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PROFILE IN BRIEF

Karen Fort Hood

A Lesson in Preparation

BY TARYN HARTMAN
Legal News

Karen Fort Hood made history in 2002 when she was the first African American woman elected to the Michigan Court of Appeals. But the first place she made history was the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

While attending the Detroit College of Law, Hood worked as a special assistant prosecuting attorney alongside assistant prosecutor and mentor Jan Bartee in the office's juvenile division. When Bartee moved to the office's appellate department, she insisted that Hood come with her because they worked well together, and also because Bartee said everyone who worked in the appeals division passed the bar exam on their first try.

Hood broke that streak, flunking the bar the first time she took it.

But instead of dismissing her as was office protocol, Prosecutor John O'Hair agreed to keep her on staff and work with her to ensure she would ace the test the next time it was offered.

"They embraced me in the prosecutor's office," Hood recalls.

She stayed there until 1992 when she was elected to the Detroit Recorder's Court, which merged with Wayne County Circuit Court in 1997.

Appellate division chief Tim Baughman gave her time to work on her bar preparation between casework assignments, and colleagues throughout the office quizzed her on legal topics and helped with her essay writing, a skill that assisted her greatly when it came to writing appeals.

"It was kind of like an artist," she says of learning legal writing, which she applied to her appeals work in the prosecutor's office. "You start with a blank palette, and then you just kind of create. To me it was like art, and a challenge."

Mastering legal writing emphasized to Hood what she wanted to do with the appeals process and was the catalyst in her ultimately aiming for the state Court of Appeals.

"You really learn discipline and to be self-motivated," Hood says of the skills she took from the prosecutor's table to the bench.

But before she could leave the prosecutor's office for good, there was one more prep course she needed to take.

Prior to her first jury trial in Recorder's Court, an assistant trial prosecutor by the name of Kym Worthy spent a girls' weekend at Hood's home getting her ready to preside over a courtroom.

"We got so much done, and we had so much fun," Hood says with a laugh. "When she left, I felt like Thurgood Marshall, I was so prepared."

Her close friendship with Worthy—"We became like sisters as the years went by, and she is to this day my sister," Hood says—was one of many that continued long after Hood left the prosecutor's office.

"We were like family, so many of us," she says. "So many friendships and sisterhoods and brotherhoods came out of that office."

A native of Detroit, Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Karen Fort Hood received her undergraduate degree in 1980 from the Regents College of the University of the State of New York at Albany, and her law degree in 1989 from the Detroit College of Law.

Judge Hood is a member of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan, the Wolverine Bar Association, the National Bar Association and the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals.

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Steak and the City



Photo by John Meiu

NALS of Detroit conducted a fund-raising event Thursday, Feb. 19, at Big City Grill in Detroit. Diners who presented a NALS ticket to their Big City server had 20 percent of their sales go toward NALS events and college scholarships. Among those lending a hand to NALS were (l-r) Linda Rosten with Chrysler Financial; Anita Blanco with Miller Canfield; Vincent Ageas with Big City; Cindy Taylor and Lynne Bussinger with Barris, Sott, Denn, & Driker P.L.L.C.; Sheila Henkel and Dino Caredeas with Big City; Lynne Johnson with Miller Canfield; and Kim Paul and Mary Tortomose with Barris Sott.

Justice Ginsburg back in court only 18 days after major cancer surgery

BY JESSE J. HOLLAND
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg returned to the Supreme Court bench Monday, a little over two weeks after her second major bout with cancer prompted questions about her health and the possibility of a quick court vacancy for President Barack Obama to fill.

A beaming Ginsburg walked into the marble courtroom with her eight male colleagues as Supreme Court Marshal Pamela Talkin began the traditional chant that announces the start of court: "Oyez. Oyez. Oyez..."

Wearing her typical court dress consisting of a black robe and white lace collar, Ginsburg showed no ill effects from her recent pancreatic cancer surgery, leaning forward in her chair and tossing out challenging questions for lawyers in her soft hesitant voice.

"You are really saying you were wrong," she chided a lawyer for the Navajo Nation who seemed to be backing away from an earlier position his clients took.

During the arguments, Ginsburg looked the lawyers directly in the eyes, leaning forward scribbling notes with a pencil. She later began rocking slightly in her seat between Justices

David Souter and Samuel Alito, and smiling and whispering with the two as they posed their questions to lawyers.

Ginsburg, 75, underwent surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York on Feb. 5 and returned to her home in Washington on Feb. 13.

Doctors gave her an encouraging prognosis after they removed a small malignant tumor from her pancreas and determined that the disease had not spread to her lymph nodes or other organs.

Ginsburg was appointed in 1993 by President Bill Clinton, and this was her second bout with cancer — and the second time she hasn't missed work because of the disease. In 1999, she had colon cancer surgery, underwent radiation and chemotherapy, and did not miss a day on the bench.

Judith Resnik, a Yale law professor and friend of Ginsburg's, recalled that Ginsburg took part in a conference at Yale while she was undergoing chemotherapy for colon cancer. "It's no surprise at all" that Ginsburg would want to return to work quickly.

Resnik said that Ginsburg's determination to get back to work so soon after her surgery is consistent with her outlook on life. "There is an underlying notion that a lot of people go to work not feeling well all the time," Resnik said.

One of the ideologically divided court's leading liberals and its only woman, Ginsburg's health is being watched closely in Washington.

If Ginsburg or another justice leaves the court, it falls to Obama to pick a successor. Anyone he might choose to replace her probably would be as liberal as she, if not more so, keeping in place the 5-4 conservative tilt of the court.

Republican Sen. Jim Bunning on Saturday suggested she may not survive very long, even with the successful surgery.

Ginsburg has "bad cancer. The kind that you don't get better from," the two-term Kentucky Republican said, according to the Courier-Journal of Louisville.

"Even though she was operated on, usually, nine months is the longest that anybody would live" with pancreatic cancer, said Bunning, a Hall of Fame pitcher with no medical background.

There was no immediate comment from the court but Bunning apologized on Monday. "It is great to see her back at the Supreme Court today and I hope she recovers quickly," the senator said in a statement.

Associated Press writer Mark Sherman contributed to this story.



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

DAILY BRIEFS

NALS of Detroit to present program

NALS of Detroit will present a CLE After Hours program on Monday, March 9, from 5:30 to 8:15 p.m. at the Detroit offices of Miller, Canfield, Paddock, and Stone P.L.L.C. offices in Detroit.

Keynote speaker Rebecca Simkins of Barris, Sott, Denn, & Driker P.L.L.C. will discuss "Ethical Issues and Why We Need You."

The cost for NALS members is \$13 and \$15 for non-NALS members. For additional information or to register, contact Mary Tortomose, NALS treasurer, by phone at (313) 965-9732 x319 or by e-mail at mtortomose@bsdd.com, or visit www.nalsfordetroit.org/events/2009-03-09/meeting.html.

City settles case of death in police lockup

DETROIT (AP) — The city of Detroit has settled a lawsuit over the death of a 67-year-old man in a police lockup.

James Stone suffered a heart attack and died

in August 2005 at the police department's Second Precinct. Lawyers for his estate say Stone complained for hours about chest pains but no one took him to a hospital.

The case was settled Monday before a jury was picked in federal court. City lawyers declined to comment on the financial terms.

State considers Net shaming tax-dodgers

LANSING (AP) — Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration is considering a

Blogging Dean Bob WSU Law School dean launches blog

BY TARYN HARTMAN
Legal News

In his first post, titled "Fearlessly Entering the Blogosphere," Wayne State University Law School Dean Robert Ackerman launched "The Dean Bob Law Blog" (<http://law.wayne.edu/blogs/deansblog/>) on Feb. 18.

Ackerman said that with the blog he's seeking a different type of discourse than what's typically found in a traditional law school environment.

"I want to be able to talk to people in a format and even in a language that's different," he said.

But the blog won't completely beat all the law professor out of Ackerman: his two initial posts included a total of five footnotes.

In posts that he hopes to update at least once a week, Ackerman said he plans to address law school-related matters like the current economics of running a law practice in addition to personal posts detailing his perspectives on the city.

While Ackerman acknowledged that the blog may help draw attention to WSU's law school, it's intended to be a forum for his personal thoughts and opinions and not meant to be representative of the law school as a whole.

"It's kind of a bully pulpit for me to talk about things I think that matter," Ackerman said.



Dean Robert Ackerman

Committees fined for campaign law violations

Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land announced this week that three political fundraising committees are paying a total of \$225,250 for violating Michigan's Campaign Finance Act.

The penalties are part of conciliation agreements signed by the Department of State and the Senate Democratic Fund, Mark Schauer for State Senate committee and the Committee to Elect Bob Schockman.

The agreements resolve violations stemming from the 2006 state Senate races. The fines reflect the total amount of the excess contributions and \$1,000 per violation.

Senate Democratic Fund (SDF)—The SDF agreed to return \$202,250 to the Mark Schauer for State Senate committee. That's the amount of the improper contributions made by the committee. The SDF also paid a fine of \$10,000, which equals \$9,000 for each of the nine occasions on which it accepted excess contributions plus \$1,000 for violating a previous conciliation agreement.

Mark Schauer for State Senate—\$208,250 total, which equals the amount of the excess contribution as well as \$6,000 for each of the six separate violations.

Committee to Elect Bob Schockman—\$7,000 total, which equals the amount of the excess contributions plus \$1,000 for violating the Campaign Finance Act.

plan to "cyber shame" Michigan's worst tax-dodgers by posting their names on the Internet.

The list would include people and businesses owing at least \$100,000 in past-due taxes to the state. That's about 350 names as of now.

Granholm plans to propose legislation to loosen state privacy laws to permit the posting of the names, debts and addresses of the delinquents. She estimates it could bring in an extra \$5 million a year.

A number of other states have similar programs already. South Carolina calls it "Debtor's Corner," and Minnesota calls it "DelinqNet." Connecticut pioneered the idea in 1997.

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Malcolm Berko finds little room for insurance in today's market

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Through the pain of living, emerges the joy of living

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■ U.S. Supreme Court

Round up of recent action taken by the U.S. Supreme Court

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