LAW DAY LUNCHEON 2019

The OCBA Law Day Committee once again outdid itself by hosting the annual luncheon at the Skirvin Hotel. Those who arrived early had time to meet and greet comrades not often encountered at other functions, and mingle with lawyers and judges who retired since the prior year’s festivities. This event also provides attendees with the opportunity to witness recognition of so much good being done in the Oklahoma County justice system, as well as a public venue in which to demonstrate their appreciation.

The awards are always a highlight of the luncheon and this year was no different. District Attorney David Prater and Public Defender Robert Ravitz were recognized jointly as “lifetime” defenders of the rule of law, and The Innocence Project at OCU was honored with a $25,000.00 award, generously provided by attorney Howard Berry, Jr. The OCBA Young Lawyers Division honored courthouse fixture Cleo Fields with the Liberty Bell Award, which came as a complete surprise to both him and his family (see “CLEO SHINES!” by Judge Walke on p. 5). Other members of the OCBA were recognized by the Journal Record through individual awards for various contributions to the legal community of Oklahoma County.

Special guest speaker Robert Kerr, of the OU Gaylord College of Journalism, addressed the theme for the luncheon, which was “Free Speech, Free Press, Free Society.” His presentation focused on the role social media plays in distributing information to the “marketplace of ideas,” a term popularized by Justice Oliver Wendall Holmes, Jr. 100 years ago in Abrams v. United States, 250 U.S. 616 (1919). Professor Kerr presented several points of thought to the audience, including whether this “marketplace” is still feasible in today’s electronic age, and if so, whether it serves as a benefit or a disservice to society, as a whole.

Guests of honor at the luncheon also included several Oklahoma County Special and District Judges, in addition to Oklahoma Supreme Court Chief Justice Noma Gurich, Presiding Judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals, David Lewis; Oklahoma County District Court Presiding Judge, Thomas Prince; U.S. District Court Presiding Judge Joe Heaton; Oklahoma City Presiding Municipal Judge, Philippa James; Oklahoma State Attorney General Michael Hunter; and the Deans of both local law schools, as well as the OU College of Journalism. Many thanks to the members of the Law Day Committee, the Skirvin Hotel, and those who attended for a touching and memorable Law Day celebration.

Become a Reading Buddy for 2019-20

The Lawyers for Learning Committee is already gearing up for the 2019-2020 school year! The kick-off meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 16th at 12 Noon at the OCBA offices, and lunch will be provided.

Lawyers for Learning is a group of volunteers who work one-on-one with 2nd and 3rd grade students who need a little extra help with their reading skills. Currently we work with four elementary schools in the Oklahoma City Public School district, including Adelaide Lee, Buchanan, Hillcrest and Adams. The process is simple: pick a school, determine the dates and times that work for you, and listen to a child read. Some volunteers go once a month, some once a week or every two weeks.

Is your firm considering community service work? One local firm adopted a school and formed two reading teams who go alternate weeks. If one can’t make it during their regular time, they know they have a backup and can go a different time. Going solo? We can put you with a team.

See READING BUDDY, PAGE 4
By President Sheila Stinson

Recently my six year old complained that it’s never been harder being a kid than right now. While that statement was made as he spent some quiet time in his room without his video game as a result of punching his brother in the back, it made me wonder - when was the hardest time to be a lawyer?

On the broader question of when is the hardest time to have ever lived, Harvard University Professor Michael McCormick argues that (despite my son’s claims to the contrary) the time is not right now...it was in 536 AD. It was the darkest moments of the Dark Ages. Volcanic ash led to months of darkness and winter. Infrastructur was failing. There was no central rule of law. It was the coldest decade for at least two thousand years. Bubonic plague spread. I’m proud of myself when I lay 30 bags of mulch in one weekend. My ancestors who lived through 536 AD would be ashamed.

When I asked my social media friends when was the hardest time to do their respective jobs, I received many answers from both lawyers and other professional friends. I heard from two teachers, one of whom was one of my own elementary teachers. They proposed that the hardest time to be a teacher is now. With school and parent demands, the distractions of technology, and lack of available resources, they suggest today is the hardest time. Side hint - teacher appreciation weeks are coming up.

An industrial engineer, John Simpensen, proposed the 1950s and 60s for his profession. “Taylorite observational methods were still necessary; no video and limited still photography; the closest thing to a readily accessible computer was an adding machine.” A female teacher who proposed the 1980s during the oil crisis, or when checks were not printed nearly impossible, Ida Tarbell and Nellie Bly notwithstanding.” My husband pointed out that (despite my son’s claims to the contrary) the time is not right now...it was in 536 AD. It was the darkest moments of the Dark Ages. Volcanic ash led to months of darkness and winter. Infrastructural failure was widespread. There was no central rule of law. It was the coldest decade for at least two thousand years. Bubonic plague spread. I’m proud of myself when I lay 30 bags of mulch in one weekend. My ancestors who lived through 536 AD would be ashamed.

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Dear Roscoe: While sitting through the VPOocket the other day I heard the phrase “Peeping Tom” come up in a couple of cases. Who was this Tom fellow?

J.M., Norman, OK

Dear J.S.: The answer to this question takes us back to Jolly Olde England in the 13th Century. As the story goes, the legendary Lady Godiva decided to take a nighttime ride through Coventry to protest her husband’s imposition of a heavy and unjust tax upon the locals. The Countess Godiva would ride naked through town, covered only by her exceedingly long hair. For whatever reason, the Count could not restrain his wife, but he did impose a curfew ordering everyone off the streets and away from their windows. As the legend developed, by the 13th Century popular stories added the tale of Tom, a local tailor, who did, in fact “peep.” Hopefully, he enjoyed the show because he was struck blind for the effort. Modern usage of the term “peeping Tom” began about the end of the 19th Century.

Dear Roscoe: I’m trying to help my church out pro bono. My pastor has asked me questions regarding showing films for “Movie Night” outrages or using mix recordings for workout programs. For years now, I’ve seen the FBI warnings on movies but this is hardly my area of law. T.N., Edmond, OK

Dear T.N.: This is kinda fact-sensitive. When you buy or rent a movie, you simply buy your copy. You do not acquire any license or copyright. Therefore, it’s OK to watch it at home with friends and family. Displaying to the general public, however, could lead to problems. With some exceptions, public display involves licensing. There is no general religious or charitable exemption. However, you may be able to get a non-theatrical license at substantially lower cost than a commercial license, or you may purchase or lease the movie from a distributor authorized to license as well. An exception exists for movies used in a classroom setting where teaching occurs at the same time. Also, do not overlook many films whose copyrights have expired and are now in the public domain.

Much of what has been said for movies also applies to music as well, particularly when the recording is that of the original artist and not, for example, a member of your choir giving his or her rendition. 17 USC 110 (3) does provide an exception for performance of nondramatic literary works, musical works, or dramatico-musical works of a religious nature, or display of a work, as part of religious services at a place of worship or religious assembly. I think the workout venue might be pushing the envelope a wee bit. Keep in mind that copyright protection and licensing requirements do not depend upon whether you charge for participation in the event.

The Kearny trial rolled on. Chips pretty much reprised his testimony at the preliminary hearing. Assistant District Attorney Carl Coleman’s next witness, R. Michael Reising took the stand. He sat tall and erect, every bit the military man he once was. He wore a dark suit and, with his rounded wire framed glasses, looked like a stern professor who might occupy a basement lab in the White House or Pentagon, consulted only when needed.

Q. Mr Reising——
A. Doctor Reising, forgive me. What is your usual business or occupation?
Q. I am president of Watch and Ward Security Systems.
A. And what is the business of that company?
Q. Cyber-security
A. Security against what, specifically?
Q. Well many things. Hackers, malware, cyber espionage, data theft.
Q. Do you personally perform these services?
A. Starting out, sure. Now, of course, I have employees who do most of the hands-on work.
Q. You started Watch and Ward yourself?
A. I did. Yes, sir.
Q. When was that?
A. When I started the business? 2002.
Q. Did you have any specialized training or education in the area of Cyber-security?
A. Well, my training and experience goes way back to before “cyber-security” was a thing, but

Mr. Keeper: Your Honor, speaking for both Mr. Ridley and myself Mr. Coleman has shared Dr. Reising’s CV, and we’ll stipulate to his technical expertise.

Mr. Coleman: Your Honor, I appreciate the offer. However, under the circumstances of this case, I think the jury should receive more detail than the resume provides.

Mr. Comer: It’s Dr. Riesling’s own resume! If he’s satisfied with it to establish his credentials in his profession, why shouldn’t Mr. Coleman be satisfied?

THE COURT: Counsel, please come up to the Bench.

Mr. Coleman: Your Honor, we’ll be included in some very technical matters. If Dr. Riesling is going to guide us through that maze, the jury needs a sufficient basis to trust his credibility. CVs are by nature superficial treatments of a person’s career and qualifications. For all we know, the jurors might take this as an acknowledgement he has some minimal or borderline qualifications.

Mr. Comer: With the stipulation on the table, any further questioning along this line should be deemed inadmissible as prejudicial, repetitive, and a waste of time.

Mr. Ridley: I agree. He’s expanding on the already stipulated to qualifications to take a commercial break from the real issues in order to bolster the witness’ credibility.

THE COURT: Well, gentlemen, I believe an offer to stipulate is just that. It’s an offer, and not binding until accepted. Mr. Coleman is not required to accept it, and I know of no authority under which I could prevent further examination even if I were inclined toward doing so. The objections are overruled.

Mr. Ridley, you were about to go into your education and experience.

A. Yes, sir. I graduated from the Air Force Academy in Colorado with a degree in Engineering in 1981. I then went on to earn a Masters Degree in both Mathematics and Computer Information Systems and received additional training in Electronic Warfare while stationed at Eglin Air Force Base. In 1990 I was posted to the former East Germany to perform analysis of, and establish security for, the electronic files of the former regime as a component of reunification of the two Germanys. I retired from the Air Force in 2000, and worked as a civilian security consultant until started Watch and Ward.

Q. What was the highest rank you achieved?
A. Full colonel.
Q. And while you were deployed to Germany?
A. For the most part, major.
Q. How many other military personnel, if any, worked there with you?
A. I have no way of knowing that in total. I can only speak for my team.
Q. OK. How many on your team?
A. As for actually uniformed personnel, I’d say about a dozen.
Q. And who did you answer to?
A. Well, nominally Colonel Lamprecht was our commander.

Q. Nominally?
A. Yes. As a practical matter we all worked under a civilian.
Q. And who was that?
A. His name?
Q. Yes.
A. Peter Kearny.
Q. Do you see Mr. Kearny in the courtroom today?

Mr. Comer: Objection.

Mr. Ridley: Irrelevant and prejudicial.

THE COURT: The record will so reflect.

Q. We’ll come back to that. Mr. Riesling, are you familiar with the word, and I think I’m saying it right, Zeretzung?

Mr. Comer: Objection.

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MAY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By: Miles Pringle

April 25th was the deadline for bills to pass the opposite chamber. Some bills that passed were sent on to the governor’s desk, while others, which had “Title Stricken”, went back to their house of origin for further work. As this is the First Session of Oklahoma’s 57th Legislature, bills previously filed may come back up in the Second Session. This First Session is scheduled to adjourn on May 31st.

Several noteworthy pieces of legislation have passed. A series of bills (HB2479, HB2480, HB2483, SB456, SB457) reorganized five state agencies to give the governor more control over the hiring and firing of agency heads (Office of Juvenile Affairs; Department of Transportation; Department of Corrections: Healthcare Authority; and Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse). This was one of the main objectives the Governor laid out in his first State of the State address.

As part of the deal the Governor reached with Legislators, the Senate will have confirmation authority over the Governor’s appointment of an agency head. The bills also reorganize the boards of these agencies, reallocating the number of appointments between the Governor, the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

The Legislature also passed a medical marijuana unity bill. This bill, HB2612, sets out a basic regulatory scheme for the medical marijuana industry. It defines industry terms such as “mother plant” and provides the new Medical Marijuana Authority the obligation to perform inspections and issue subpoenas when necessary. Governor Stitt described the regulation of the medical marijuana industry to The Journal Record as a “work in progress”.

Most notably for the 3rd branch, the Governor signed HB2366, more widely known as judicial redistricting. It sets the districts of the Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals to match the five congressional districts and four at-large positions. Governor Stitt was quoted by The Journal Record as explaining “This common-sense legislation ensures all 4 million Oklahomans are well represented while also increasing the number of quality, qualified candidates eligible for these critical appointments.”

The bill only grandfathered in current Judges and Justices for their current term. Thus, there could be additional turnover in the make-up of the Courts. There is a potential issue in that Section 2 of Article VII of the Oklahoma constitution provides that the “Supreme Court shall consist of nine Justices until the number shall be changed by statute and each Justice shall be from a separate district of the State.” The at-large districts may violate the requirement of separate districts.

Other notable bills include SB 509, which limits “step therapy” requirements from insurers. Step therapy is when an insurer refuses to cover a prescription until other potential remedies are exhausted. The bill does not eliminate this process, but attempts to limit when an insurer may engage in such practice. SB 1001 has received some press coverage for prohibiting municipalities from taxing the use of plastic bags. HB 2423 creates a new entity in Oklahoma known as “Benefit Corporations”. Possibly my personal favorite is HB 1292, which designates the Rosette Nebula as the official astronomical object of the state. I didn’t even know we needed a state astronomical object until we had one.

As of the writing of this article Governor Stitt has only vetoed one bill, SB 1205. The bill would have created the Oklahoma Home and Community-Based Services Ombudsman Program Task Force. The Governor said he was supportive of the concept, but wanted to address the issues through alternative means.

READING BUDDY, Continued from PAGE 1

Each school has a team liaison who works with the principal or reading specialist. This way we know the readers are working on material that is appropriate to their reading level and volunteers can work on specific issues with the student.

Ask anyone who is currently a Lawyers for Learning member and they will tell you they believe the reward they get working with these students is possibly greater than what the students receive. The majority of these students show marked improvement over the year, giving them a great advantage when it’s time for their third grade testing.

We invite both attorneys and office staff to join. To learn more, you’re welcome to attend the meeting on July 16th or contact either Lawyers for Learning Chair Virginia Holleman at 405-524-1110, email: vholleman@cathcartdooley.com, or the OCBA at 405-236-8421.

Book Notes

By Bill Gorden

Love Can Be
Ed. By Louisa McCune and Teresa Miller, Kirkpatrick Foundation, 2018, paper, 251 pages, $19.95
Let’s start off Summer season on a high note. What could be better than a book about people’s pets. Not just any people, but people in and around Oklahoma, and celebrities at that. Oh, and the book sales are being used to benefit animals in harm’s way in Oklahoma.

These are moving and heartwarming stories about dearly loved animals, not just dogs and cats. Some are quirky, some cute, some old, some talented. All are interesting. There are plenty of photos as well, no need to use a big imagination. This book won two prizes at the Oklahoma Book Awards this year, presented by the Oklahoma Center for the Book. Start off the season warm inside.

Drawing Fire: A Pawnee Artist & Thunderbird in World War Two Brummet
Echohawk and Mark Ellenbarger, University Press of Kansas, 2018, hardback, 248 pages, $29.95
The 45th Division Thunderbirds are integral to Oklahoma History. Their records of achievement and bravery are legitimate legend. Among the Oklahomans in that outfit were always a goodly number of Native Americans. After all, it is Oklahoma. During World War Two, in Sicily, the boot of Italy, and later Southern France, leading into Germany itself, Native Oklahoman Americans led the way. This is meant to be literal. The skills of moving while not being seen, of scenting out the bad guys, and outright bravery put them out front. They scouted, they counted, they came back with data on who, where, how many. They also did their share of killing and dying.

And drawing, and writing. One of them was Brumnet Echohawk, whose writing done in the midst of battlegrounds, and whose art, from the same places, is also legend.

Sometimes the passage of time diminishes the writing or art concerning great events, but not here. Echowhawk’s descriptions of patrols, scouting, and battle are still engaging. He makes us see, hear, and smell the battlefield. He makes us feel the tiredness of 48 hours of battle with no sleep, little food. One begins to wonder how all of this has been done.

The art is placed a little late in the book, one finds oneself thinking back over what was read. However, the art also speaks for itself. This is a very perceptive person involved in an enormous story, taking it all in and preserving it. This is well worth the money and time investment for any Oklahoman. Finalist in the Oklahoma Book awards.
It was an honor to accept the assignment from Debbie Gorden: Bring Cleo Fields to the Law Day Luncheon on May 1st. Cleo was receiving the Liberty Bell Award from the Young Lawyers Division and he didn’t know anything about it. Keep it a surprise!

Not a problem. I decided I would invite him to lunch, tell him it was at the Museum Café, then have a last minute change of heart and take him to the Skirvin. That should work.

When I asked Cleo if I could buy him lunch to thank him for all the good things he does, he was receptive. However, when I told him the only day I had available in the next month or so was on Wednesday, May 1st, I could have sworn I saw a sudden movement in his eyes indicating that date was perhaps problematic. But he agreed.

A week or so later, I realized that if he was getting an award then his family should be invited. I told Cleo to be sure to invite any of his kids, all adults, to come and join us. Cleo’s wife had passed away several years ago. He really liked the idea, and thought one or two might join us. The next week Cleo apologetically approached me and asked if I would mind if three or four of his kids came to lunch with us. I assured him that was no problem - the more, the merrier. I asked him to get me a final count, along with their names, and Cleo assured me that was no problem.

That next week, I asked Cleo where the list was. He said he sent it up to my office already. When I checked with my bailiff and clerk, there was no list. In a panic, I called Cleo and asked about it. He told me he would be right up with the list. When I looked at the list, including me and Cleo, the luncheon group had grown to ten. Not a problem, except rain was expected on Wednesday, so I needed to arrange transportation from the courthouse to the Skirvin so no one would get wet. I drafted Judge Allen Welch and Judge Beth Kerr, both of whom are huge fans of Mr. Fields. They happily accepted the opportunity to help drive the family.

On Tuesday, the day before the luncheon, I decided it wasn’t fair to surprise Cleo, as that might prove embarrassing in some way. I went down and told Cleo I had to be honest with him. Cleo shook my hand as always, smiled, and said, “It’s okay, Judge, I already know.” I laughed and told him

Wednesday, May 1st, I could have sworn I saw a sudden movement in his eyes indicating that date was perhaps problematic. But he agreed.
OCBA President Judge Sheila Stinson greets the crowd at the Law Day Luncheon.

Ask a Lawyer Volunteer Law Day Chair Kellie Howell

Vicki Behenna of the Oklahoma Innocence Project at OCU Law received the Howard K. Berry Sr. Award from Oklahoma County Bar Foundation President Jeff Trevillion.

Ask a Lawyer Volunteers

Ask a Lawyer Volunteer Law Day Chair Kellie Howell

Ogletree Deakins

Employers & Lawyers. Working together

Kim Tran

has joined Ogletree Deakins’ Oklahoma City office as Of Counsel. Ms. Tran has extensive experience in employment, civil rights and commercial litigation. Ms. Tran is the tenth attorney to join Ogletree’s Oklahoma City office since opening in January 2017. Ogletree is an international law firm with 56 offices, it is the second largest employment law firm nationally and is one of the largest law firms in the world. Corporate Counsel Magazine has just named Ogletree as the 2019 best employment law firm nationally based on a survey of general counsel at Fortune 1000 companies.

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OCBA Law Day Chair Kellie Howell introduces this year’s speaker.

District Attorney David Prater and Public Defender Bob Ravitz, recipients of this year’s Journal Record Award, pose with Journal Record Editor Russell Ray.

Cell Phone Forensics

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- Assist with interpreting Mobility Usage Reports and device location

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Volunteer Opportunities

The OCBA has many opportunities to volunteer with their Community Service Committee, Law Related Education Committee, Lawyers For Learning Committee and Voices for Children Committee. However, this new monthly column will list other opportunities for our members to help the community. If you know of something that should be listed here, please contact the Bar Office at 236-8421 and we will add it to this new monthly Briefcase column.

OK CITY CRISIS NURSERY

Mission – strengthen families & prevent child abuse & neglect by providing 24-hour emergency care for children during crisis situations in an environment of unconditional love

Child Care Team
Child care volunteers will assist staff in ensuring the children are comfortable, helping with meals, daily activities & providing extra love and attention.

Hours: Daytime (7am - 11am, 11am - 3pm, 3pm - 7pm)
Evening, overnight and flex shifts will be available after we have opened. Please list any available times you are available including times not listed.

Kitchen Crew
Prepare and assist in helping volunteers with meal time.
We will be accepting pre-made meals to freeze and serve easily.
If you are able to provide a pre-made meal, please contact us and we can give more specific details. This will be a huge way you can contribute without having to physically help at the nursery and will be crucial for cutting back on costs for us.

Volunteer link: https://www.crisisnurseroykc.com/crisisnurseroykcget-involved

OAMIC Introduces Employed Lawyer Policy

Considering Professional Liability coverage as an Employed Lawyer?
We now have a policy for you!

Coverage includes pro bono legal services with employer’s written permission
Exposure to regulatory compliance issues, HIPPA, & other areas makes this well worth the expense.
ARE YOU ON THE MOVE?

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For an application packet go to
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Phil Bruce named to Employers Counsel Network

Mcafee & Taft labor and employment attorney Philip R. Bruce has been named a member of the Employers Counsel Network (ECN), an exclusive affiliation of leading lawyers and law firms across the United States and Canada, dedicated to advising and representing employers in all facets of labor and employment laws and workplace disputes. Mcafee & Taft is the sole member law firm to represent Oklahoma in the network.

In this new role, he also joins fellow Mcafee & Taft employment lawyers Courtney Bru, Charlie Plumb and Paul Ross in serving as co-editors of the Oklahoman Employment Law Letter, a monthly review of new court decisions, regulations and laws that affect state employers.

Oklahoma City University School of Law honors Riggs Abney Law Firm

Attorney Sharon Gentry received the Law Firm of Distinction Award on behalf of Riggs Abney Law Firm at the 2019 Oklahoma City University School of Law Awards Dinner on April 6 in Oklahoma City. The firm received this honor due to its active involvement in numerous charitable, civic and service organizations.

The award is presented annually to a law firm who has a history of hiring OCU Law alumni, serving or mentoring OCU Law students, participating in internship programs for OCU Law students, or contributes monetarily or otherwise to the success of the Oklahoma City University School of Law. The recipient firm must also have attained prominence in the community through support of its worthy endeavors in education, government or accomplishments impressive to the citizens of Oklahoma.

New Crowe & Dunlevy director elected

Crowe & Dunlevy recently announced the election of Tynia A. Watson to the position of director in the firm’s Oklahoma City office. With nearly a decade of experience, Watson will continue to represent clients as part of Crowe & Dunlevy’s Cannabis Industry, Intellectual Property, Litigation & Trial and Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Practice Groups.

Watson’s intellectual property (IP) law experience includes assisting clients with IP litigation, trademark clearance and registration, patent prosecution, trade secrets, copyright issues, IT licensing and compliance and unfair competition. She also counsels clients in oil and gas matters, environmental law issues, cannabis IP and numerous general litigation disputes.

Since 2018, Watson has been listed in Best Lawyers in America for Copyright Law and Trademark Law. She has also been recognized as a Rising Star by Super Lawyers in the fields of Intellectual Property, Intellectual Property Litigation and General Litigation.

She graduated summa cum laude from Oklahoma City University School of Law where she was a member of the William J. Holloway, Jr. Inn of Court and served as president of the Intellectual Property Group. Also during law school, she won CALI Awards of Excellence in Civil Procedure II, Copyright Law and Art and Cultural Heritage Law.

Walke, Welch, and Kerr met Cleo and his eight guests at Cleo’s Professional Shines on the first floor of the Skirvin, and she escorted them up to their table.

Robert E. “Bob” Howard is a litigator based in the Oklahoma City office. His areas of expertise include civil litigation, criminal law and adoption, and he primarily handles matters for clients holding LegalShield Legal Membership Plans. Harvey is licensed to practice in Oklahoma and Texas, and is past president of the Delaware County Bar Association. He holds a Juris Doctor from Oklahoma City University and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Central Oklahoma.

Robert E. “Bob” Howard practices in the areas of real estate, foreclosure and landlord/tenant law in the firm’s Tulsa office. Prior to joining Riggs Abney, he served as a municipal court judge in Collinsville and led a leading Oklahoma mortgage foreclosure firm. Howard holds a Juris Doctor from The University of Tulsa College of Law, a MBA from Golden Gate University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Idaho.

CLEO SHINES!, Continued from PAGE 5

I figured someone would let the cat out of the bag. It would shock me if he hadn’t already been told by some- one about the Liberty Bell Award. He said, “My kids know too, and they’re excited to be here for the lunch.” I walked away proudly, knowing that honesty was the best policy.

On Wednesday morning, the day of the Law Day Luncheon, Judge Welch’s balliff, Melinda, told me to go by the Law Library and get some birthday cake. I asked whose birthday it was, and was shocked to learn it was Cleo Fields’s birthday! By prior arrangement, Judges Walke, Welch, and Kerr met Cleo and his eight guests at Cleo’s Professional Shines on the first floor of the courthouse. The Judges retrieved their cars and met the honoree and his entourage at the curb on the east side of the courthouse on Harvey. Carol Bybee, the Paralegal for the (Howard K.) Berry Law Firm, met us downstairs at the Skirvin, and she escorted them up to their table.

When Ben Grubb announced the Liberty Bell Award from the Young Lawyers Division, Cleo actually looked and acted shouldered the award. He was playing along really well! Award made, lunch eaten, photos taken, happy family, and good times, including everyone in the balloon singing “Happy Birthday” to Cleo. Then I got my car and brought it around to pick up Cleo and two of his daughters.

Cleo said, “Judge, I had no idea what was happening. That was such an honor.”

Me: “Oh, Cleo, I’m just happy I told you about it before so you weren’t shocked.”

Cleo: “What? I didn’t know about it.”

Me: “Wait, I told you yesterday.”

Cleo: “I thought you were telling me that the lunch was for my birthday!”

Me: “I didn’t know it was your birthday until today. You only knew you didn’t know about the award?”

Cleo: “Oh, no, I didn’t have any idea. I wondered why you wanted to have lunch with all those other people.”

As Robert Kerr, our speaker at Law Day, told us, good and memorable things come in threes. A Liberty Bell Award celebration, the Liberty Bell Award honoring Cleo Fields from the YLD, and a surprise rendition of Happy Birthday from 400 lawyers, judges, and friends, who know and care for their Courthouse Friend, Mr. Cleo Fields.
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