A TRIBUTE TO THE FORMER CHAIRS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE TRIAL JUDGES

The First 25 Years

Past Chairmen—National Conference of State Trial Judges

Along with the late Justice Tom Clark, Judge Marovitz and a small number of state trial judges created the National Conference of State Trial Judges. He was the guiding force in its early years and will always be remembered as the first chairman. Judge Marovitz is presently Senior United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

One of the organizers of the Conference, Justice Reardon is also past Chairman of the ABA Judicial Administration Division and served on numerous committees of the Conference, JAD and ABA. He was the first President of the Board of Directors of the National Center for State Courts. He served as Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Massachusetts for many years and retired as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court for the Commonwealth. He is still carrying out the work of the National Center and has been serving as a Master for the U.S. Supreme Court, most recently in a case between Arkansas and Mississippi.

Also one of the organizing forces in the Conference, Judge Starley was requested by Justice Clark to serve on the Organizational Committee of the Conference. He retired from the 143rd Judicial District Court of Texas in 1976, but accepted judicial assignments until the fall of 1983. (He presided over the Lower Rio Grande Water Suit involving 200 attorneys and 3,000 parties from 1962 to 1967.)

Judge Pharr was present at the Conference’s first organizational meeting in 1966. He was chairman of many committees during his long service to the Conference. In 1960 he was appointed by then Chairman Paul Reardon to chair a Committee on the Agenda and, with Justice Reardon, did much to set the future direction and long range goals of the Conference. He helped originate and was a co-editor of the State Trial Judges’ Journal. He has retired as Chief Judge and Senior Judge of the Superior Court of the Atlanta Judicial District of Georgia.
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Justice McDonald brought his distinguished background (Chairman of National Conference on Crime and Delinquency, Co-founder and Past Chairman of the National Association of District Attorneys, recipient of the 1951 Knickerbocker Award, etc.) to aid the development of the NCSTJ. Stories are told of Judge McDonald, at the birth of the Conference, standing in the hallway drafting the first constitution and bylaws. Some believe that the original documents still have plaster on them from having been written on the hotel walls. He resigned as Justice of the New York Supreme Court in 1971 and is now counsel to the firm of Shea & Gould in New York City.

Judge Parnell participated in NCSTJ’s organizational meeting. He appeared at seminars on behalf of NCSTJ all over the U.S. He was Chairman of the State Trial Judge’s Book Committee and a member of the first Board of Directors of the National College of State Trial Judges, now the National Judicial College. He was on the first faculty of the Judges’ College in Boulder and continued teaching for many years in Reno. The author of many legal articles, he taught at Wisconsin and Marquette Law Schools. After 20 years on the 10th Judicial Circuit in Wisconsin, he retired in 1972 and continued to work on assignments throughout the state for many years.

Judge Murray’s name is closely linked to the National Judicial College, as one of the judges most responsible for its organization and continuation. He was an incorporator, and he was interim Dean in 1965 and a member of the Board of Directors acting as chairman from 1971 to 1980. He taught at the College on the first faculty in Boulder and continued teaching from 1964 to 1977. He served as chairman of many committees and was especially active in preparing The State Trial Judge’s Book, authoring many articles. He later became Chair of the ABA Judicial Administration Division. He presently is Senior Judge of the U.S. District Court in Boston, Massachusetts.

Judge Murphree attended the first meeting of the State Trial Judges Conference. He was a member of the faculty at its first session of the Judges’ College in Boulder and also served on the College’s Board of Directors. He was a co-author of The State Trial Judge’s Book, and was active in the JAD and ABA, serving on the Advisory Committee on “The Function of the Trial Judge.” He retired from the bench in December, 1978, after serving thirty-five years as circuit judge in the Eighth Judicial Circuit of Florida.


At its organizational meeting, Judge Sutinonetti participated in discussions as to whether the Conference should be independent or affiliated with the ABA. He served on the faculty at the National Judicial College and represented the Conference at various seminars. He was a contributing editor to the second edition of The State Trial Judge’s Book. In 1974 he was appointed by the President of the U.S. to the Commission on the revision of the Federal Appellate Court System, the only state trial judge to serve. He taught at Whittier College of Law and presently is the Senior Judge of the Circuit Court at Portland. He is a consultant to state courts seeking to reduce delay and costs.

Judge Waugh was a founder of the Conference, having been asked by Justice Tom Clark to attend the first organizational meeting. He lectured at many judicial seminars throughout the country for the National Conference, was on the faculty of the first session of the Judges’ College at Boulder and continued on the faculty for many years. After over 24 years on the trial bench, he retired in 1972 to become of counsel to the law firm of Riker, Danzig, Scherer & Hyland. He is still working on the improvement of the judiciary, having served “pro bono” as special counsel.
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on judicial appointments for the past ten years to the former and present Governors of New Jersey.

We were all saddened to hear of the death of Judge John T. Reardon on March 16, 1984. Judge Reardon had been very active in the Conference’s work, both before and after serving as its chairman. He was a guiding force in its formative years. He chaired the Judicial Administration Division in 1974–75. After many years on the trial bench, Judge Reardon served on the Appellate Court in Illinois for three and one-half years before his retirement on December 1, 1979.

Judge Meyer was an active member of the Conference Board both before and after he served as chairman. He served as Chairman of the Committee on Fair Trial and Free Press and a member of the Reardon Committee. He developed the plan for state representation at the conference and was on the Board of Directors of the National College in 1974 and on the Board of Directors of the National Center for State Courts. Since 1979, Judge Meyer has been on the Court of Appeals in the State of New York.

Judge McKenzie was on the faculty of the National Judicial College and participated in over 20 seminars sponsored by the Conference all over the United States. He co-authored the 1969 State Trial Judge’s Book. He was President and later Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts. He served on many Conference, JAD and ABA committees. He was on the Advisory Committee “On the Function of the Judge,” and was a Chairman of the Judges’ Advisory Committee to the ABA Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility. He has served on the Superior Court, Atlanta Judicial Circuit in Georgia since 1962.

Judge Foster was a Director of the National Judicial College and served on various committees throughout his long and distinguished service to the Conference where his wisdom and experience on the bench was of tremendous assistance. Judge Foster retired on August 31, 1975 after having served as Judge and later as Chief Judge of the Orphans Court and then as Judge and Chief Judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, for a total of 27 years of judicial service.

Judge Foote did much to strengthen the Conference during his term of service. He was one of the few Chairmen from a smaller community and the only Judge from the state where the Judges’ College began. He brought the Conference common sense and his homespun philosophy which did much to strengthen it. Judge Foote retired from full service on the trial bench in January of 1979, but continues to sit as a Senior Judge throughout the State of Colorado on assignment by the Chief Justice.

Judge Richards has been active in the Conference almost since its inception. He was a graduate of the first College at Boulder and has been a member of the faculty for many years. Described by his fellow judges as a human dynamo, he is immediate past Chairman of the Judicial Administration Division and is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Judicial College. He was a member and chairman of many committees of the Conference, the JAD and ABA. He was an adjunct Professor of Law at Indiana Law School, and a faculty member of the American Academy of Judicial Education. He presently serves on the Superior Court of Lake County, Indiana.

Judge Revelle has served in about every capacity possible in the Conference. He was Chairman of the Editorial Board of The Judges’ Journal and did much to improve it. He worked for many years on the faculty at the Judges’ College and was on its Board of Directors from 1979 to 1982. He served on various committees of the Conference, JAD and ABA. Judge Revelle retired from the Superior Court in 1983 after almost 30 years, and is presently of counsel to the law firm of Revelle, Ries & McDermott. He is promoting the Alternative Dispute Resolution System in the State of Washington, and returns to the bench to serve as Judge and Judicial Master by appointment.
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Judge Warren served the Conference in many capacities. During his term of office it was felt by many that he was instrumental in saving The Judges' Journal. He brought about independent thinking for the Conference and a better relationship with the ABA, so that NCSTJ could work better for trial judges. He also brought about adequate funding for the Conference and will long be remembered for his strong leadership. Judge Warren retired as a Circuit Judge in the 17th Judicial Circuit of Florida in January of 1979, but has been regularly assigned back to the bench, usually to sit on long and complicated cases.

Judge Gilmore has been chairman of many Conference committees, as well as committees of JAD and ABA. He worked on The State Trial Judge's Book and was a faculty member at the Judicial College since 1966. Judge Gilmore taught at Wayne State and University of Michigan Law Schools and has been a leader in numerous seminars throughout the U.S. He has spoken at the annual ABA conventions, is author of numerous legal articles and has been considered by his fellow judges as a leading legal scholar. After serving 24 years as a state trial judge, he is presently a U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Justice Weisberger is fondly referred to as a judge's judge. The judges have wondered how he could give so much of himself to the Conference, not only serving on the faculty at the Judicial College for years but traveling all over the country lecturing at seminars and judges' schools, and yet keep his own docket up to-date. His lectures at JAD annual meetings on "Recent Developments in Criminal Law" became a legend. Justice Weisberger is personally known by more judges (even in England and other foreign countries) than almost any judge in the U.S. After a long and distinguished career as a trial judge, he now sits on the Supreme Court of Rhode Island.

Judge Fretz is a long time member of the Conference and has been a valued member of the faculty of the Judges' College since 1967. He graduated with the first class of the College at Boulder in 1964. He has been a speaker and section leader at judicial conferences throughout the United States, having appeared in over twenty states, including Hawaii and Alaska. Judge Fretz also chaired the ABA Task Force on Courts and the Public. He is presently a Judge in the Superior Court in California, having been on the bench since 1962.

Judge Etheridge has served on many Conference, JAD and ABA Committees. He is a long time member of the faculty of the National Judicial College. He serves as a member of the ABA Law School Accreditation Committee and is not only respected as a judge but as a legal scholar. After becoming a Senior Judge in the Atlanta Judicial Circuit in 1977, he joined the faculty of the University of South Carolina, later was a visiting scholar at the Harvard Law School, and is presently a Professor of Law at Emory University Law School. He is to become Associate Dean of the Law School this month.

Judge Noe has served on many committees of the Conference, JAD and ABA. He is presently a member of the Judicial Evaluation Task Force on Criteria and was a member of the Task Force on Jury Standards. He has been active in the Conference, both before and after his service as chairman, and presently holds the important post of Conference delegate to the ABA House of Delegates. He has been editor of the Trial Judges News from its start in 1981. He presently sits on the Superior Court for the State of Washington.

Judge ‘Red’ James, story teller extraordinary, charming and friendly leader, did much to further the aims of the Conference. He was also a faculty adviser at the National Judicial College. He started many activities in the Conference. He was instrumental in having the Conference file an amicus curiae brief in Pulliam v. Allen in the U.S. Supreme Court. A close personal friend of President Lyndon Johnson, he turned down many offers of federal appointments so that he could remain in...
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We honor our former chairmen who through their leadership, time and talent, and while serving full time on their respective courts, shaped and honed a Conference which, for 25 years, has spoken on the national scene for judges, has been responsive to the needs of judges from a national perspective, and has most significantly improved the quality of justice. Each contributed in his own way; collectively they created the oldest organization of judges in continuous existence in the nation.

We owe them a great debt of gratitude and on behalf of this country’s state trial judges we express our deep appreciation for their dedicated service.

Robert C. Broomfield
Chairman, 1983–84

1983–84 is the Silver Anniversary of the National Conference of State Trial Judges, an organization of, by and for state trial judges of this nation. Through the leadership efforts of Associate Justice Tom C. Clark, it was founded in 1958–59 by a small group of judges who wanted to improve the judiciary, the judicial process and the quality of justice in the general jurisdiction state courts. Its many programs and projects over the years have achieved those goals, but none so dramatically as its role in the creation in 1963 of the National College of State Trial Judges, now called the National Judicial College.

the position so dear to his heart, that of state trial judge. Judge James will be retiring this year at the end of his present term as a Texas State District Judge.