

# OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY LAW REVIEW

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## TRIBUTE

### JUDGE GARY PURCELL

#### *The Honorable William C. (Bill) Hetherington, Jr.*

It is certainly an honor to be asked to provide some thoughts, some history, and maybe a few stories about the right honorable Judge Gary Purcell. To say it was an extremely memorable period in my Judicial career is certainly an understatement as Judge Purcell and I together with our wives Chris and Susie, and our forever appreciated and loved staff, had a blast (most of the time). In my view we served the state of Oklahoma and Judicial District 21 admirably.

I was asked to serve with Judge Purcell as a Special District Judge by Judge Preston Trimble in 1980. Judge Purcell had been there a year or so. We served together for six years and to this day, our Court system still utilizes some of the forms and contributions that have impacted our Judicial system to this day. Judge Purcell drafted the first “Victim’s Protective Order” process and helped with the legislation to get the original version passed which went into effect statewide. That law has undergone many revisions and continues to offer significant legal protections where appropriate and factually justified under that law. We were one of the first District Courts that began to shape and form “alternative courts” in an attempt to deal with those suffering from mental health conditions and addictions. With the forever appreciated cooperation by our District Attorneys, Judge Purcell was able to put in place

diversionary courts that gave these offenders the opportunity to stay out of prison if they took advantage of the many available resources and would deal with their mental health condition and addictions as required by the diversionary Court rules.

Judge Purcell was very proud to be a Special Judge to whom attorneys would waive jurisdictional restrictions and allow him to try every kind and manner of jury cases without hesitation. Judge Purcell was frequently called upon to try jury trials in other judicial districts to “catch up” on backed up jury cases. I remember well, not too long after Judge Purcell was appointed Federal Magistrate, he called me complaining about being limited to cases involving whizzing on the sidewalk charges at Tinker Air Force Base! However, he said he would always drive by the Bank here in Norman and check his account balance, which made him feel a whole lot better!

Judge Purcell was constantly in motion and quite the jokester. Just ask Barbara and Pat! Over the years since, we both (and I blame it mostly on Gary) admit the jokes we played back then might be “actionable offenses” now. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Barbara and Pat! I have said this many times before, but it is so true that Judge Purcell was a true professional when he needed to be and the most positive and colorful friend anyone could ask for. He absolutely set the standard here in Cleveland County and as a Federal Magistrate for what it meant to be part of our Judicial branch of government, how to act, how to be a leader, a consensus builder when needed and professionally strong when the circumstances of a given case so demanded.

I again, cannot express how Judge Purcell is missed and our hearts and prayers continue to go out to Chris and Gary’s family. His life was certainly a life well lived and I will never forget.