

BENCHMARK

AJA

A Publication of the American Judges Association ■ Vol. 23, No. 3 ■ Fall 2000

AJA Jazzes It Up in Kansas City

The 40th annual conference of the American Judges Association held in Kansas City, September 10-15, was a rousing success by any standard. President Terry Elliott, the Executive Committee, the Education Committee, and our host, Judge Michael McAdam, secured excellent speakers and enlisted the help of many people to ensure the success of the conference.



Judge Gerald T. Elliott, William S. Sessions, Chief Justice William Ray Price, Jr. (Missouri), Chief Justice Gerald W. VandeWalle (North Dakota), Chief Justice Thomas A. Zlaket (Arizona), and Judge Michael McAdam

Educational Program

The conference offered a smorgasbord of opportunities for fellowship, learning, and recreation. The judges and spouses attending, from each of their unique perspectives, had ample opportunity to be inspired. Those opportunities included the lectures delivered by such luminaries in our profession as Gerald W. VandeWalle, chief justice of North Dakota; William S. Sessions, former FBI director and former chief judge of the Western District of Texas; William Ray Price, Jr., chief justice of Missouri; and Roger K. Warren, president of the National Center for State Courts. The educational sessions on the topics of judicial outreach, judicial ethics, diversity and racial equality, community-focused courts, and domestic violence offered something for the palate of the most discriminating judge. If those topics did not, then Professor Charles H. Whitebread's annual review of recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court certainly did.

Social Program

Perhaps just as inspiring were the delights of Kansas City itself and some of the extracurricular

continued on page 3

Meet AJAs New President

Judge Chris Williams, of the municipal court in Hot Spring County, Arkansas, was sworn in as the new president of the American Judges Association on September 14 at the 2000 annual meeting in Kansas City, and he has an ambitious agenda for the association.

"My goal and mission is to protect the independence of the judiciary," he said in his inaugural address at the conference. This mission includes building public trust and confidence in the courts, improving operations by applying the Trial Court Performance Standards, and eliminating ethnic and gender bias in the justice system.

AJA should strive to determine the "best practices" for accomplishing these ends and to put them in workable form.

The result will be "a proper guide for the judge to follow in everyday practice," he said. "These ideas will help us become better judges.

"It is time we give to our membership something they can take home and use," said Judge Williams.

Education for both the public and judges is also high on Judge Williams's agenda for AJA. We should "work toward improving the school text-

continued on page 3



New AJA president Chris Williams and his wife, Martha