Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States I Have Known

by
Harriet Ford Griswold

Editor's Note: During her lifetime, Mrs. Harriet Ford Griswold has been a frequent visitor to the Supreme Court. Many of her visits were occasions to hear her husband, Erwin N. Griswold, argue before the Supreme Court. He has been arguing cases before the Court for a fifty-five year period, and in March of 1987, Mrs. Griswold heard him argue his 127th. Mrs. Griswold has been present in Court to hear 113 of these cases.


Mrs. Griswold received an A.B. degree from Stanford University and a Masters from Columbia University Library School. She worked as a librarian in the Los Angeles City School Library. Mrs. Griswold has written a number of book reviews for publication in magazines and newspapers, including professional periodicals such as The Publishers Weekly.

In August of 1939, Mrs. Griswold contracted polio and she has been unable to walk without the aid of braces and crutches since that time. Mrs. Griswold notes that her first set of braces were made by Sam, the craftsman at the Boston Children's Hospital brace shop, who made President Roosevelt's braces.

She has worked hard to publicize the needs of the aged and disabled, as a world traveler, often to places where her work on behalf of the handicapped was well known. She has visited hospitals and rehabilitation centers, lectured and brought countless hours of pleasure and encouragement to people throughout the world. In particular, she has been an ardent advocate of the need to provide access to public buildings for the handicapped. She includes The National Gallery of Art and the British Museum as two of her successful conversions, though her successes, if such can be measured statistically, number in the hundreds.

The following reminiscences are Mrs. Griswold’s personal account of her experiences with many of the Justices of the Supreme Court who served during the 1930's. They afford glimpses into the social life of the era as well as the personalities of the individuals involved. While Mrs. Griswold has known 31 Justices well, she has restricted this account to those she knew in her first years in Washington.

After Erwin Griswold and I were married in California, we arrived by train in Washington, D.C. on January 11, 1932. Erwin would continue to be a lawyer in the office of Solicitor General Charles Evans Hughes, Jr. in the Department of Justice. I did not go to the Supreme Court January 12, 1932 for that afternoon a party was being given in our honor. I was absolutely crushed to learn that had been Justice Holmes' last day on the Supreme Court.

Two months later Holmes' Law Clerk, Harvard Law School — continued on page two

Annual Meeting Date Set

The date for the Society's thirteenth Annual Meeting has been set for Friday, May 6, 1988. As in past years, the afternoon's activities will include the annual lecture, a tour of the Supreme Court building, and an open house at the Society's headquarters. The evening's activities will include the annual meeting of the membership, followed by a black tie reception and dinner at the Supreme Court. The Annual Lecture this year will be given by Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in the Restored Court Room in the U.S. Capitol building. Further details will follow in the next issue of the Quarterly and each member will receive a separate invitation and reservation card for reservations to the reception and dinner.
Justices (continued from page one)

graduate H. Chapman Rose, had Erwin and me invited to have tea with Justice Holmes. We went to his Ely Street residence which they said was the only house in Washington, D.C. that smelled like Beacon Hill, Boston, with its horsehair furniture and butcher's wax. I noticed a vase of violets. Violets had been the favorite flower of Justice Holmes' wife Fanny. This gallant, 91 year-old gentleman showed his age as he labored to get up from his armchair. I sat down very fast. The midafternoon tea and tray had me peace. When the Justice heard that I came from California, with a twinkle in his eye, and no sign of age, he said: "The last stand of the frontier was when I saw a top hat at the Cliff House in San Francisco."

Mark De Wolfe Howe told us that Justice Holmes had been in San Francisco in 1899 after he became Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts where he had served with distinction for twenty years. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt, "Liking this Massachusetts Justice's liberal credentials," nominated him to an Associate Justice. When he and his wife Fanny moved to Washington, D.C. in 1902, Holmes found Lafayette Square "so different from what it had been forty years ago," when he and his Harvard Regiment of the Twentieth Massachusetts Infantry, tired soldiers fighting to save the Union, "had trampled the park grass into mint." It had been at the height of the Civil War that Julia Ward Howe accompanied her husband to Washington where he was to survey the health conditions of the Union troops. Seeing these brawny Union soldiers walking through the mud had influenced Julia Ward Howe to write "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." "Let us die to make men free." Holmes reminiscing said "he had had the sword, now over the mantle, with him on August 30, 1961 at the Battle of Manassas where he heard the guns roar; where Daniel Webster's son was killed ..." Justice Holmes went on to say, "when you drive to see the Manassas Battlefield (called Bull Run by Northerners) the sign will tell you that Confederate soldiers won the Battle, but we won the Goddamn war."

Holmes was proud to follow in the footsteps of his maternal grandfather, Judge Charles Jackson, who had preceded him on the Supreme Judicial Court. And Holmes was gratified that his grandfather Jackson had willed to him that stand-up desk in the corner of his study. Here Holmes stood to write his opinions and disserts in longhand, and vigorously upheld the Constitution of the United States. Some of his Supreme Court Brethren thought his opinions too short. He commented, "There is nothing so conducive to brevity like a caving in of the knees."

Harvard's President Charles W. Eliot having worked with Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. as a Harvard Overseer, and having heard Holmes' twelve Lowell lectures about the "Common Law," in 1882 appointed Holmes to be a professor at Harvard Law School. The Lowell lectures had given Holmes, Jr. great recognition. Six feet three inches tall, the Junior Holmes had risen above being overshadowed by his five foot five celebrity father, Dr. Holmes, professor, "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table;" poet laureate of Boston for half a century and the discoverer of the contagiousness of puerperal fever. His immersion in public activities was mirrored by his wife, Alice, working for the reform of juvenile courts, and assisting the families of destitute indi viduals and professional associa tions. As colleagues, the two debated social questions. They taught with the case method. Holmes' tenure was just three months, because he was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Judicial Court. Benefactor Samuel Warren lured Brandeis from teaching to be his law partner, and introduced Brandeis to the Boston Brahmin — to Emerson, William James, Longfellow and other leading figures of Boston. As a law partner, Brandeis "waged battle against big business, against Boston and Maine railroad rates, sought a solution for a labor conflict between musicians of the Boston Symphony and Henry Lee Higginson, repre sented Fenem's employees..." He became famous as a "People's Lawyer." His immersion in public activities was mirrored by his wife, Alice, working for the reform of juvenile courts, and assisting the families of Sacco and Vannetti, Alice Brandeis and Harvard Law School's Professor Samuel Williston's wife were members of the Saturday Morning Club.

Brandeis actively campaigned for Woodrow Wilson, who as President nominated Brandeis to be an Associate Justice. Ervin and I were invited to have dinner with Justice and Mrs. Brandeis at their unostentatious apartment at 2205 California Street. Brandeis liked being with bright Harvard Law School graduates, particularly ones who had been on the Harvard Law Review which he helped create in 1887. As an office

Justice Holmes was wounded three times during the Civil War — at Bull's Bluff, Antietam and Fredericksburg. The sword that accompanied him, had a place of honor over the fireplace in his study.

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Roger Taney and the Carpet Bag Burglary

The following notarized statement was taken by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney from Fayette McMullen of Virginia on January 18, 1854. It is not entirely clear why Congressmen McMillen and McMullen chose the Chief Justice to notarize his statement or precisely what use was made of the statement, but it is likely that Taney took the statement as part of his Circuit duties for the Fourth Circuit. The assignment of Circuit duties then, as now, was made by Order of the Court and was not always related to a specific seat on the Bench.

Samuel Chase was assigned to the Fourth Circuit during his service on the Bench, and Gabriel Dovall succeeded him. With Dovall's resignation in January of 1839, and Chief Justice Marshall's death in July of that year, the Court's regular assignments were disrupted. Volume 34 of the Federal Reports (Peters 9) lists the Fourth Circuit as unassigned due to a vacancy on the Court. When the new assignment was made, it went to the new Chief Justice, Roger Brooke Taney, rather than to the new Associate Justice.

The composition of the Fourth Circuit has varied over the years, but it has traditionally contained states in close geographical proximity to Washington, D.C. The Judiciary Act of 1789 created three circuits; the eastern, middle, and southern. The first time the circuits were referred to by numbers was in the Judiciary Act of 1801, wherein six circuits were established. Under that act, the Fourth Circuit contained the states of Maryland and Delaware, and the Fifth Circuit contained Virginia and North Carolina. As new states were added to the Union, the composition of the circuits was altered and the number of circuits increased. By 1854, the Fourth Circuit had been expanded to include the states of Virginia and North Carolina, and in 1864, the newly created state of West Virginia was also added to the Fourth Circuit.

The complaint in this statement was Fayette McMullen, who was serving as a member of the U.S. Congress from the State of Virginia at the time of the robbery and at the time of the deposition. He was born in 1855 in Virginia and attended private schools. During his career, McMullen served as State driver and teamster for Virginia, and as a member of the Virginia State Senate (1839-1849). He was elected as a Democrat to the 11th Congress and was re-elected to the three succeeding Congresses (March 4, 1849-1857). McMullen was later elected as a representative from Virginia to the Second Confederate Congress, where he served until the end of the Confederacy. After the Civil War, he engaged in agricultural pursuits and banking. In light of the facts given in this statement, it is perhaps ironic to note his banking career and also that McMullen was killed by a train in Wytheville, Virginia on November 8, 1880.

This document was made available to the Society by E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., who found it among the personal effects of his father, Judge E. Barrett Prettyman, who served on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia from 1949-1970, and as Chief Judge of that Court from 1958-1960. Judge Prettyman's special judicial assignments included service as Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the United States, 1961-1962, Chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Narcotic and Drug Abuse, 1963, and Chairman, Board of Inquiry into the U-2 Incident of Francis Gary Powers.

City of Washington District of Columbia Court:

Fayette McMullen of Virginia a member of the House of Representatives of the United States from the extreme Southwestern District of Said State of Virginia this day personally appeared before me Roger B. Taney Chief Justice of this Supreme Court of the U. States and made oath in due form of law that on the 7th day of August in the year of 1854 he was travelling from the City of Washington aforesaid to the City of Richmond in the State of Virginia with a carpet bag containing among other things money to the amount of Seventeen hundred dollars and ten dollars to the best of his recollection, namely about four hundred dollars in gold coin of the Coinage of the United States, one fifty dollar note of one of the banks of the City of Washington, and the residue in notes of different banks of the State of Virginia duly authorized and chartered by law, and among these were sundry notes the amount not recollected on the "bank of the valley" of Virginia, and a considerable amount, from three to five hundred dollars, in notes of the Bank of Kanawha, which he well remembers because this bank had but recently gone into operation under a charter duly granted by act of assembly of Virginia, and he had not before seen its notes in circulation.

The way to the City of Richmond he was casually left by the Rail Road Car at a point on the Road sixteen miles from the City of Richmond called the Slash Cottage, and being so left, and anxious to proceed to the City of Richmond he was travelling on the Said Rail Road with his carpet bag to said City of Richmond in a hand car. Having reached within about a mile and a half of Richmond the noise of a rail road train in motion was heard, and the hand car was stopped to ascertain if this was true, two men came up to the hand car from a side road leading up to the Rail Road, both these were unknown to the affiant at the time but one appeared to be a Virginian and the other a German or Dutchman. The train proved to be another, and then the hand car with the affiant and his said carpet bag moved on towards Richmond and suddenly at a curve in the road after having advanced a very short distance after their last named stopping they discovered in motion towards them on the same track the Rail Road train coming North from Richmond. Having little time to make good their escape, the affiant sprang off on one side of the road leaving his carpet bag on the hand car and the hand car was run back by the train some distance; the affiant as soon as the difficulty was over went back to where the hand car was and on examining could not find his carpet bag. The two persons before mentioned were then standing not far off from the Rail Road. Affiant then mentioned that his carpet bag was gone, and on looking it was found a little way off in a culvert rather under the road. It was open and on examination the money was gone out of it. One of the persons aforesaid first picked it up, in the search. The money was not found and never has been. It was in a buckskin belt which was rolled up and wrapped in a printed circular. And this printed circular as the affiant informed and verified was found the same day, not by the affiant, but by another person, very near the Rail Road and a considerable distance from where the bag was found open as aforesaid. The affiant from all the facts and circumstances at the time has just cause to suspect and verify does believe and did on that day declare his belief that the two persons aforesaid or one of them with the presence and cooperation of the other, had opened the said bag and taken out the money and then thrown the bag where it was afterward picked up open in the presence or sight of affiant as [two words missing].

He further says that from information had at or about the time from others who appear to know, the name of the said Dutchman or German was Charles L. Bachman & from conversation on the following Thursday with John Wirth of the City of Richmond the affiant was satisfied and now verily does believe that the person whom said Wirth saw with money on the 7th day of August 1854 at his said Wirth's house was the identical person who was present as aforesaid when said money was taken from the carpet bag and a portion of the identical money was given up by the other of the said two persons and recovered by the affiant. And so the affiant saith to the best of his knowledge and belief the said Charles L. Bachman mentioned in the affidavit of said Wirth did on the said 7th day of August 1854 in the State of Virginia feloniously take and steal and carry away a large sum of money belonging to the affiant as above stated. And the affiant says that living several miles distant from the place said offense was committed he has not since been able to attend before any grand jury court having jurisdiction over the place said offense was committed.

Jury 18, 1854, Sworn before me. R. B. Taney.

Fayette McMullen's life seemed linked to transportation—in his early career he served as State driver and teamster; as a member of Congress he was robbed while travelling by train; and in 1880 he was killed by a train.
President Coolidge insisted that Justice Stone be chairman of the Ambrose trustees, to administer this gift and the Folger Collection. The stones would describe their summer travels to Europe, and enjoyment of the simple life at their cottage on Isle au Haut, off the coast of Maine. During the summer, Agnes Stone had time to pursue her hobby of painting. When her paintings were exhibited, Justice Stone was proud to take friends to see them. Fanny Holmes, a skittled needlewoman, had had her needlepoint landscapes exhibited.

President Coolidge had brought Dean Stone to Washington to be Attorney General. He had to fire Harding's Attorney General, Harry M. Daugherty, who was implicated in a scandal. In the Coolidge Cabinet, Stone got to know Charles Evans Hughes and Herbert Hoover.

The stones and Griswolds spoke with much approval of the Herbert Heffers. Quaker Herbert Hoover was outgoing with friends in his home, but seemed uncomfortable with the press and the "Dear Public." During and after World War I, he was Famine Relief Administrator, and got food to starving Europeans. From World War I days I can remember my parents admonishing me to eat all the food on my plate. "Remember the suffering Belgians."

President Hoover selected Stone (one of his best friends) to be included in his White House pre-breakfast Medicine Ball Cabinet. I knew Mrs. Hoover well as I had been a Stanford University student at the time the Hoovers were residing at their home on the campus. It was our good fortune to go often to the White House. At a Christmas party given for their son Allan, we danced in the East Room, and were entertained by piano logs done by Stanford graduate Allen Campbell, son of Arizona's governor. While in the White House, Mrs. Hoover continued her active role in Girl Scout volunteering; she had me to lunch at the little Girl Scout House. She told us of her finding in White House storage the four chairs which had been used in 1881 when President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

President Hoover in 1950 nominated Charles Evans Hughes to be Chief Justice of the United States. As Chief Justice, the distinguished lawyer would extinguish his son, Charles Evans Hughes, Jr. could no longer be Solicitor General because he could not argue cases before his father.

I felt it a privilege to be a law student at the Supreme Court. I found Chief Justice Hughes presiding over the Court with mastery. Fellow Justices described him as "the greatest in a great line of Chief Justices, famed for his sincerity, fairness and good humor, using his great intellect for the common weal."

I was told of Chief Justice Hughes carrying out one of his life's hardest assignments. The day I arrived in Washington, D.C. as a bride, he went to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' Eye Street residence, and asked the 91 year old Justice to resign. Holmes' residence, and asked the 91 year old Justice to resign. Holmes' life was spent trying to redeem the name.

Hughes had been most thoughtful, and came to see him every day. He wondered if he would make it to the rostrum. After Franklin Roosevelt won the election, Hughes had been most thoughtful, and came to see him every day. He wondered if he would make it to the rostrum. After Franklin Roosevelt won the election, Hughes had vowed to resign that he had tears streaming down his cheeks. Justice McReynolds had a reputation for being disputatious. After 1933 he refused to attend White House receptions, and on one occasion, refused to stand when the President entered the room.

But McReynolds was asked to take his seat. As Chief Justice, Charles Evans Hughes had a reputation for being disputatious. After 1933 he refused to attend White House receptions, and on one occasion, refused to stand when the President entered the room. He became friends of Justice Butler's daughter, Anne. When one went to the Butler's home, you found the whole family most cordial of Anne's sister who had had sleeping sickness. Justice Roberts' daughter, also named Elizabeth, invited us to Sunday dinner. Justice Roberts stood up to carve the roast beef; commenting that this was easier on the shoulder he had injured in a fall from a horse. He said that as usual Chief Justice Hughes had been most thoughtful, and came to see him every day.

On March 4, 1933, I was at the Capitol to see Franklin Delano Roosevelt inaugurated as President of the United States. A ramp had been built at the Capitol to accommodate the needs of Franklin Roosevelt who had had polio. Outgoing President Hoover walked briskly down the ramp. Franklin Roosevelt, hanging on to his son James with one hand, and to a stair rail with the other, shuffled along at such a slow pace that observers wondered if it would make it to the rostrum. After Franklin Delano Roosevelt was sworn in by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, his forceful words "Nothing to fear but fear itself" were heard by the multitude. Six years later President Roosevelt nominated Harvard Law School Professor Felix Frankfurter to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court in June, 1939.

Justice Van Devanter was born in Marion, Indiana. When he heard that I also was born in Marion, he had us to ten. He regaled us with talk of his riding circuit in Wyoming in 1888, saying that he was the first judge not to place two guns on the Court Room Bench in front of him before hearing a case.

Justice McReynolds, a cantankerous bachelor, had us to one of his famous breakfasts. He was a pleasant host, a contrast to - continued on page eight
his expression of displeasure as he sat on the Supreme Court. He showed his intolerance by turning his back on Justice Brandeis and Justice Cardozo and any woman, such as Assistant Attorney General Mabel Walker Willebrandt, who argued cases before the Court. Mindful of this, Chief Justice and Mrs. Hughes had two separate judicial dinners, dividing the Justices to avoid embarrassment.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a fireside chat March 9, 1937 retaliated against the Court's hostility to New Deal legislation by outlining what was to be called the "Court-packing plan." In their book, Nine Old Men, Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen commented on the fact that Justice Brandeis was 80 years old and six other Justices were over 70. The Senate Judiciary Committee had hearings about this court packing legislation with Senator Willard Tydings and Burton Wheeler leading the opposition. All over the country many lawyers spoke out against it. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee, "The Supreme Court is fully abreast of its work. There is no congestion of cases on our calendar."

Before we moved to Massachusetts in 1934 as Erwin Griswold became a Harvard Law School Professor, we had been entertained by, or had entertained, eight of the "Nine Old Men" on the Court. We felt very honored to have known these outstanding Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States.

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