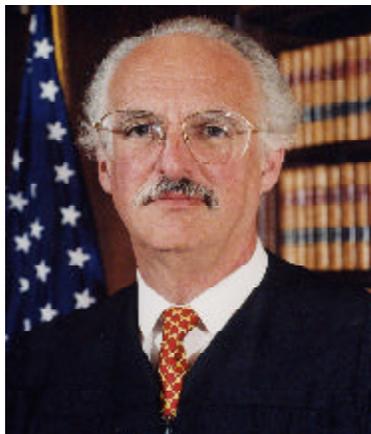


## A Message from the Chief



It is hard to believe another year has passed and the business of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit is still moving forward so efficiently and effectively. Once again, the court’s managers and staff must be commended for their hard work and dedication. In addition, the court’s committees have been particularly busy this year. For example, the Pro Bono Committee

has worked extremely hard to encourage law firms to expand their pro bono programs – with much success – and for that we are most grateful to the committee and to the firms. (See article on Pro Bono Committee’s advancements.) The courts’ volunteer mediators and oral history interviewers must also be recognized for their hard work and commitment to the courts. The circuit is indebted to all of these individuals.

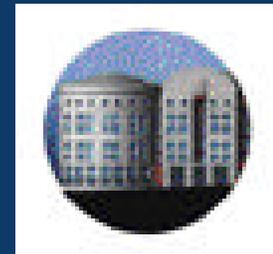
It is with great pleasure that the court welcomes Judge John G. Roberts, Jr., to our ranks. Judge Roberts was confirmed on May 8, 2003 to fill the seat vacated by Judge Buckley in August 1996. He was sworn in by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist on June 2, 2003. Following Judge Roberts’ swearing-in, the judges of the Court of Appeals held a lunch in his honor at the court. At the time of his long-awaited confirmation, Judge Roberts was the senior partner in charge of Hogan & Hartson’s appellate practice. Judge Roberts is a most welcome addition to the court.

continued p. 2

### Inside this Edition

Employee Appreciation Day .....	2
Judge Roberts Joins Bench .....	3
Judge Silberman's Portrait Unveiled .....	3
Tutoring Program .....	4
Attorney Admissions Ceremony .....	4
Historical Society .....	5
Supreme Court Update.....	5
Pro Bono Recognition Breakfast .....	6
Committee News .....	7
Three Little Pigs In Court .....	8
Ticker Tape .....	10

## ANNEX



## UPDATE

April 2003 marked the one-year anniversary of the annex groundbreaking. For many months following demolition of the Third Street parking lot and entrance, the only visible progress was an ever-widening and ever-deepening hole in the ground. Much of the excavation work was performed at night, making progress seem even less perceptible. During the winter, construction fell slightly behind schedule, due in part to the weather (in February alone, work was canceled on half of the days scheduled) and in part to delays in the issuance of necessary permits. But suddenly things are rolling at an impressive pace, and for those who periodically take a peek at the construction site, changes during the course of just one day can be amazing.

continued p. 9

## From the Chief. . .

Not only has the composition of the court changed over the last year, but the physical structure also has changed remarkably since my last message to the bar. After what seemed like an interminable period of site excavation, we are now starting to see the structure of the new annex emerging from the ground. It is with great anticipation that we watch the annex unfold before our eyes each day. We look forward to its completion next year.

In May the judges of the circuit gathered for two days to study and discuss selected writings of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. This conference, which was developed in cooperation with the Law and Economics Center of the George Mason University School of Law, offered the judges an opportunity to consider and discuss the ways in which the often conflicting thoughts of the Founders have shaped present constitutional structures and debates.

Two nationally recognized scholars and authors, Gordon S. Wood and Joseph J. Ellis, planned course content and led the discussions. Professor Wood, the Alva O. Way University Professor of History at Brown University, is one of the country's leading historians of

colonial America and the author of several award-winning books, including *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, for which he received the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for History. Joseph Ellis, Professor of History at Mount Holyoke College, is also a Pulitzer Prize winner (2001) for his seventh book, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. The discussion was enlightening and provocative, and captivated the attention of the judges. The professors offered great insight into the lives of four very distinct and fascinating characters and left us all with much to consider.

Plans are now proceeding for the 2004 Judicial Conference, which will be held at The Homestead in Hot Springs, Virginia for the first time since 1987. The Conference Arrangements Committee members include Circuit Judge Randolph, District Judges Robertson, Walton, and Collyer, myself, and several members of the bar of our court. The Committee is working on putting together a stimulating and educational program, as well as some special events.

*Douglas H. Ginsburg*  
Chief Judge

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## Employee Appreciation Day 2003



**The judges and staff of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, May 13, 2003**

On May 13, 2003 judges and staff of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit gathered for the court's annual Employee Appreciation Day event. Chief Judge Ginsburg opened the ceremony noting that the court had "come together to celebrate many jobs well done and the many accomplishments that occurred over the 2002-2003 term. It has been an extraordinary year and one you should all be very proud of." On behalf of the circuit judges, he expressed the judge's gratitude to the Court of Appeals family for their efforts during the year.

A number of staff members were recognized for their service with formal awards. Sara Delgado, Circuit Architect and Assistant Circuit Executive for Space and Facilities, was recognized with the court's Outstanding Employee of the Year Award for her extraordinary efforts in handling the difficult and demanding workload associated with coordinating construction of the annex, while at the same time overseeing maintenance and improvements in the existing courthouse.

## John G. Roberts, Jr. Joins Circuit Bench



John G. Roberts, Jr. was confirmed by the Senate to a judgeship on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on May 8, 2003. Judge Roberts graduated from Harvard College in 1976, and received his law degree in 1979 from Harvard Law School. Following graduation from law school, he served as law clerk for Judge Henry J. Friendly of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the following year to then-Associate Justice William H. Rehnquist of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Judge Roberts served as Special Assistant to United States Attorney General William French Smith from 1981 to 1982 and Associate Counsel to President Ronald Reagan from 1982 to 1986. He then joined Hogan & Hartson where he developed a civil litigation practice, with an emphasis on appellate matters. From 1989 to 1993 he served as Principal Deputy Solicitor General of the United States. He returned to Hogan & Hartson in 1993. At the time of his confirmation, Judge Roberts was the senior partner in charge of Hogan & Hartson's appellate practice. He is a member of the American Law Institute and the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers.

Judge Roberts was sworn in on June 2 by Chief Justice Rehnquist. His formal investiture is not yet scheduled.

## Judge Silberman's Portrait Unveiled

The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, friends, colleagues, and former law clerks of Judge Laurence H. Silberman gathered in the Ceremonial Courtroom on November 8, 2002 to celebrate the unveiling of a portrait commemorating his years of service on the circuit. Among the guests were Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Ruth Bader

Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Solicitor General Theodore Olson, and Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson. Judge Silberman's wife, the Honorable Ricky Silberman, and his children and grandchildren also were present. Chief Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg presided over the ceremony.

Among several long-time friends who offered remarks were former D.C. Circuit Judges and now Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, and former D.C. Circuit Chief Judge Patricia Wald. Two of Judge Silberman's former law clerks, Eugenie N. Barton and Stuart Levey, spoke with affection of their experiences while serving with the judge and in the years since then. John H. Manning, who met Judge Silberman in 1985 while clerking for Judge Robert Bork, also offered a tribute to Judge Silberman.

Judge Silberman's law clerks, numbering nearly 50, commissioned the portrait. It was painted by Peter Egeli. The painting, which was unveiled by the Honorable Ricky Silberman, now hangs in the Court of Appeals courtroom.

Judge Silberman was appointed United States Circuit Judge in October 1985 and took senior status on November 1, 2000.



**Honorable Ricky Silberman and artist Peter Egeli unveil the portrait.**

# The Tutoring Program

Westbrook Littlejohn threw both arms in the air over his head. "I'm famous! I'm famous!" he whispered. Under almost any other circumstance Westbrook would have been shouting in excitement. But he was walking down the hall of J.O. Wilson Elementary school, and, like all students there, he knows when to use his "inside voice."

Westbrook, age 9, is one of the J.O. Wilson students who participates in the school's tutoring program with the circuit. Under this program, court staff and judges volunteer to tutor students on a regular basis throughout the school year. Jimmy Azadian, law clerk to District Judge Urbina, has been one of Westbrook's tutors during this school year. Jimmy helps Westbrook with reading, science, math, and writing. A recent exercise on writing skills led to an exciting exchange of correspondence. Westbrook decided to write a letter to President George W. Bush. He and Jimmy worked together over two tutoring sessions, first thoughtfully outlining the points Westbrook wanted to include, next checking the spelling of new words, and finally composing and carefully printing the letter.

With help from Jimmy's wife (Charity Azadian, an executive policy administrator for the Department of Homeland Security) the letter found its way into the right



Westbrook Littlejohn and Jimmy Azadian

hands, and soon Westbrook had a reply from the President. With the letter came White House trading cards and photographs of Barney and Spotty (the First Pets) for Westbrook. Everyone in Westbrook's class received a coloring book and a model of Air Force One. Westbrook read the President's letter aloud to his astonished class. His teacher, Ms. Smith, told the class how proud she was that one of her students had the courage to write a letter to the President.

The courts' tutoring program offers a special one-on-one experience which has great rewards for both the students and court staff. Tracy Hauser Scarrow, Special Assistant to Chief Judge Ginsburg, and Melissa McKinney Ryan, Assistant Director of the Legal Division, coordinate the program. This year 29 members of the courthouse family volunteered to tutor first and second graders.

Reflecting on his experience, Jimmy Azadian commented: "Westbrook's letter to the President

## Attorney Admissions Ceremony Reinstated

Last year the Court of Appeals reinstated the practice of holding admissions ceremonies for attorneys admitted to the bar of the D.C. Circuit. This ceremony had at one time been a part of court routine but was discontinued about 15 years ago. Circuit Rule 46 provides for the admission to the bar of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit of any attorney of good moral and professional character, who is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court of a state, another United States court of appeals, or a United States district court. Most circuits handle the admissions process without any sort of formal ceremony.

continued p. 10

is a perfect example of the importance of the circuit's tutoring program. Of course, the tutoring program helps the students improve their math and spelling, but, more importantly, it builds their self-confidence and sense of accomplishment. It was just as rewarding for me to see Westbrook's confidence grow as we worked on this project together. He is truly a remarkable young man."

# Historical Society of the D.C. Circuit Becomes a Membership Organization

The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit has become a membership organization and will offer its members a variety of programs of historical interest. The Society's Board of Directors, led by co-chairs Circuit Judge David S. Tatel and Senior District Judge Louis F. Oberdorfer, and Society President, E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., look forward to the expansion of activities and programs that a larger membership will promote. Reflecting on the change, Mr. Prettyman notes, "Even though we have just begun our membership campaign, we are heartened by the enthusiastic early response. We are confident that once practitioners, judges, and others become aware of our organization, they will want to become members. We are planning a variety of activities that will be of great interest to the Bar." Among the new opportunities in which members may participate will be public education programs, panel discussions, lectures, and periodic social events. Members will also work with historians, academics, attorneys, court staff, and others to gather, preserve, and share artifacts, documents, records, photographs, and memorabilia of the vital role played by the courts of the D.C. Circuit.

The Historical Society was created in 1990 and is responsible for a number of significant contributions to the courts of the circuit. As part of a celebration of the courts' 200th anniversary, it commissioned and published *Calmly to Poise the Scales of Justice: A History of the Courts of the District of Columbia Circuit*, a work written by Professor Jeffrey Brandon Morris. In March 2001 the Society sponsored a Bicentennial Symposium involving U.S. Supreme Court Justices, judges of the circuit, practitioners, and academics. See Symposium: The Bicentennial Celebration of the Courts of the District of Columbia Circuit, 90 Geo. L.J. 545 (2002). Area high school students joined in the Bicentennial celebration by participating in a moot court competition. With the assistance of volunteer lawyers, the students appeared in six courtrooms before District Court judges to argue cases previously heard by the District Court.

The Society is engaged in a major project involving taking the oral histories of the judges and lawyers who played significant roles in the circuit. Volunteer attorneys have already compiled 39 oral histories and are working on 40 more. As each oral history is completed and indexed, it is added to the collection available to the public at three repositories: the Library of Congress, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Library of the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse. Several of the Society's collection of oral histories are showcased in an exhibit (now on display in the main lobby of the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse), including voice excerpts from the oral histories of Judges Gerhard A. Gesell, Harold Greene, George E. MacKinnon, Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr., and Patricia M. Wald, as well as Dean Erwin Griswold and Attorney Edmund C. Campbell.

For more information or to request a membership application call (202)216-7346 or write the Historical Society Office at E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse, Room 4826, 333 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

## SUPREME COURT UPDATE

On January 15, 2003 the Supreme Court of the United States decided No. 01-618, Eldred v. Ashcroft. Affirming this court's decision in Eldred v. Reno, 239 F.3d 372 (D.C. Cir.), reh'g and reh'g en banc denied, 255 F.3d 849 (D.C. Cir. 2001), the Court rejected constitutional challenges to the 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act.

On January 27, 2003 the Court decided No. 01-653, FCC v. Nextwave Pers. Communications, Inc., and 01-657, Arctic Slope Reg'l Corp. v. FCC, affirming this court's decision in Nextwave Pers. Communications, Inc. v. FCC, 254 F.3d 130 (D.C. Cir. 2001). The Court held that the Bankruptcy Code prohibited the FCC from revoking cellular telephone licenses of a bankruptcy debtor after the debtor failed to make timely payments on the licenses.

Finally, the Court on May 27, 2003 vacated this court's judgment in Amfac Resorts, LLC v. United States Dep't of the Interior, 282 F.3d 818 (D.C. Cir. 2002) and remanded. The Court, in No. 02-196, National Park Hospitality Ass'n v. Department of the Interior, held that a controversy over a regulation governing concession contracts in National Parks was not ripe for judicial resolution.

## Pro Bono Recognition Breakfast

On April 4, 2003 the D.C. Circuit welcomed representatives of eight Washington, D.C. law firms to a Pro Bono Recognition Breakfast. The event was held to thank and honor the firms for significant pro bono legal service contributions to the courts. The firms had met the goal set by the circuit's Pro Bono Legal Services Committee for 2002 -- at least 40 percent of their lawyers each contributed at least 50 hours of pro bono work.

Chief Circuit Judge Ginsburg thanked Katherine Garrett, who chairs the Standing Committee on

that every lawyer admitted to practice in the federal courts of the District of Columbia should provide 50 hours of pro bono service each year. At the time, less than 20% of the legal needs of economically disadvantaged persons were being met. Judge Ginsburg explained that "the inability of economically disadvantaged persons to obtain counsel impedes access to federal courts and leads to increases in pro se filings, with attendant burdens on the court and on the administration of justice."

The circuit's Pro Bono Legal Services Committee has worked

Chief District Judge Thomas Hogan also expressed the courts' appreciation, telling the group, "You clearly have done something unique to foster your lawyers' pro bono service. I hope you will share with other law firms what it is you do that makes possible such an outstanding achievement. We know that the best and brightest lawyers have the capacity to do so much good in so many places where it is needed. Active pro bono programs like yours turn that potential into reality. The lawyers in our community have a strong tradition of providing pro bono



Photo by Sean Groom/ District of Columbia Bar

Pro Bono Legal Services, and Judge Gladys Kessler, the judicial liaison to the committee, for putting together the "40 at 50" breakfast. On behalf of the D.C. Circuit, he thanked D.C. Bar representatives George W. Jones, Jr., President, and Shirley Higuchi, President-Elect, recognizing their strong and long-standing commitment to pro bono work.

Judge Ginsburg briefly traced the history which led the D.C. Circuit Judicial Conference to pass a resolution in June 1998, recommending

since then to increase recognition of the target and encourage law firms to meet that goal. The eight firms recognized for outstanding efforts were:

Arnold & Porter  
Asbill, Moffitt & Boss  
Covington & Burling  
Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver  
& Jacobson  
Jenner & Block  
Latham & Watkins  
Piper Rudnick  
Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering

legal help to the needy. We see this today at all levels: at firms such as yours, where partners, counsel, and associates perform pro bono; and in the organized Bar, which created and runs a nationally recognized set of pro bono clinics that serve as a safety net for the indigent." Judge Hogan also noted that the circuit's alternative dispute resolution programs rely exclusively—and successfully—on volunteer lawyers to both mediate cases and to represent pro se parties in mediation.

# Committee News

## Advisory Committee on Procedures

The Advisory Committee on Procedures was established by the Judicial Council for the District of Columbia Circuit in June 1976. Among other things, the committee provides a forum for study of the internal operating procedures and rules of the court; serves as a conduit from the bar and the public to the court regarding procedural matters and suggestions for changes; drafts, considers, and recommends for the court's adoption, rules and internal operating procedures, and amendments thereto; and renders reports from time to time, on its own initiative and on request, to the court and to the Judicial Conference of the District of Columbia Circuit on the activities and recommendations of the committee.

The court and committee welcome newly appointed member Steven Rosenthal replacing Patty Merkamp Stemler, who completed her second term on June 30, 2003. Ms. Stemler made many important contributions to the work of the committee, and her efforts and dedication are greatly appreciated. Members appointed to second terms include Kenneth S. Geller, Mark Levy, and Virginia Seitz. A. J. Kramer serves in an ex officio position created for the Federal Public Defender.

The committee currently includes the following members:

	John R. Fisher, Chair	
Henk Brands	Peter Buscemi	Kenneth S. Geller
Edwin E. Huddleson III	David G. Leitch	Mark I. Levy
Jacob M. Lewis	Gerald P. Norton	Steven S. Rosenthal
Virginia A. Seitz	Clifford M. Sloan	Jennifer N. Waters
Joseph A. Yablonski		A.J. Kramer, Ex Officio

Honorable A. Raymond Randolph, Liaison Judge

## Advisory Committee on Admissions and Grievances

The Advisory Committee on Admissions and Grievances acts on applications for admission to the court's bar that are referred to it by the court, and on complaints of attorney misconduct or neglect. The court may refer to the committee any accusation or suggestion of misconduct or neglect by any member of the bar of the court with respect to a professional matter. The committee may conduct an investigation, hold a hearing, and report on the matter as the court deems advisable. In addition, the committee investigates and recommends action on problems that arise in connection with applications for admission to the court's bar.

The court and the committee congratulate Mary Patrice Brown who was reappointed to a second term commencing on June 16, 2003.

The current committee members are:

	Christopher M. Curran, Chair	
Mary Patrice Brown		Cornish F. Hitchcock
George W. Miller		Marsha Purcell Rogers
Steuart H. Thomsen		

Honorable Judith W. Rogers, Liaison Judge

# The Three Little Pigs in Court

On May 29, in the Ceremonial Courtroom, a specially constituted three-judge panel heard the case of the *District of Columbia v. Alonzo Lobo Wolf*. Alonzo “Big Bad” Wolf was charged with the crime of willful



**Circuit Judge Tatel (right), Senior District Judge Bryant, and District Judge Roberts (not pictured) preside over the mock trial.**

destruction of property-- namely, two houses owned by Wilbur and Henrietta Pig. Circuit Judge David S. Tatel and District Judges William B. Bryant and Richard W. Roberts set a serious stage for this educational program attended by more than 200 children from nine D.C. public schools. Judge Tatel welcomed the students, their teachers, and other guests and told the children that they would be expected to serve as the jury in the morning’s proceedings. To help them understand their role and its importance in our legal system, Judge Tatel carefully explained to the children that everyone is entitled to equal justice under the law. He asked them to take a moment to look around, calling their attention to the courtroom as a “special place ... this is where equal justice happens. Everyone is treated the same under

the law. It makes no difference if you are black or white, old or young, man or woman, rich or poor.” He cautioned the young members of the “jury” to base their decision only on what they were to hear, setting aside anything they might know or feel about wolves or anyone who might have “Bad” as a middle name.

The trial proceeded with several law clerks playing the key roles. From Judge Tatel’s chambers, Kelly Cochran, Bruce Gottlieb, and

David Weiner played the three pigs, and Leondra Kruger served as the prosecutor. Iris Bennett, a former clerk of Judge Tatel’s, was the defense attorney. Vassili Thomadakis of Judge Robertson’s chambers donned the costume of a fierce wolf, but the persona of a gentle, asthmatic soul whose welcoming visit to the pigs’ new homes was misconstrued for a huffing and puffing assault. The testimony presented led the jury to a nearly unanimous “Not Guilty” verdict.

Representatives of the U.S. Marshals Service also participated. Deputy Mike Pyo and Beacon (one

of the Marshals Service’s explosive detection dogs) demonstrated how such specially trained dogs can find explosives even when concealed in a tightly sealed container. Kirk Bowden described the Marshals Service’s responsibilities for courtroom security.

Judge Tatel hosted this trial for the second year. Last year the trial was presented to school children visiting from public schools in New York City. Those children also acquitted the wolf. This year’s event was arranged in cooperation with schools of the District of Columbia and a non-profit group called In2Books. In2Books is a literacy program working to empower elementary students to achieve their personal best by giving them meaningful books to read and an adult pen pal with whom to correspond about the books. Initially launched in Washington, D.C.,



**District Judge Richard Roberts and student jurors**

In2Books plans to expand to other public school districts across the country.

## ANNEX . . .

A significant milestone was met at the beginning of March, when the B-2, or lower basement level, concrete floor slab was poured. At that point vertical construction could begin, and soon thereafter the annex started to rise out of the ground. Today construction work on the fourth and fifth floors progresses and plans are in place for installation of the exterior facade beginning in September. Recent photos show the construction site viewed from the U.S. Department of Labor building (upper left) and three views of the progress from different vantage points. In the upper right photo, note the open space between the existing courthouse (on the left) and the annex. This space will become the 23,900 square foot atrium. Occupancy is scheduled for Fall 2004.



### The circuit voice

*If you have any questions or suggestions, email your messages to the editor at [CircuitVoice@cadc.uscourts.gov](mailto:CircuitVoice@cadc.uscourts.gov) or visit the news and information section of our Internet site at [www.cadc.uscourts.gov](http://www.cadc.uscourts.gov).*

## TICKER TAPE . . .

In the wake of **Judge David Sentelle's** successful, non-fiction book titled, "Judge Dave and the Rainbow People," the world discovered that he was also a veteran crime fiction author. He has been writing for more than 10 years under the pseudonym Clyde Haywood. In his spare time, Judge Sentelle is working on a full-length crime fiction novel, set in the early 1970s, titled "Whelp of the She-Bear."

**Chief Judge Thomas F. Hogan** of the U.S. District Court was honored by the Bar Association of the District of Columbia at its 131<sup>st</sup> Annual Banquet on December 6, 2002. Each year the Association recognizes outstanding leaders in the Washington legal community. William Lawler III, President of the Association, announced that Chief Judge Hogan was honored for his exemplary leadership of "the most important United States District Court in the country," which has "ensured that the justice provided in our federal court is second to none." The banquet was held at the Embassy of the Russian Federation. **Circuit Judge Harry T. Edwards** was last year's honoree.

Three new judges have joined the District Court bench. **District Judge John D. Bates** was sworn in on February 1, 2002. **District Judge Richard J. Leon** joined the bench on March 20, 2002. **District Judge Rosemary Collyer** took the oath of office on January 2, 2003.

On July 31, 2002 President George W. Bush appointed **George Walsh** as the United States Marshal for the District of Columbia.

In recent months a number of the court's staff attorneys have completed their terms of service in the Legal Division and have moved on to other endeavors. The court extends best wishes to **Bill Ihrke, Peter Nessen, Diane O'Brien-Holcomb,** and **Maura Tully**. In March 2003 **Maureen Yap** joined the Legal Division as the newest staff attorney.

**Chief Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg** and **Circuit Judge A. Raymond Randolph** will speak at the twelfth Appellate Advocacy seminar sponsored by the Court and the D.C. Bar Continuing Legal Education Program. The all-day seminar, scheduled for Friday, October 31 will also include presentations by representatives of the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

## Admissions Ceremony . . .

The judges decided to reinstitute a periodic ceremony, including a special annual ceremony for the court's law clerks, after considering a request from the U. S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. The first ceremony was held in May 2002 for the 2001-2002 law clerks and staff attorneys, with Chief Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg presiding. A second ceremony for private sector attorneys was held in September, with Judge Harry T. Edwards presiding. In January 2003 Judge Karen LeCraft Henderson presided at an admissions ceremony at which eleven U.S. Army Judge Advocate General officers participated. Five private sector attorneys also attended. Law clerks serving during the 2002-2003 court term were admitted in a special ceremony in May.

## ASK THE CIRCUIT VOICE Who was E. Barrett Prettyman?



Elijah Barrett Prettyman was born in Lexington, Virginia on August 23, 1891. Raised in the D.C. area, he graduated from Randolph-Macon College and thereafter received a law degree from Georgetown University. He had a distinguished career both in private practice and public service, including serving as the first General Counsel of the then-called Bureau of Internal Revenue and later as Corporation Counsel of the District of Columbia. He was appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 1945 by President Harry Truman and served as Chief Judge of the Circuit from 1958 until 1960. He continued to serve the court until his death in 1971.

The courthouse was named after Judge Prettyman in 1997. Prior to this event, the building was referred to simply as The United States Courthouse for the District of Columbia.