

A judge salutes another

By John M. Tyson
Fayetteville

Last Tuesday, the current and former judges of the N.C. Court of Appeals gathered to celebrate and honor Judge Patricia Timmons-Goodson's service on our court and to all citizens of North Carolina. This occasion was also marked by sadness as Judge Timmons-Goodson retires from our court at the end of the month.

Over 26 years ago, I first met Pat, when we were both young law students and about to graduate and sit for the Bar examination. One of the requirements of admission to the Bar was to appear and be examined by the Local Bar Candidate Committee in Cumberland County. In the late spring of 1979, we appeared at the law office of Heman Clark to be questioned by him and other members of the Local Bar. We were both anxious and concerned about a pending final examination to graduate. Pat, as always, was very personable and kind, and we both completed our interviews and were recommended. Thereafter, I saw Pat on several occasions, initially as director of the 1980 National Census for a 10-county area. From there, she joined the Cumberland County District Attorney's Office and, later, became a staff attorney with Lumber River Legal Services.

In September 1984, Pat became Judge Timmons-Goodson, when she was appointed as a District Court judge in Cumberland County. Pat was elected as judge in 1986, and was re-elected in 1990 and 1994. While serving as a District Court judge, I appeared before her as an attorney in many cases. Pat was always fair, and treated all parties and attorneys with respect.

In February 1997, Pat was appointed to the state Court of Appeals and won statewide election in 1998. While on the Court of Appeals, Pat also served on the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Visitors, and received the Order of the Old Well. Pat also was elected as vice president of the North Carolina Bar Association, and received many other honors from various organizations.

After I was elected to the Court and seated in 2001, Pat welcomed me and offered all assistance. I had many occasions to serve on three-judge panels with Pat. She offered insightful and knowledgeable views on the law, and consistently used her experiences as a trial judge to help guide our decisions. She is a hardworking colleague, who remained involved in all areas of the court beyond just hearing cases and writing decisions.

What I will miss most of all in Pat's retirement is the opportunity to share the ride with her to Raleigh. Both of us chose to continue to live in Fayetteville and commute daily to Raleigh. On the days we would ride together, the trip seemed much shorter, not to mention the gas savings when the price exceeded \$3 per gallon. We would talk about the challenges of raising boys, local news, and goings on at the Court of Appeals.

The Cumberland County Bar Association invited the Court of Appeals to hold court in Fayetteville on Nov. 30 at the old courthouse on Gillespie Street. We were all hoping this opportunity would allow us to sit together on a three-judge panel in Fayetteville.

Pat's retirement, after over 25 years of service to North Carolina, is well-deserved. All judges on the Court of Appeals appreciate all that she has done for the court, and for the judges she individually served with during her tenure. We know Pat will continue to be active and involved in many worthwhile projects in the future.

Best wishes, Pat, in your future endeavors.

John M. Tyson serves on the state Court of Appeals.