

STATE COURT JUDGE PAM SOUTH WAXES ELOQUENT

ON FOOTBALL, KIDS, ATTORNEYS, AND HER LOVE FOR GWINNETT COUNTY

By: Margaret Gettle Washburn, ed.

Judge South is one of our six State Court Judges. She was appointed by Governor Roy Barnes in 2001. Pam was a Magistrate full time before she went to the State Court bench. She attended Ole Miss (they had a good football year this year-thankfully, according to Judge South). She also attended Mississippi State and received her MA in English. Her first job was working for Mississippi State in Research and Curriculum, writing technical manuals for industries. Deciding that was not her dream, she enrolled in the hallowed halls of the UGA School of Law (who did not have so great a football year...which is now over, thankfully).

Judge South attended UGA and graduated in 1988, and interned with the Gwinnett DA's office. Upon graduation, she began working as an associate for Strauss and Walker. John Strauss was the former DA for the Alcovy Judicial Circuit. At that time, it was not a fast moving circuit-not much trial work. After handling the firm's Juvenile Court, domestic and criminal defense cases, she interviewed with then-Gwinnett DA Tom Lawler and ADA Steve Franzen. She accepted a position as an ADA, happy to return to the DA's office as a trial attorney. Pam was assigned to Division 5.

She was in Division 5 for two years. Pam then prosecuted for a year in Juvenile Court in 1992, before the Honorable Judges Rodatus and Franzen. She saw a different level of "criminal" juvenile behavior in those years than the current Judges see now. The Defendants were not adult criminals; they were "delinquents." There was a real opportunity, for the most part, to intervene in a young person's life and turn that child around for the better. Judge South sees a big difference in the seriousness and violence of juvenile criminal activity over the years: much more serious criminal activity by "children."

In 1994, Pam became a full time child abuse prosecutor - a natural progression from Juvenile Court and Pam's enjoyment of working with children. She had a great opportunity to serve the community. Those were very hard cases involving children, as the victims were very different than those of other crimes. Fortunately, she had new tools to deal with those offenses. There was a change in the child hearsay law to allow the prosecutor to use the outcry in court.

Judge South enjoyed the trial work so much that it created a real dilemma for her when she considered applying for the opening for full-time Magistrate, created when Judge Debra Turner was elected to the Superior Court in 1999. Judge South was appointed by then-Chief Magistrate Warren Davis and the Superior Court Judges. It was a good change for Pam, and she could stay involved in the criminal aspects of the law. Pam enjoyed her move to Magistrate Court - there was more opportunity to learn other areas of the law, from small claims to TPO's in the domestic arena to being appointed to serve by designation in Superior Court on Temporary Hearings.

Judge South has lived in Gwinnett since 1990, and lived in Lilburn. Pam is now residing in Norcross. She likes that Gwinnett citizens have great vision. There is a terrific business community in the County. Pam is involved in Leadership Gwinnett, and is a graduate of the 2005 class. She is on the Leadership Gwinnett Steering Committee. She is also on the Vestry at the Christ Church Episcopal in Norcross. Having been raised Baptist, it is a change, but she loves her church and friends.

When she took the State Court bench in 2001, Pam's goal was to maintain a sense of fairness in her courtroom. In State Court, business litigation and personal injury cases are the bulk of the caseload. Judge South gives both parties a chance to be heard and tries to create a resolution that's fair to both parties in a calm and efficient manner. She strives to create a level playing field and stresses that she lets the attorney do their jobs. There is no need for histrionics, except for domestic

cases-that is an arena with its own rules (or cases with Margaret and Alan Mullinax).

As the County grows, she would like the State Court to develop a vision for the future. The attorneys are pleasantly surprised at how quickly cases are calendared and resolved. Pam believes that efficiency is important and that when cases and disputes are resolved quickly, that benefits the community, the citizens, and the attorneys, and it creates less wear and tear on people, their pocketbooks, and the County's pocketbook. Her goal is to continue to be the Court for rapid and fair resolution of disputes, despite budget issues and despite the rapid growth in the County.

Pam's hobbies include traveling and her BMW. She took a dream trip to Vietnam last year where she rode a bicycle through the central and southern portions of the country with a group of friends. They toured villages and cities-a real adventure, and they saw hard-working and happy people. She also visited several Buddhist temples and saw the devastation in areas where the war was waged. What is in Judge South's "Bucket List?" She really wants to see Patagonia (not the store in Buckhead), the southern tip of Argentina and Chile. (I offered to drive to her Buckhead; it's much closer).

Her staff makes her job much easier. Carrie Kennedy is her Calendar Coordinator, and Angie Wellmaker is her Judicial Executive Assistant. She states that Carrie and Angie are truly "customer service" oriented. Her staff attorney Dan Whitworth is always available to answer tough questions (or easy ones). Dan: (770)822-8556.

Advice to young lawyers: it was a tough year in 2009 for the legal profession and the court system. We should all continue to do good work. "Good lawyering" is always recognized, and attorneys should invest in themselves and their reputations right now and wait for the economy to turn around. You may contact Pam: pamela.south@gwinnettcountry.com. Angie: (770)822-8554 and Carrie: (770)822-8555.