

Western District of Missouri

Under the direction of Chief Judge Gaitan and Judges Sachs, Wright and Smith, the Historical Society for the Western District of Missouri underwent a restructuring this year. New officers were elected in September and the local chapter began sponsoring a highly successful series of speakers. Membership has quickly grown from a handful to nearly seventy (70) members. The chapter hopes to double that number in coming years.

In September 2007, at the invitation of Judge Wright, U.S. District Court Judge William Wilson of Little Rock, Arkansas spoke on a variety of subjects with his customary blend of oratorical skills and humor. In November, Murray Gartner, Esq., a retired lawyer from New York City, spoke to an audience of chapter members and judges on the topic "Clerking for Justice Robert Jackson in the Truman Era." Gartner graduated from Harvard Law School in 1945 where he served as President of the Harvard Law Review. He clerked for Justice Robert Jackson in 1945 and 1946. He was invited to Kansas City by Judge Howard Sachs, before whom he appeared throughout the 1980's TWA-Flight Attendant litigation. At Judge Sachs' request, Gartner converted his remarks into a paper which the local chapter has submitted to the Supreme Court Historical Society for publication. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy should email pdonnelly@stinson.com.

On March 6, 2008, the chapter hosted a luncheon attended by nearly 100 attorneys to honor U.S. Senior District Judge Scott Wright on his newly-published memoir, "Never in Doubt: Memoirs of an Uncommon Judge" (written with Larry Schumaker). Their presentation was a great success. And this month, the U.S. Attorney's office in the Western District concluded filming the oral biography of retired U.S. Magistrate Judge and former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, Calvin Hamilton. Under the leadership of Deputy U.S. Attorney

Tom Larson, lawyers in that office have also been at work on a history of the U.S. Attorney's office in the Western District.

This fall, Tom and Jeff Ray will be featured at a meeting of the chapter to discuss an interesting chapter of that history: Maurice M. Milligan and his "Missouri Waltz." Milligan served as the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri while FDR was in the White House. Milligan and his assistants gained national reputations for prosecuting voting fraud cases in the '30's. He successfully prosecuted Tom Pendergast for tax evasion, bringing to a close Pendergast's career as boss of Kansas City.

Milligan's severest critic was Senator Harry S Truman, who went so far as to take the floor of the Senate to speak against Milligan's reappointment in 1938. Two years later, after Milligan had resigned his post to run for the Senate in the Democratic primary, thus creating a three-way race in which Truman prevailed over Milligan and Governor Lloyd Stark, Truman recommended that Milligan be reappointed as U.S. Attorney.

Nevertheless, when Truman became President, he quickly appointed a replacement for Milligan. Three years later, Milligan's 1948 book, "Missouri Waltz," blasted Truman and the Pendergast machine just before the '48 presidential election. These events form the outline of a fascinating story of a colorful era in Kansas City and the U. S. Attorney's office.

The chapter looks forward enthusiastically to another active year.