

Fall 2022

BANKS TRIBUTE

The Honorable Chief Judge Debra Brown

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Recommended Citation

Brown, The Honorable Chief Judge Debra (2022) "BANKS TRIBUTE," *Mississippi College Law Review*. Vol. 40: Iss. 3, Article 11.

Available at: <https://dc.law.mc.edu/lawreview/vol40/iss3/11>

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BANKS TRIBUTE

*The Honorable Chief Judge Debra Brown**

Champion of justice.
Intellectual giant.
Humble in nature.
Generous and kind.
Consummate gentleman.

These and other thoughts cross my mind as I struggle for words not yet said or written to describe Fred Lee Banks, Jr. Of course, it is already widely known that he presided on the Mississippi Supreme Court for eleven years and on the circuit court for six years; that he was a legislator in the Mississippi House of Representatives for nine years; that he has been an NAACP national board member since 1982; and that early in his legal career, he litigated civil-rights cases, including those involving school desegregation and voting rights, at a time when it was risky to do so. Also often acknowledged are the numerous awards and accolades he has garnered throughout his decades of public service. So my effort at originality would seem a futile endeavor. But it is a true testament to the high and far-reaching respect and recognition he has merited for his pristine character and legal reputation.

As best I can recall, the first time I met Judge Banks in person is while I was in law school at a campus event he also attended. It was there I learned he was in the midst of a re-election campaign for the state Supreme Court. I certainly was in awe of being in the presence of a state Supreme Court justice—I previously had no opportunity to encounter a person in his position. Over the many years since then, it has been a privilege to interact with him as a mentor, colleague, law partner, and friend. During the time we practiced law together, he was always open to discussing any topic or

* Chief Judge Debra Brown has served on the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi since being nominated by President Barack Obama and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2013. In 2021, she became Mississippi's first Black female chief federal judge. After earning her Bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University, Chief Judge Brown earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi School of Law. Prior to being appointed as a judge, she practiced law at Wise Carter Child & Carraway and Phelps Dunbar in Jackson, Mississippi.

issue I (or anyone else) brought to his office, usually well after the end of the business day when I knew I could count on him being there (as some may know, he is rather a night owl). His genuinely receptive and supportive personality is what has made him so endearing to me and so many others.

Every celebration of Fred Banks and his personal and professional accomplishments is one long overdue. I am honored to join those saluting him and his extraordinary and commendable legal career.

Debra M. Brown
United States Chief District Judge
Northern District of Mississippi