

## A TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE JIMMY ROBERTSON

*Claude Stuart\**

Jimmy was a truly extraordinary human being with more facets of character and ability than a Cartier diamond. Consider just four: (1) his scintillating intellect enhanced with his adroit verbal ability (2) his amazing capacity for hard, sustained work to produce at the highest level (3) an all-embracing love of life including its many humorous absurdities. (4) his selfless devotion to the public good including early, school desegregation , provision of mental health services for all, and selflessly serving on the Ole Miss law school faculty and the state Supreme Court . I first came to know Jimmy when he, as just a high schooler, was my Little League baseball coach. He loved the game and especially his Boston Red Sox but more than that, he taught us fledgling ten-year-olds in his unassuming way that hard work and enthusiasm pay off, if not always in victory, invariably in good sportsmanship and camaraderie. I followed his high school career as a Greenville Hornet in basketball—an enthusiastic dribbler par excellence. Much later as law partners, we ran road races together all around the Delta. His steps were a bit choppy but tireless in pursuit of the finish line which he always reached.

He had a first class, innate ability to analyze the most complex legal issue and deduce its solution in rapid fire writing which (like Winston Churchill) kept two secretaries fully busy. Faced with proposing a solution to unequal agricultural land taxation, his client and expert proved that multiple soil types in the Mississippi Delta invariably produce different, predictable yields which should set their value for taxation—but one example of his practical but brilliantly innovative solution to a Gordian knot type problem.

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In the law practice he would usually be behind his desk before 7 am and work tirelessly all day into the evening especially when drafting his legendary briefs. In the pre-computer days, his desk and office floor would be piled high and strewn with papers, but he could produce any specific one in an instant. I never understood how he could do it! Once he was to deliver a seminar presentation in New Orleans on the new bankruptcy rules of which neither of us knew anything. Riding shotgun, I read the rules and all available commentary to him all during the six-hour drive. During his speech delivery the next morning, one would have thought he had been on the Rules' original drafting Committee. He loved the law, especially Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes ,and starting with his days at Harvard Law School, he never stopped learning and reverencing the law. He was a constant inspiration to us all.

He never ceased playing practical jokes brilliantly concealed until he sprung the trap. The day of my marriage, with mischievous glee, he had the Chancellor issue, and the Sheriff solemnly serve me with a bewildering writ of "harem scarem" for me to be produced at the aisle forthwith. When as a young lawyer on my first attendance at the Mississippi Bar Convention on the Coast at firm expense, I asked him for an idea of reimbursable expenses, his guiding answer: "Well, I wouldn't buy your wife a bikini but dinner at Mary Mahoney's has no limit."

As Shakespeare has Hamlet observe of his father , we shall not look upon his like again—a truly remarkable and unique friend, mentor, and lawyer extraordinaire.