



Honoring Excellence with Annual Awards

Just Rewards

By Suzanne Craig Robertson



The writing award of excellence was named for Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Joe Henry, who was elected to the court in 1974 and died June 9, 1980. He was Tennessee Bar Association president in 1970-71.



After this magazine had been up and running for 16 years, an award was established to honor the “lawyer who writes the most outstanding article that is published in the *Tennessee Bar Journal*.” In announcing the Justice Joe W. Henry Memorial Award for Outstanding Legal Writing in 1982, Ronald Lee Gilman wrote that “the purpose of the award is to encourage practicing Tennessee lawyers to write scholarly yet practical articles for the *Journal* that will be of maximum benefit

to the members of our bar.” Gilman, now a senior judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, also went on to be a TBA president.

This year’s winners of the prestigious award, Jennifer J. Lacey and John P. Williams, wrote the article, “Stick to the Plan: The Vested Property Rights Act of 2014 Creates More Certainty for Developers.” Williams is a two-time winner of the award as his article was deemed best also in 2003. Only two other people have been awarded the Joe Henry more than once: David Raybin (1982 and 2004) and Donald F. Paine, who won in

1989, 1997 — and in 2013 he was awarded, posthumously, the first Joe Henry Outstanding Legal Writing Lifetime Achievement Award.

Justice Henry

The award was named for the late chief justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, Joe W. Henry, “a practicing lawyer, a scholar, and a writer with a rare talent for clear, forceful and often dramatic wording,” the award’s original announcement says. After he died, the *Journal* published several articles in tribute to Henry in its August 1980 issue. (Read

them at www.tba.org/sites/default/files/JoeHenryMemoir.pdf)

“He will be remembered as an able, distinguished jurist — one who believed in justice for every individual and had compassion for the unfortunate and underprivileged,” Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Ray L. Brock Jr. wrote. “He sought to even the odds for women, black people, children and the mentally ill. He had a commitment to justice. His opinions were thoroughly researched and carefully documented. They sparkled with his colorful language,” Brock continued. “He added richly to the legal literative of this State.”


The Judges

Three people always judge the Joe Henry Award, as set up by the board in 1982: the president of the TBA; the chief justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, or an appellate judge designated by the chief justice; and the dean of the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of

Law, University of Tennessee or Vanderbilt law schools (on a rotating basis), or a faculty member designated by the dean. With a total of six law schools in the state now, Belmont University School of Law, Lincoln Memorial University’s Duncan School of Law and the Nashville School of Law have been added to the rotation.

This year’s competition was judged by TBA President Jonathan Steen, Chief Justice Sharon Lee and Dean Peter Letsou of Memphis.

The Competition

When the award began, the *Journal* was quarterly. There were about 11 articles considered for the award. It soon became bimonthly, pushing the number of eligible articles up. In this year’s competition, which encompasses 12 issues and many regular columns, there were nearly 40 articles or columns considered. 

SUZANNE CRAIG ROBERTSON has been editor of the *Tennessee Bar Journal* for 27 of its 50 years.

Justice Joe W. Henry Memorial Award Winners

1981-82	Joe B. Jones
1982-83	David Raybin
1983-84	Jack W. Robinson
1984-85	William L. Harbison
1985-86	James F. Eggleston
1986-87	John B. Phillips Jr.
1987	Lewis L. Laska
1988	William D. Evans Jr.
1989	Donald F. Paine
1990	Robert L. McMurray
1991	Marshall L. Davidson III
1992	Lucian T. Pera
1993	D. Alexander Fardon
1994	Shelby R. Grubbs
1995	David A. Burkhalter
1996	Monica L. Allie
1997	Donald F. Paine
1998	Robert W. Ritchie
1999	Timothy S. Bland and Thomas J. Walsh
2000	Frank Watson III
2001	Dan W. Holbrook
2002	Bob Lype
2003	John P. Williams
2004	Charles Young and David Raybin
2005	Richard Spore
2006	Monica J. Franklin
2007	Darsi Newman Sirknen
2008	J. Ross Pepper
2009	Spencer Elg
2010	Taylor Berger
2011	Two Awards: Andrée Sophia Blumstein and Scott Griswold
2012	Daniel Headrick
2013	Kimberly Stagg and John E. Anderson Sr.
2013	Donald F. Paine awarded posthumously the first Joe Henry Outstanding Legal Writing Lifetime Achievement Award .

More Accolades

In addition to the Joe Henry Award, the Tennessee Bar Association gives several other honors each year. You can see those recognized at the TBA Annual Convention on page 7.

- Law firm and corporate legal departments are recognized with the **Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Initiative Awards (CCPBI)**. First organized in 2006, the law firm and corporate legal department selected as recipients are to “best exemplify extraordinary commitment to access to justice ideals, pro bono service and the Corporate Counsel Covenant of Service.”
- The TBA Leadership Law program initiated the **Larry Dean Wilkes Leadership Award** in 2012 to honor the former TBA president and Leadership Law chair who died in 2011. The award recognizes the classmate who exhibits “exceptional leadership qualities that enhanced the Leadership Law experience for all class members.”
- **The Frank F. Drowota III Outstanding Judicial Service Award** is given to a judge or judicial branch official of a federal, state or local court in Tennessee who has demonstrated extraordinary devotion and dedication to the improvement of the law, the legal system and the administration of justice as exemplified by the career of former Supreme Court Chief Justice Drowota, the award's first recipient.
- The TBA Young Lawyers Division gives the **William M. Leech Jr. Public Service Award** to a Tennessee lawyer who has been of outstanding service to the profession, legal system and the community. The award is named for former Attorney General William M. Leech and was given to him posthumously in 1997.
- The TBA Environmental Law Section established the **Jon E. Hastings Memorial Award** in 2006, to honor a founding member of the section, who died in 2004. It is a juried competition for the best legal writing by a law student on a topic of Tennessee or federal environmental law.