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PHELPS DUNBAR'S DEDICATIONS TO FRED BANKS

Phelps Dunbar Attorneys

A NATURAL BORN LEADER

*Reuben Anderson**

Fred and I have been lifelong friends. Fred is both keenly intelligent and wise. We started out together in the fifth grade, were baptized together, and served as altar boys together. Whatever grade we were in, Fred was always the smartest person in the class.

Fred's intrinsic sense of fairness is reflected throughout his legal career. After law school, we started a private practice in Jackson. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund hired our firm to serve as its local counsel, along with John Nichols and Melvyn Leventhal. That office became the firm Anderson, Banks, Nichols and Leventhal, the first interracial law firm in Mississippi history. Fred saw segregation and courageously fought it. Our firm was instrumental in integrating public schools and public accommodations in Mississippi. Desegregation did not come easily. It was hard-fought, and Fred was instrumental in making it happen.

Our political and judicial careers mirrored each other, and when taking the step into new territories, Fred was always a steady source of creativity and steadfastness. Returning to private practice at Phelps and seeing Jackson, Mississippi, through a time where we were a hotbed for litigation was invigorating. Fred always had creative solutions and solid arguments.

It's rare that anyone can look back on a fifty-plus year career and have a partner and friend by their side through it all. It's been an honor to share experiences, make history, and practice alongside a man and lawyer for whom I have the utmost respect.

* Reuban V. Anderson is a senior partner at Phelps Dunbar in Jackson, Mississippi. He is Mississippi's first African-American Supreme Court Justice, where he served from 1985 to 1991. Other key positions have included: Circuit Court Judge for the 7th Circuit Court District, 1982-85; County Court Judge for Hinds County, 1977-82; Municipal Judge for the City of Jackson, 1976-77; Partner, Anderson, Banks, Nichols & Stewart, 1968-77; Mississippi Associate Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., 1967-75; and Jamie L. Whitten Chair of Law and Government at the University of Mississippi, Fall of 1995.

A LAW PARTNER THAT EPITOMIZES THE PROFESSION*Jim Shelson**

I have known Fred L. Banks, Jr., as a colleague and friend since he joined Phelps over twenty years ago. Fred has been a mentor, a role model and an inspiration. In his practice of law and daily life, Fred models civility, empathy and good humor.

Fred came to Phelps in the midst of a storied legal, political and judicial career. He brought a tenacity and energy that made you excited to go to work every day. For Fred, law was never a job. It was always a passion and a drive. By his example alone, Fred pushed people beyond their comfort zone and encouraged progressive thinking.

Practicing alongside Fred has been one of the biggest honors of my career. No one is more deserving of recognition. He has exemplified the highest standards of professionalism and advocacy, and he actually made civil-rights history. He has been a great mentor and friend, and I know that his career accomplishments will inspire upcoming students and lawyers as much as they have inspired me.

QUIET HEROES*Marshall Redmon**

Quiet heroes. They don't stand out in a room or ask for a lot of attention, but their presence is always felt and their legacy almost visible. They make a difference. Judge Fred Banks is one of them. For over a half a century, Judge Banks has been dedicated to human rights, to ethics in the legal profession, and to service. In over twenty years as a Phelps partner, we've felt his positive impact. His actions have instructed us. His decency has inspired us. This dedication from the Mississippi College Law Review is a fitting tribute to a quiet hero among us. Thank you, Judge Banks.

* James W. Shelson is a partner and practice group coordinator in the general litigation group in the Jackson, Mississippi, office of Phelps Dunbar. In addition to his extensive litigation experience, he served as an infantry officer in the United States Army from 1984-1990 and authored a book on Mississippi chancery court practice.

* Marshall M. Redmond joined Phelps Dunbar in 1987 and became Managing Partner in 2016. He is a partner in the firm's New Orleans office, is a member of the firm's Operations Committee, and chairs the firm's Policy and Planning Committee.

A FRIEND AND PARTNER*Tommy Siler**

It is a distinct honor to have an opportunity to write a few words about Fred Banks. I did not know Fred until I learned he joined our firm some twenty years ago. Before that time, Reuben Anderson told me a great deal about Fred and their long relationship, but I had not spent any time with him. Reuben jokingly (but, at least, half-seriously) told me Fred was a real lawyer he depended on for advice. In the twenty years since Fred became my partner, I learned firsthand the accuracy of Reuben's description. Fred is more than just a "real lawyer," he is a great lawyer with as fine a legal mind as anyone I know. I myself grew to depend on Fred's counsel when I needed advice on difficult legal questions. Looking back over my career, I do not know how I could have navigated a number of thorny legal issues without his thoughtful advice and counsel.

More important than that, however, Fred grew to be my friend. We did not always agree on every issue we discussed and certainly viewed the world through different eyes, but we always respected the other's viewpoints and appreciated the fact that we came from very different backgrounds and experiences. I am proud to call Fred my partner, but even prouder to call him my friend.

A SPONSOR AND FRIEND*LaToya C. Merritt**

I have been fortunate to spend most of my career working with Judge Fred L. Banks, Jr., watching his brilliant legal mind at work and witnessing his intense dedication to promoting equity in the legal profession and the Mississippi community.

Judge Banks and I joined Phelps in the fall of 2001. I had recently completed a clerkship, and he, a veteran attorney and trailblazer in the civil rights world, was ending a decade of service on the Mississippi Supreme Court. His standards, legal ethics, and drive to push for equality have

* W. Thomas Siler, Jr., is the managing partner of Phelps Dunbar's Jackson office and the practice coordinator of the Jackson labor and employment group. Since 1983, he has concentrated his practice in the representation of management in labor and employment law matters, and in the defense of civil rights issues.

* LaToya C. Merritt is a partner in Phelps Dunbar's Jackson office and serves as the practice coordinator of the Jackson labor and employment group. Before joining the firm in 2001, she clerked for the Honorable William J. Haynes, Jr., of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee.

remained the hallmarks of his work. Over the years, these qualities, as well as his personal character, have inspired me to do the same.

Judge Banks is a lawyer's lawyer. He is the first person I turn to for professional guidance. Over the years, he and I have spent many hours sparring over legal theories and discussing whether a particular court "got it right" with its holding.

I vividly recall one such occasion with Judge Banks. At the time, I was vetting a legal argument for a brief I was drafting. Judge Banks vehemently opposed the argument, deeming it nothing but "nonsensical" legal jargon. "Ms. Merritt," he asked, "what case do you have to support your position?" I replied, "Judge, I am reading directly from a Mississippi Supreme Court opinion that has not been overturned." He asked who had written it. I responded, "Justice Fred L. Banks, Jr." Judge Banks smiled, "Great argument, Ms. Merritt, carry on!"

I'd be remiss to simply call Judge Banks a mentor. Rather, I see him as a sponsor and a friend. Throughout our professional relationship, he has been a vigorous advocate for me and other diverse professionals to both internal and external stakeholders. Judge Banks has positioned me to take the reins on significant cases, cultivate important relationships, and grow in my career while freely lending a hand with impactful feedback and wise advice.

He has taken the same approach in his work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), promoting and living out the organization's tenets for the last half a century while encouraging younger professionals to stay vigilant and get involved. Whether by advising the NAACP's leadership in his role as Board Counsel or through pro bono work with similar service organizations, Judge Banks has proven that even in private practice attorneys can commit their time to the principles and beliefs that matter most to them. Working alongside Judge Banks in our support of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund has been one of the greatest honors of my career so far.

Judge Banks's humility and "give-back" spirit are his strongest attributes. A standard-bearer in the legal world, Judge Banks remains humble and has an attitude of acceptance and appreciation for all people. He is slow to judge, always giving fellow attorneys the benefit of the doubt—even when they might not deserve it.

I look forward to continuing to work with him for what I'm certain will be many more years of zealous resolve and compassionate commitment to the causes of equity, equality, and justice in our world. I count it an honor to practice with one of Mississippi's greatest living heroes.