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McAlester News-Capital

Hall of Fame shines spotlight on McAlester's Justice Taylor

By James Beaty
Staff Writer

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— Oklahoma Supreme Court Vice Justice Steven Taylor has served for years as the volunteer stage manager when individuals were given the state's top honor by being inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. The spotlight is now shining on Taylor himself.

Taylor and six other individuals were inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame during a special ceremony for the 2009 honorees held on Thursday night at the Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center.

In his acceptance remarks, Taylor referred to McAlester in connection with an African proverb, that it takes a village to raise a child.

Taylor called McAlester the village that raised him — mentioning his family and friends, the school system and the community.

He said he is still, today, a child of Oklahoma.

"I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to earn this recognition," Taylor said.

During his remarks, he cited the support of his wife, Mary Taylor, and their son, Wilson Taylor.

He also spoke of two other products of McAlester who had a big influence on him: Former Oklahoma Gov. George Nigh and former U.S. House Speaker Carl Albert — both of whom are also in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Clayton I. Bennett, of Oklahoma City, inducted Taylor during the Hall of Fame ceremony.

Bennett is chairman of the Oklahoma City Thunder of the National Basketball Association. He is also president of Dorchester Capital, a diversified private insurance company, and serves as director and officer of numerous other businesses.

A former McAlester resident who now lives in Oklahoma, City, Polly Puckett Nichols, was also inducted into the Hall of Fame along with Taylor and the other five inductees.

Like Taylor, she grew up in McAlester and attended McAlester High School.

That meant two of the seven inductees into the 2009 Hall of Fame were products of McAlester.

The 2009 Hall of Fame inductees also included another individual originally from the area, former Eufaula Ironhead and football great, Lee Roy Selmon.

Anyone who would like to see a telecast of the Hall of Fame ceremony inducting Taylor and the other honorees should have an opportunity to do so this weekend.

The program is to be telecast over Oklahoma's public television network, the OETA, at 8 p.m. on Saturday. It's on cable channel 3 and on channel 11 on several satellite stations that offer the state public television station.

Others inducted during the ceremony were basketball great and best-selling jazz musician, the late Wayman Tillsdale, of Tulsa; C. Kendric Ferguson, of Altus; Marlin G. "Ike" Glass, of Newkirk, and V. Burns Hargis, of Stillwater.

Taylor is also a former District 18 district judge for Pittsburg and McIntosh counties. His many cases include presiding over the state trial of Oklahoma City bomber Terry Nichols in 2004.

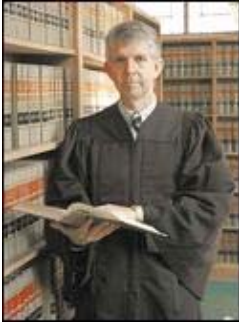
He is also a former Associate district judge for Pittsburg County and a former McAlester mayor.

A McAlester High School graduate, Taylor later joined the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as the youngest judge in the U.S. armed forces.

In 2004, Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry appointed Taylor to the Supreme Court, a seat Taylor has since retained.

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Steve Taylor