



LAW PAWS

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APPELLATE COURT DOGS

"Law Paws" is a new monthly column by Sally Goade and Carol Anne Long that, generally speaking, will profile local attorneys and judges who are often accompanied by their pets while at work. We may also incorporate a story about a mascot or two, and we will be excited to feature a companion article next month by **Joe Jarrett** about therapy dogs in the courtroom. If you have a suggestion of a bar member who should be profiled for this column in future issues, please email Sally (Sally.Goade@tncourts.gov) or Carol Anne (Carol-Anne.Long@tncourts.gov). This month, we will begin with the dogs who brighten our work days at the Tennessee Supreme Court Building in Knoxville.

Molly Ogle, by Sally Goade

Molly Ogle, a fourteen-month-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel, began a typical work day this month at the Tennessee Supreme Court Building in Knoxville by enthusiastically greeting the post office lady on the ground floor and then calmly boarding the elevator with her owner and "mom," Judge Norma McGee Ogle of the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals. Once through the secured door on the third floor, Molly made a mandatory stop to have her belly rubbed by Judge D. Michael Swiney of the Tennessee Court of Appeals and then could not resist calls from law clerks in the office of Judge Thomas R. Frierson, guiding her mom through the door for a little social time. The kitchen was on the way to her office, so Molly greeted staff there, and finally she reached law clerk Amy Paul and executive assistant Andrea Wingate, who were waiting outside Judge Ogle's office for their morning greeting.



"Molly lightens the mood—we see such dark stuff in our work, and she brightens the day," Amy told me. Judge Ogle notes that appellate court service is isolating work and that a dog walking the hall at the courthouse provides a "spark of happiness." "All of our judges are dog people," she adds. Molly's predecessor in the Ogle household was Sally, a Brittany spaniel who on most days accompanied the other Judge Ogle in the house, Rex Henry, to the Sevier County Courthouse. Judge Norma Ogle says that when Sally died last year, she told her husband that she either needed an anti-depressant or a new puppy. She had always wanted a Cavalier, but Molly's breeder was particular about puppies going to homes where they would not spend long hours alone during the day. Molly was soon in training for her duties as an appellate court dog.

When I asked what advice Judge Ogle would give attorneys or judges thinking of adding a dog to their office staff, she said that the dog's temperament is of paramount importance but noted also that good training is key. When Sally was young and the Ogles realized they needed help, they engaged trainers George and Ace at Meadowbrooke Kennel to assist them in teaching basic obedience commands and social skills. Molly has undergone the same training, and it shows. She enthusiastically greets her human co-workers, but she does not jump on them, and she has learned to keep her naturally high energy in check.

There was that one day, though, when I became part of a search party looking for Molly. She had been with Judge Ogle in the kitchen and then was simply not there. Eventually six of us



were searching the stairs, the closets, every nook and cranny . . . until Judge Witt came in and announced that Molly and his Beagle Otto were snuggled together in his chambers. Breathing a sigh of relief, we all laughed and returned to our work, a little lighter of heart and more "human" in feeling.

Otto Witt, by Carol Anne Long

If you've seen Judge Curwood Witt of the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals walking in downtown Knoxville sometime in the past three years, chances are you've seen him with his faithful Beagle companion, Otto. Otto has become so well known in Knoxville that people often stop on the street to greet Otto by name, and Judge Witt has no idea who these friendly people are. Otto even receives Christmas cards addressed exclusively to him!

Judge Witt rescued Otto from the Monroe County Animal Shelter in December 2010, a few months after losing his former Beagle in a tragic accident. A true dog lover who has owned over 15 dogs in his lifetime, Judge Witt isn't afraid to spoil his furry companion. Without question, Otto leads a fantastic life. He sleeps in a custom wooden bed, handmade by Judge Witt. He has acres and acres of farmland on which to run, play, and chase rabbits on Judge Witt's Madisonville farm, and Judge Witt reports that he can often hear Otto baying from a mile away while the latter is chasing a rabbit. During bad weather, or even good weather, Otto accompanies Judge Witt to the office, where Otto spends his days napping in a comfortable leather chair.



Bringing your pet to work might not be everyone's cup of tea, but when you've got a dog as well-behaved as Otto, it's a natural fit. With a two-and-a-half hour daily commute, having Otto along for company is a treat for Judge Witt. Once he arrives at the courthouse, Otto is so calm and quiet, most people aren't even aware of his presence. However, people often stop by Judge Witt's office just to see if Otto is available for a quick visit. Otto is also wonderful with children. I can attest that my two children are crushed if they visit the office with me and Otto is not there. Once, Otto contentedly napped at my 4-year-old daughter's feet while she sat in my office and watched a movie, occasionally reaching down to pet her canine friend.

When asked how Otto compares with other dogs he has owned, Judge Witt responds that Otto possesses exemplary house manners and is very affectionate. "He's about the sweetest dog I've ever had."

And he's smart, too. This past October, Judge Witt and Otto were walking from the parking lot to the post office entrance of the courthouse when Otto suddenly began to bark and go into "rabbit mode" near some landscaping at the northeast corner of the building. Judge Witt scolded him, knowing that there were no rabbits in this small corner of grass and shrubs in the middle of downtown Knoxville. The following day when Judge Witt arrived at work, sans Otto, he noticed, in that very patch of landscaping where Otto had reacted, a small rabbit hiding beneath a shrub. Needless to say, Otto received an apology from Judge Witt that night!

So the next time you spot Judge Witt and Otto in downtown Knoxville, feel free to stop and say hello. You might even want to greet Otto's owner, too!