



MISS KATHARINE C. BLECKLEY

## IN MEMORIAM.

## MISS KATHARINE C. BLECKLEY.

In THE SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA.

NOVEMBER 13, 1962.

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE COURT.

On the morning of June 3, 1962, an air liner crashed at Orly Field near Paris, France. One hundred and thirty persons, most of them residents of Georgia, were killed. Many a heart was broken. Many, many more were saddened. So many lost dear ones. So many lost close friends. One dear to all Justices, Judges and lawyers of Georgia was among those in the "numbing list of the dead"—Miss Katharine C. Bleckley.

That morning, after ninety-seven years of the association of the Bleckley family with the administration of justice in our highest courts, the chain was broken.

Her grandfather, Logan E. Bleckley, was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia from 1875 until 1879. From 1887 until 1894, he was Chief Justice. His son, Logan Bleckley, Miss Katharine's father, became Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court in 1888. Upon the creation of the Court of Appeals in 1906, he became clerk of that court. He remained as clerk until his death January 23, 1937.

From 1923 to June, 1929, she literally worked by the side of her revered father. From June, 1929, to December, 1934, she was *Deputy Clerk* of both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. She was appointed Clerk of the Supreme Court on December 8, 1934, and served as clerk until her death on June 3, 1962.

She had been born in Atlanta and educated in its educational institutions. She never divulged the date of her birth. She is survived by her beloved twin brother, Logan Bleckley, Jr., and nephew, Logan Bleckley, III. Among her survivors, too, are her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Barnett Bleckley.

When she was appointed clerk, Honorable Richard Brevard Russell, the elder, was Chief Justice. The Associate Justices were Marcus W. Beck, Samuel C. Atkinson, Stirling Price Gilbert, R. C. Bell, John B. Hutcheson.

Of these, not one remained on that tragic morning 28 years later.

Those are the milestones. They illustrate only the span of her life and length of devoted service.

Our task, our high and honored privilege, is to try to utter words here today which will be truly commemorative of our friend. Those of us who were privileged to know her need no such words. She is enshrined in our hearts. But—it is well that there should be a memorial so that those who never knew her may know what the life of this great lady meant to her dear ones, to her friends, to the lawyers and judges of Georgia, to her church, to her city and state, to her native country, and to her beloved England.

Our friendship— my knowledge of her sterling worth—began many years

ago when sitting by her father's side she began her work for the appellate courts of Georgia. Each time I came to the courts I saw her. Throughout the years, I saw evidences of her careful, painstaking, accurate labor. Perhaps most vivid in my memory is her reverent gratitude on the occasion of the Centennial Exercises in the Supreme Court of Georgia on May 30, 1945, in the old courtroom in the Capitol outside of which there is the tablet presented that day to the Supreme Court of Georgia by the Georgia Bar Association in commemoration of 100 years of notable service to the people of this state, a century of unfaltering devotion to the great principle of equal justice under the law. I shall never forget the words she uttered expressing that reverent gratitude as the late Marion Smith, chairman of the committee of the bar, and I, fortunate to be President of the Georgia Bar Association at that time, left the courtroom at the conclusion of the ceremonies.

The Chief Justice who sat that day, the Presiding Justice, all of the Associate Justices, save one who is now our Chief Justice, all are gone. And now the Clerk is gone. There have been memorials to all of those. None is more deserving than she, because no one of them more studiously observed the admonition of Chief Justice Bell uttered that day: "So, in the performance of our allotted tasks... it is not enough that we should know the law, but we should love justice. Thus, may we not at all times bear in mind the importance and solemnity of our trusts, remembering also the great price that has been paid for every right that exists under the law..."

During all of the years of her service as clerk of this court, your present clerk (Mr. Henry H. Cobb) served as her deputy. Day by day, week by week, month by month, he witnessed her implementation of General Lee's maxim: "Duty is the most sublime word in the English language."

He does not wish to speak on this occasion, but he has given me permission to include here his expressed thoughts: "There was nothing average about her. In an unusual degree she was intelligent, capable, conscientious, loyal, tolerant, generous, and compassionate. The loyalty of her host of friends was matched only by her loyalty to them. Her generosity was greater than any one person knew about. Some of her alms she did in secret; and not always did she let her left hand know what her right hand did. And she provided for her own. As her father's father was her father's idol, so was her father hers. She emulated him in many respects—in thoroughness, devotion to duty, meticulous attention to detail, fearlessness, vigor of expression, sense of propriety, appreciation of values, and compassion. The tenderest spot in her heart was for her mother whom she adored, and who adored her. They delighted in each other's companionship through the years until her mother's death. On political and social issues she was a staunch conservative. Typical of some of her uninhibited expressions was this: In a lively discussion of the then current political trends with one of her friends whom she regarded as too liberal in his views, she vigorously remarked: 'I believe in a benevolent dictatorship with me as the dictator.' Her interests were not limited to the humanities; but matters which to most people were uninteresting and commonplace were often interesting to her. For example, an ordinary automobile trip to any place—

especially to the mountains—she enjoyed in the spirit of adventure and excitement. 'I'm a hick,' she liked to say about that quality. She was tolerant enough, self-confident enough and magnanimous enough to invite and accept constructive criticism. There was no one like her, and no one with whom she could accurately be compared."

You have honored many of her close friends by naming them as members of this Committee for whom I report. No one was a closer friend of hers and her family than Henry J. Fullbright, Jr., Esq. Without knowledge of Mr. Cobb's letter, Mr. Fullbright has written me: "In commenting on Katharine's character, ability, service to the bar, the court, the public, her church and many other groups, don't overlook her genuine sincerity, kindness and consideration for others. Those who saw her in the office on occasions may think that she was all business and sometimes abrupt. You and I, and all others who knew her, are well aware of her true attitude to others. I was privileged to consider her a dear friend and to be in the home frequently during Mr. Logan's last illness and then later at the time of the death of her mother. She was very kind, tender and considerate of her parents and also of two aged aunts whom I knew about, and there may have been others. I just hope you will give some mention of the kindness and humaneness not only to white persons but also to colored people... She was truly one of God's noblest creations."

I have alluded to her love for England. She was one of us who believed that in a world where there was no England we would not want to live. Typical of her, she was not content with "believing." She demonstrated her devotion by acts and deeds. She served as President of the Atlanta Chapter of the English Speaking Union for seven years. I first learned of her interest in England and the English Speaking Union in the early stages of World War II. There were hundreds of British soldiers—airmen mostly, many of whom afterwards participated in the Battle of Britain and saved civilization—who were being trained in Georgia. Many of these were stationed at an air field near Macon. One day in the early 1940's, she phoned me: "Charlie," she said, "there are a number of English air cadets at Cochran Field; I have arranged for them to see Atlanta, and meet some people here, will you please see that they get here?" Those were days of gas rationing you know, and we couldn't just arrange for a convoy of automobiles and get them there. But—with the help of a friend and a sympathetic public official, we saw that they got there. We often chuckled over that memory. She must early have realized what all of us learned later, that so many of us would owe so much to so few.

After the war was over she made a dozen or more trips to England and Scotland where she had many friends who were prominent in the legal, social and political life of those countries. For her work and interest in futhering closer ties between the English speaking countries she was, by Queen Elizabeth II, made a member of the Order of the British Empire.

By coincidence, I had the opportunity to view personally the mutual devotion between her and Britons of high rank. My wife and I were in England in July of 1957, attending the meeting of the American Bar Association. One Sunday we were invited to the home of Lord and Lady De LaWarr, some distance south of London. When we entered the home,

and were greeted by our host and hostess, the next person we saw was our friend, Katharine—also a guest—and just as outspoken in her views, just as friendly, honest and sincere as if she were behind her own desk in her own office—and so happy to be in a land she loved with people she loved—British and American.

It is fitting that this phase of our memorial conclude with the words of a close friend, Information Officer of the British Consulate in Atlanta: “I would like to offer an epitaph, as a token of respect and beloved memory, from my wife, her friends in the British Consulate and myself. Loyal and devoted citizen of the United States as Miss Katharine unquestionably was I like to think that these words from Rupert Brooke’s poem, ‘The Soldier,’ would have pleased and comforted her:

‘If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there’s some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England.’”

I would offer only one amendment: That there’s some corner of a foreign field that is forever England—and America and Georgia.

For she loved and served her native land and native State. And fortunately for those of us she served, we recognized the sterling worth of her character, and her service, and evidenced that recognition while she was still amongst us.

“Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Fortunately, her character, her devotion, was not wasted on the desert air. Those attributes strengthened the Bar of this State; the whole People of this State, and the Bar and the People rose up, on at least two occasions, to show their appreciation.

One was on May 31, 1958, when the Lawyers’ Wives of Georgia at their 10th annual luncheon named her as the Co-Honoree. Her colleague on that occasion, the Executive Secretary of the Georgia Bar Association, wrote her:

“I don’t know any individual in Georgia who more richly deserves recognition for service beyond call of duty than you.” As one of the “wives” said on that occasion: You have been and are so wonderful to our lawyer husbands and this is our way of saying thank you very much.”

Earlier that year (January 21), she had been selected as the Atlanta Woman of the Year in the Professions.

A member of your present committee (a former President of the American Bar Association, E. Smythe Gambrell) well expressed the view of the lawyers of Georgia at that time when he wrote:

“While she is the granddaughter of Georgia’s late and greatest Chief Justice, Logan E. Bleckley, and the daughter of Logan Bleckley, long a leader in the Georgia Bar Association and the Clerk of the Court of Appeals of Georgia, her greatest distinction is in her own right, and based upon her own achievements for the legal profession and in related fields of government—local, state, national and international.

“Despite the fact that she is a woman she many, many years ago was elected a member of the Georgia Bar Association, when women were rarely to be found in that organization. Her work as Clerk of the Supreme Court

of this State is a model for supreme court administration in the forty-eight states of the Union. Her efficiency and her unfailing courtesy are beyond description.

“Although the duties of her high office do not require it, she has been regular in her attendance and participation in the affairs of the Georgia Bar Association for a quarter of a century; likewise in the annual meetings and other affairs of the American Bar Association.

“Miss Bleckley has never exacted or expected from those who deal with her officially any particular consideration because of the fact that she happens to be a woman. At the same time, in her associations with those of the legal profession in this State and this country and abroad, she has never sacrificed or lost that special respect which men accord to gentle women.”

Another member of the Committee, William C. Turpin, wrote me:

“There is one side of her life of which I was aware which is not too generally known, and that is her connection with the church. She was a devoted churchwoman and, as would obviously be the case, a most loyal one.”

I have tried to paint a word picture of a respected and beloved friend that those who did not know her, those living and those who are to come, may learn of one who was a steadfast rock of character in a troubled era. She worshipped in the faith of her fathers. We have invited her Rector—Reverend Frank Ross-of All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Atlanta, to participate toward the conclusion of these exercises. He will after others have responded. Better equipped than I am to tell you of that facet of her life, her devotion to her church, is he. But in concluding our report, I do want to paraphrase one of the most beautiful of the many beautiful prayers of my faith:

To our departed friend, Katharine C. Bleckley, whom we now remember, may peace and bliss be granted in life eternal. May she have found grace and mercy before the Lord of Heaven and Earth. May her soul rejoice in that ineffable good which God has laid up for those who favor Him, and may her memory be a blessing unto us who cherish it.

H. H. Perry, Jr.  
Wm. M. Henderson  
Miss Ellyne E. Strickland  
Bernard Nightingale  
Wm. H. Young, Jr.  
T. T. Molnar  
Ben B. Burgess  
Allan C. Garden  
R. Wilson Smith  
W. Wright Abbot  
W. C. Turpin  
Henry J. Fullbright  
Alex A. Lawrence

Randall Evans, Jr.  
Duncan S. Graham  
Clement E. Sutton  
E. Smythe Gambrell  
Henry H. Cobb  
J. A. Branch  
John L. Tye, Jr.  
Joseph B. Cumming  
Charles M. Lokey  
B. D. Murphy  
Durwood T. Pye  
Madison Richardson  
Hugh G. Head, Jr.

Charles J. Bloch, Chairman

REMARKS BY JUDGE DURWOOD T. PYE.

May it please the Court: Privileged am I to say a personal word in tribute. From among Miss Bleckley's many virtues for which we justly extol her on this Memorial Day, I wish to select for an added expression, her loyalty to her friends. Loyal friendship is one of the noblest and most enduring values in life. If one does not possess this bedrock quality, how can one obey the Divine injunction: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" (St. Matthew, 22:38)

Loyalty to friends is an holy virtue, sanctified and recognized as such by the Sacred Scriptures. Abraham was called the Friend of God. (II Chronicles, 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Job recalled the days of his youth when "the friendship of God was upon my tent." (Job 29:4) And Jesus said "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (St. John 15:19)

Of this most excellent virtue Cicero said: "Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable than fidelity—Faithfulness and truth are the most sacred excellencies and endowments of the human mind." Shakespeare put into the mouth of Caesar words descriptive of our friend: "Constant as the Northern Star, of whose true-fixed and resting quality there is no fellow in the firmament." (Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 1).

REMARKS OF PROF. W. M. HENDERSON.

May it please the Court, the family of Miss Katharine C. Bleckley, and her friends: How great an honor to be her friend! Miss Katharine was your friend and mine. She was generous, intelligent, and kind. People in Georgia, our own dear home, and people in Britain, whence a good many of our ancestors came, shall never forget her because of the wonderful humanity that made her a part of all mankind.

I cannot do better than to say what John Donne said three centuries ago—he who was chaplain to Charles I and Dean of Saint Paul's:

"No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promotorie were, as well as if a Mannor of Thy friends or of thine own were. Any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

REMARKS OF HON. PATRICK LANE.

As the Court may know, I have only recently arrived in Atlanta to take up the post of Her Britannic Majesty's Consul in this city, and I therefore never had the privilege and honour of knowing the late Miss Katharine Bleckley. I have however heard, since my arrival here, from her many friends and admirers, and particularly from the members of the English-Speaking Union, to which she dedicated so much of her life's work, what a great and wonderful person she was. Moreover, even before coming to Atlanta, after the news of the terrible tragedy at Orly became public, I heard many warm tributes to Miss Bleckley from many friends and colleagues in England and in Europe who had known her, and who were shocked and grieved to hear of her death. I therefore regret very much that I never had the privilege of knowing Miss Bleckley myself, but I am sure that her work for the English-Speaking Union, which is so much

appreciated at the Consulate, will live on and will be continued, as would be her wish.

I thank the Court for permitting me to make my own tribute to Miss Bleckley.

RESPONSE OF CHIEF JUDGE JULE W. FELTON  
ON BEHALF OF THE COURT OF APPEALS .

May it please the Court, Members of the Bleckley family and Friends: On the occasion at which we honor the memory of one so dear to many of us, repetition of words of devotion and praise should be welcome for no amount of emphasis on her sterling character and divine qualities would be adequate to the full portrayal of her true worth. While I was writing these words someone telephoned me this definition of faith: "Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned. It implies love and determines action." This is the explanation of Miss Katharine and of her beautiful life—of all the praises heaped on her today.

Her faith in God and her insight into her relationship with Him are the windows through which the by-products of love, character, devotion to duty, family, friends and humanity are revealed. Such a faith and insight are rare possessions for mortal beings. They gave thrilling and significant meaning to her every thought and deed. Life to her was not a methodic, habit-following, drab procession of actions and events. It was a, shining, growing, flowering richness which meant love and duty and service, not ends in themselves but a triumphant engagement at each step toward a goal not made with hands but eternal in the heavens. Every good work was but a reflection of a dedicated and divinely inspired soul. And so sham, simulation, subterfuge and insincerity were foreign to her being. She was as genuine as her faith and the God-likeness of her soul. To have her respect and admiration was a most meaningful experience and an incomparable compliment. It is difficult to realize that she is gone. She is not at her desk any more but she lives in the sacred chamber of our hearts. As ever we leave our highest and best thought to poetic expression:

"The heart makes a record of every shinging thing and plays it back like music through the years."

RESPONSE FOR THE SUPREME COURT  
BY ASSOCIATE JUSTICE , BOND ALMOND .

On behalf of the Court, I wish to express our appreciation for the full and comprehensive report of the committee on the life and career of our late Clerk, Miss Katharine Caroline Bleckley.

As the report discloses, she lived a life full of activity—not only as a member of the official family of the Supreme Court, but as a civic spirited member of her community, state and nation.

Her career as a public servant and in private life was unique and outstanding. As a Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals for five years and as Clerk of the Supreme Court for twenty-eight years, she faithfully served the bench and bar. During her period of service as Clerk of this court, twenty-four Justices served on the court.

She had the distinction of being the first woman to serve as clerk of the highest state appellate court.

Though not a lawyer, her loyalty and devotion, like her father's, was to the legal profession. She attended the annual meeting of the Georgia Bar Association and rarely, if ever, missed an annual meeting of the American Bar Association, whether the meeting was in San Francisco or London. She perhaps personally knew more judges and lawyers in Georgia than any other person. She enjoyed the respect and friendship of the bench and the bar. Her record of selfless service and the giving of her time and talents to persons and civic organizations—as she would have it be—is not fully known even to her closest friends. Her patriotic help and service to the welfare and entertainment of the British airmen in training in Georgia during World War II led to her being awarded by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954 a medal as a member of the Order of the British Empire, which was followed by her untiring efforts in the work of the English Speaking Union. In recognition of her public service, she was in 1956 selected as Atlanta's Woman of the Year in the Professions.

In our official family she was known as "Miss Katharine." She conceived it to be her first duty to serve the Court and its bar. To this work, her loyalty, fidelity and excellence of performance earned for her the adoration and respect of the Court and bar. To illustrate her loyalty to her work as Clerk, she rarely missed being in her office on Saturdays and state holidays, when other state offices were closed. When asked why she was in her office on these days, her reply was: "The mails and lawyers do not respect these days. If I am not here to keep the office open or to answer the mail, injury might result to some lawyer's client." Miss Katharine carried out to the letter the rules and traditions of the Court without fear or favor as to lawyers or parties.

It is significant that she met her sudden and tragic death in the airplane crash on June 3rd at Orly, France, while she was on missions of service for the Atlanta Art Association and the English Speaking Union. She died as she lived, in the service of others.

In her passing, the services of three generations of Bleckleys to the Court came to an end. Though the chief memorial to her is to be found in the records of the Clerk's office, it is fitting that this memorial, prepared and presented by the bar, will be published in the official reports of this Court.

THE BENEDICTION BY REVEREND FRANK ROSS.

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we remember this day before Thee thy faithful servant Katharine, and we pray Thee that, having opened to her the gates of larger life, Thou wilt receive her more and more into Thy joyful service; that she may win, with Thee and Thy servants everywhere, the eternal victory; and Almighty God, who sittest in the throne judging right; We humbly beseech Thee to bless the courts of justice and the magistrates in all this land and especially this court; and give unto them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that they may discern the truth, and impartially administer the law in the fear of Thee alone; through Him who shall come to be our Judge; and finally into Thy hands, Oh Heavenly Father, we commend Thy servant Katharine, and our friends and our selves. May Thy Grace and Favor ever be upon us for now and ever more. Amen.