

John Dewey Watson

John Dewey Watson was born in Arkadelphia to a pioneer Clark County family, the youngest of three brothers. Growing up on a small farm, he attended Arkadelphia public schools. Upon graduating from high school, he received a scholarship to Ouachita Baptist College where he majored in political science. Working as a radio announcer and construction worker helped him to pay for college. At Ouachita, he was honored to be selected as student body president, a member of Blue Key, and recipient of the Stephens Political Science Award.

As a sophomore, he joined the Marine Corps officer training program and was commissioned a second lieutenant upon graduation from college. After training in Virginia, he was assigned as an infantry officer with Second Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment, Third Marine Division, Kaneohe, Hawaii, where he trained his platoon for fourteen months in preparation for combat in Vietnam. After an amphibious landing at Chu Lai, Vietnam, he served as platoon leader and battalion intelligence officer for eleven months during which time he participated in every major battle his battalion fought. He was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for his service.

Following active duty with the Marines, he enrolled in law school at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville on the G.I. Bill and remained in the Marine Reserves to help pay his way through law school. He also worked part-time as a television weatherman. During law school, he was selected for the national moot court competition, as a candidate for the law review, and as dean of his law fraternity.

Upon graduation from law school, he received an appointment as a law clerk to Associate Justice Lyle Brown of the Arkansas Supreme Court. Justice Brown assigned him duties of briefing every case that came before the Court and the responsibility of writing the first draft of every civil case assigned to him as author of the majority opinion. The experience was the best education a lawyer could receive before entering practice. Justice Brown emphasized the importance of being neutral as a judge, considering all sides, and conducting ones own independent legal research before making a decision. He insisted on looking at the future implication of his decision and the precedent it would make, not only its effect on the litigants.

After serving as law clerk, Dewey was invited to join the law firm of Smith, Williams, Friday & Bowen of Little Rock (now Friday, Eldredge & Clark), where he has practiced ever since. His practice has been extremely varied from administrative law to zoning matters. He has represented individuals, workers, professionals, corporations, banks, government agencies, and other entities. He has served as counsel, special judge, hearing officer, arbitrator, and mediator in thousands of matters. He has tried more than 140 cases before juries, judges, arbitrators, and hearing officers. He has argued more

than 40 cases on appeal. He is a contributing author to four nationally published legal textbooks. He has taught many classes for law school, medical school, and legal and medical seminars. He organized the construction law section of the Arkansas Bar Association for which he received the Presidential Award of Excellence. He was awarded the Continuing Legal Education Award for Outstanding Contributions by the Arkansas Bar Association and the President's Award by Pulaski County Bar Association. He is listed in the reference The Best Lawyers in America and has an "a" "v" rating by Martindale-Hubble.

Dewey's civic work has been as a member of the boards of directors of the YMCA, Arkansas Baptist Children's Home, and Central Arkansas Health Systems Agency. He has also served the United Way and his church, Immanuel Baptist, in various capacities. He served as Chairman of the Metropolitan YMCA for three years during which time he led the organization on a successful capital campaign to become debt free for the first time in its one hundred year history. He retired as a Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his service.

Dewey met Sandra Jackson at Ouachita. They married following graduation. After the Marines and law school, they were blessed with three children. Two are lawyers and one is a banker. He and Sandra have been blessed with five grandchildren ages one to nine.