

Gunter...from Page 1A

a lot of experience, so I plan to use that.”

Gunter swore in as a judge of the circuit in 2012, and he became chief judge last year following the resignation of Chief Judge Murphy C. Miller on July 1, 2018.

The circuit consists of three Superior Court judgeships currently held by Judge Gunter, Judge Raymond George and Judge Joy Parks.

George also came aboard the circuit in 2012, and he will succeed Gunter as the next chief judge of the circuit.

Gov. Brian Kemp is expected to appoint Gunter's replacement before the end of the year, and senior judges of the Superior Court will cover the remainder of Gunter's calendar of cases in the meantime.

The office of Superior Court judge is an elected position in Georgia, only filled by appointment when necessary. And though he swore in to a new four-year term in January, Gunter said he learned in late May that he was eligible for retirement and the timing just worked out.

“I was looking at the retirement statute, and it spelled out that I had enough time as district attorney and judge to go ahead and retire,” Gunter said. “I turned 60 in May, so that makes me eligible to collect my retirement.”

“And the reason for looking at all that was, I have 27 years in a 24-year retirement system. I'm paying into a system and not getting anything

else out of it, so, economically, it made sense to go ahead and retire.”

Added Gunter, “It's partly for that reason that I'm retiring, but I've got some health issues with members of the family that I know will be more pressing on my time in the next few years, so it just seemed like a good time to go ahead and retire.”

Along with a renewed focus on family in retirement, including quality time with his grandkids, “this other endeavor I'm getting into will also take a good bit of my time as well, keep me busy.”

“I plan to improve my golf game, too,” Gunter said.

The retiring judge hails from Habersham County but has lived in Blairsville for many years, and Gunter said he and wife Rita of 37 years plan to stay in Union County post-retirement.

“I'm not moving anywhere,” Gunter said. “We built a home about three years ago, and we're still trying to break it in. We spend a lot of time away from it just because of family stuff going on, which, again, is one of the reasons that I'm retiring.”

When it comes to his legacy, Gunter said he hopes to be remembered as a fair judge who treated people well in the courtroom.

As far as what he will miss most about his job, Gunter said that, hands down, it'll be working with people to change their lives in Drug Court, which he brought to the northern part of the circuit several years ago, and Mental Health Court,

which he took over after Judge Miller retired.

“The Accountability Courts, they were a big reward for me, and I'm going to miss those folks and really hope that they do well,” said Gunter, who views such programs as crucial aspects of criminal justice reform. “All these folks are regular people but they have issues, and if we can help them with those issues, we can get them back to doing normal things.”

“That's always rewarding when that happens. It has a huge impact, not just on the individual who comes through the court, but on all of their family and coworkers and employers – people like that all get a benefit from it.”

His time on the bench would have certainly made proud his father, the late World War II Veteran and Chief Judge Jack Norman Gunter of the Mountain Judicial Circuit.

At the time, the Mountain Circuit was made up of Union, Towns, Rabun, Stephens and Habersham counties.

The Enotah Judicial Circuit came into existence not long after Gunter's father retired in 1992, as Towns and Union joined Lumpkin and White to form the new four-county circuit.

N. Stanley Gunter began his own legal career after graduating from the Woodrow Wilson College of Law and becoming a member of the State Bar of Georgia in 1986. The young lawyer shared a special moment with his dad when the elder Gunter swore him in to the practice of law.

Gunter got his first job as an attorney in the spring of '87, working for Gov. Joe Frank Harris as his assistant

executive council, and later, his executive council. And when Gov. Harris left office in 1991, Gunter moved to Blairsville to practice law with local attorney Charles Cory.

After working with Cory for a few months, Gunter struck out on his own and ran a private legal practice for several years until resolving to answer the call to public service.

He ran for election as district attorney in 1998 and won in a multi-candidate field, becoming DA of the Enotah Judicial Circuit in 1999. Gunter served in that capacity for three terms before leaving office in December 2010.

Following a unsuccessful bid for election to the Georgia Court of Appeals, he accepted a job with the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, and he soon found himself leading the organization as executive director.

He remained there for about a year and a half before applying for a vacant judgeship on the Enotah Judicial Circuit in 2012, and Gov. Nathan Deal selected Gunter for the position.

Two years later, in 2014, Gunter ran for and won re-election to his seat, and he ran again and won re-election to a four-year term last year.

Sept. 9 was the deadline for potential candidates to apply for an appointment to fill the roughly three years left in Gunter's term.

The state's Judicial Nominating Commission is in the process of reviewing submitted applications and will soon send Gov. Kemp a narrowed list for consideration and subsequent appointment.

9/11 Commemorations...from Page 1A

who perished in the attack, especially the 343 firefighters who gave their lives trying to rescue victims who were trapped or injured.

“The biggest things I wanted to convey out of this speech,” Dyer said, “was to describe the event and make sure everybody understood the lives that were lost, the damage to our country, the damage to the buildings, and convey that there are feelings associated with that.”

“Everybody needs to remember those feelings. And there are a lot of people who weren't born at the time, and they don't understand it like we do. We had all these feelings of sorrow and anger and surprise.”

“But as a firefighter, we have more feelings. We have the feelings of pride – of those firefighters going in and doing everything they could to help people.”

Dyer told the story of retired Deputy Chief Jay Jonas of the New York City Fire Department, who was a captain on FDNY Ladder 6 at the time of the attack, and who survived the collapse of the North Tower along with his crew.

Dyer had previously met Jonas at a Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs Executive Training event and had heard his presentation.

“When Chief Jonas described the situation they were in and the choices they made to rescue those people, it made me proud to be a firefighter,” Dyer said.

The Union County fire chief shared Jonas' story of how he and his crew had re-entered the North Tower after the South Tower had collapsed, making it to the 27th floor in search of victims.

When Jonas realized that the collapse of the North Tower was imminent, he ordered their retreat.

On the way down, they encountered a distraught woman, Josephine Harris, who was unable to move any further. Jonas and his crew rescued the woman, and they made it to the fourth floor when, suddenly, the North Tower collapsed, Dyer said.

After four hours of digging and searching, Jonas, his crew and Harris finally made it to the surface, where they were liberated from the nearly six-story-high pile of rubble.

“When this happened, what did we do?” Dyer asked. “We turned to God. We came together as a country. And we should never forget.”

“But we should also educate the people that weren't born then, or were too young to understand, that this is a big event. They should learn as much as possible.”

Two thousand, nine hundred and seventy-seven people died that day as a result of the terrorist attacks, including 2,605 Americans and excluding the 19 terrorists, and over 6,000 others were injured.

Compared to the Sept. 11



Union County Fire Chief David Dyer

attacks, 2,403 people lost their lives in the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, kickstarting America's direct involvement in World War II.

The people who died on Sept. 11, 2001, were mostly civilians, whereas those who perished at Pearl Harbor were mostly military personnel.

Damage to infrastructure as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks is estimated to be \$10

billion, with an economic impact of the terrorist attacks estimated at around \$3 trillion.

The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks changed something deep inside every American. For some, it was a route to fear. But for a great many more, it was a route to a new patriotism and a renewed belief in the principles upon which the United States was founded.

S.A.F.E. Inc. Volunteer Training Workshop



S.A.F.E. Inc. will be holding a volunteer training workshop September 23rd & 24th from 1 - 5 PM and the 25th & 26th from 9 AM - 1 PM.

S.A.F.E. stands for Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, and is the Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Advocacy program serving Towns and Union counties since 1989.

There are several areas of need for volunteers: at our emergency shelter, our child advocacy center, and at both our thrift stores. If you would like to register for this training, or would like more information about volunteering with S.A.F.E., please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Vicki Franklin at 706-379-1901, or email her at vfranklin@safeservices.org.