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### **Between the Lines Summer 2012**

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Summer 2012

## Between the Lines Summer 2012

University of Tennessee College of Law

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# Tennessee Law Between the Lines

*The Semi-Annual Online Companion to the Tennessee Law Magazine*

## Federal Charges

Like many of their classmates, Jarrod Blue and Michael Cottone spent their summers working in the judiciary. The pair clerked for Senior Circuit Judge Eugene Siler of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. The federal clerkship was an opportunity for the students to gain hands-on experience in a court that has produced four U.S. Supreme Court justices.



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## Finding Balance

Felix Laughlin (LAW '67) found the secret of balance 40 years ago when his wife gave him his first bonsai tree. Since then, the retired attorney has grown his collection of the trees to more than 100. For the last 16 years, he has served as president of the National Bonsai Foundation.



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## A Supreme Visitor

Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan will visit the University of Tennessee College of Law on Friday, Oct. 19, to present the Rose Lecture. The lecture, which alumni are invited to attend, is scheduled for 1 p.m. in Cox Memorial Auditorium.



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*Photo provided courtesy of The Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.*

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## LAW'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The fall 2012 issue of *Tennessee Law* will give an in-depth look at the challenges and trends in the law school application process, debt management and the role played by employer recruitment. Learn how UT Law is navigating the changing times and what you can do to help future generations of UT lawyers.

## MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Send an email to editor, Tanya Brown, at [tgbrown@utk.edu](mailto:tgbrown@utk.edu), or remit to:

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Any letters received may be edited for length and clarity and could appear in print. Go ahead—make your voice heard!

## COMING EVENTS

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## News & Events

### Federal Charges



Rising 2Ls Jarrod Blue and Michael Cottone are back on campus after a summer experience that will help shape their legal careers.

The two UT law students spent six weeks as judicial interns with Judge Eugene Edward Siler, Jr. of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Working out of the federal courthouse in London, Ky., Blue and Cottone enjoyed a front row seat, observing the inner and outer workings of the federal appellate judicial system.

"We had the opportunity to work on, what I call, high-octane stuff," Cottone says. The pair spent most of their internship writing draft opinions, but also had numerous opportunities to observe court proceedings as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio.

"The best part was seeing some great advocacy," Blue says. "When we went to Cincinnati we saw some great attorneys from national law firms on cases involving labor disputes. You also get to see some not-so-great advocacy skills. That should definitely help us when we participate in moot court next year and later in our practice."


"It was really enjoyable," Cottone says. "Not just the oral arguments, but seeing some really great briefing. We were able to delve into some complex legal issues and deal with them at a high level."

When not in court, Blue and Cottone wrote draft opinions based on the judge's decisions. Working with Judge Siler's four judicial clerks, the two aspiring litigators gained invaluable experience.

"We received our assignments through the clerks and the draft opinions go through a lengthy editing process," Blue says. "We did get feedback from Judge Siler, and we all talked on a regular basis and had lunch together every day, which was great."

One of the clerks is Jay Inman, a 2009 UT Law graduate, who is finishing up his one-year clerkship with Judge Siler. Prior to that, Inman clerked for U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Wier for two years in the Eastern District of Kentucky.

"Judge Siler selects several outstanding law students each year for summer internships," Inman says, "and these interns have challenging and rewarding experiences, including substantive assignments on active Sixth Circuit cases.



“As clerks we try to give the interns a hands-on introduction to the clerkship experience. They are our colleagues and collaborators for the summer.”

Inman has watched Blue and Cottone grow this summer. “Their work as researchers and writers has been excellent,” he says. “They have been an important part of our team and great representatives of the University of Tennessee.”

“This experience has reaffirmed my interest in litigation,” says Blue, who hopes to compete with the National Environmental Moot Court team this coming year. “It has also helped me to enhance my writing skills. The most important part of the appellate process is the brief; this experience has made me conscious of that.”

Cottone is also interested in a career in litigation and said he will pursue a judicial clerkship before entering private practice. “I understand much better now how judicial decisions are actually made,” he says.

UT law students and graduates have developed quite a history with the Sixth Circuit. Another 2009 graduate, Nathan Kibler, clerked for Judge Siler during 2010 and 2011.

“Clerking for Judge Siler has been a terrific experience,” Inman says. “He teaches us a great deal about legal analysis and appellate advocacy, and he models how to treat everyone with kindness, class, and respect in all aspects of life.”

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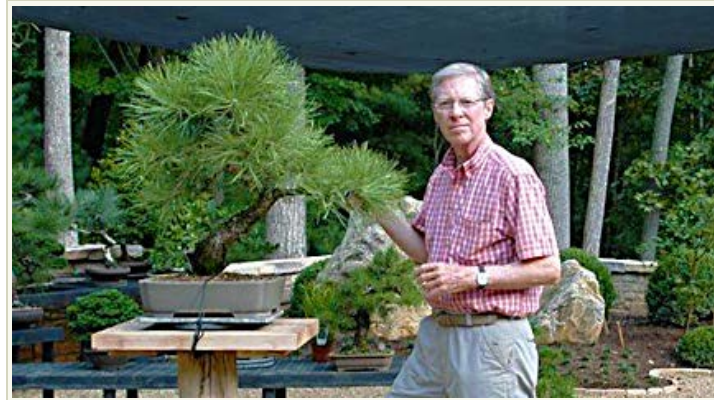
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## News & Events

### Laughlin finds peace in art of bonsai



When asked what it takes to reduce stress and achieve balance in one's life, Felix Laughlin '67 has a quick answer: bonsai—the Japanese art form of growing miniature trees.

And for him, it all began with a couple of juniper trees in the Big Apple.

In 1972, Laughlin was working seven days a week as a corporate tax attorney for a large firm in New York City. Prior to that, he had spent four years in the chief counsel's office at the IRS national office. Sensing that he needed an activity outside of the grind of corporate tax, Laughlin's wife Betty Gayle came home one day with what would become his first bonsai tree.


"She had a family friend who had spent time in the Far East, and he had a bonsai collection," Laughlin recalls. "We were living in a tiny apartment in the Upper East Side without a balcony or anything, so in the winter we had to put the trees in the refrigerator to keep them dormant. You could open the door in the wintertime and see the fall—red and yellow, which was quite amazing. There was no room in the refrigerator for anything else, so we ate out a lot, which my wife really liked."

Laughlin was immediately hooked. "Bonsai is art and horticulture together," he says. "People assume bonsai are special dwarf trees, but any tree that gets a woody trunk will work. It's the pruning technique that makes it a bonsai. All you need is a tree from the wild or from a nursery and a few tools to get started."

From that humble beginning, Laughlin's collection has grown to well over a hundred trees. And for the past 16 years he has served as president of the National Bonsai Foundation. In fact, he was a founding member of the organization, which was an outgrowth of a gift of bonsai from Japan in honor of America's bicentennial in 1976.

The Japanese bonsai are housed in the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., in a pavilion built especially for the bicentennial gift. Following the success of the Bonsai & Penjing pavilion, the National Bonsai Foundation was organized to raise funds to build a North American bonsai pavilion. Laughlin, who had moved to Washington to continue his corporate law practice, joined the effort and actually drafted the articles of incorporation for the foundation. He has been working with the group ever since.

Laughlin retired earlier this year and moved his collection to Asheville, N.C. He



found a man who hauled cattle in a 26-foot trailer and commissioned him to transport the 100-plus trees. "It was quite an ordeal," he says. "We built benches to set the trees on and tied them all down. It took a couple of days to load the trailer and drive it down here."

While admitting bonsai is a great stress reliever, Laughlin cautioned it might not be for everyone. The trees require constant attention for watering, pruning, repotting, etc.

"You have to be committed," he says. "It is like having a pet that will live longer than you, if you do it right. Instead of getting old and decrepit like a dog or cat, bonsai get better and better."

The most famous bonsai in the world, Goskin, a gift from the emperor of Japan housed at the Japanese pavilion, is 200 years old, Laughlin says. Another, a 400-year-old white pine, survived the Hiroshima bombing and was in one family for six generations before it was donated to the Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington, D.C.

"It is a terrific thing for lawyers," Laughlin says of his hobby. "Lawyers, generally, are pretty dedicated people. They can keep up with things, which is what you have to do. I have a number of friends that are doctors and lawyers and they really enjoy this. It is a serious pursuit and you have to follow through."

Laughlin also likes to paint and admits to having an artistic bent, which is why he has enjoyed his many bonsai trees throughout the years.

"Now that I am retired, I have more time to spend with my bonsai," he says. "It is like a window into nature. I don't know if my wife regrets having given me that tree 40 years ago to provide a hobby and balance in my life. I certainly don't."



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## News & Events

### A Supreme Visitor



United States Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan will be at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to present the annual Rose Lecture. The event, sponsored by the College of Law, is open to law students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as members of the federal, state, and local judiciary, university administrators, and other members of the campus community. The lecture is scheduled for 1 p.m., Friday, Oct. 19, in Cox Memorial Auditorium in the Alumni Memorial Building.

For security reasons, backpacks or large bags will not be permitted in the building. The event will not be ticketed, but attendees will be required to show UT or state identification and to identify themselves as alumni of the law school at the door.

President Barack Obama appointed Justice Kagan to the Supreme Court in 2010. She is the court's 112th Justice and its fourth female Justice. She is the third sitting Supreme Court Justice to visit UT in 22 years. The College of Law hosted Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in 2010 and Justice Antonin Scalia in 1990. In addition, retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor visited UT in 2008 to help open the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy.

Justice Kagan, 52, was born in New York. She received her bachelor's degree from Princeton University, her Master of Philosophy degree as a Daniel M. Sachs Graduating Fellow at Worcester College at Oxford University, and her law degree from Harvard Law School.

Early in her career, Justice Kagan served as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and was an associate in a Washington, D.C. law firm. She has been a professor at the University of Chicago Law School and a professor and dean at Harvard Law School.

She was associate counsel to President Bill Clinton and then served as Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and Deputy Director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Before becoming a Supreme Court Justice, she served for a year as the Solicitor



General of the United States.

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