

## A JACKSON LAWYER'S TRIP TO TYLERTOWN

I now practice only family law and supervise a four lawyer, ten member firm. But, in my early years, I practiced alone and worked on many different kinds of law. I started my own practice in 1988 because I knew that I had to be in control of my own destiny. The thing that surprised me about starting my own business was that I was not alone; there were many, many people who were there to help in some way. I learned the most important lesson in life, and that is that the people around you elevate you as they desire and you must never forget that.

One of the people who came almost out of nowhere to be a friend and supporter was Jane Simmons. She was selling disability insurance at the time and the first time I met her, she was very friendly and introduced herself. She said, "Hey, I'm Jane Simmons, and I'm from Tylertown, Mississippi." I would always kid her because she had a thick southern accent and would always say that she was from "Tylertown, MEESSEESSEEPPEE." I always wondered why she had to add the "MEESSEESSEEPPEE" because I had never heard of a "Tylertown" anywhere else. But then I realized that most folks from Mississippi, will do that.

I'm from Laurel, MEESSEESSEEPPEE

I'm from So So MEESSEESSEEPPEE

Like, where else is there a Laurel, or So So, or McComb or Picayune for that matter. I guess its just pride. People are proud of where they are from in Mississippi.

Anyway, Jane had the biggest smile and the a zest for life that matched. And she was always for me. One day though, she said she needed me. Her ex husband was taking her to Court to reduce his child support. Court was in Tylertown and she did not have the money to pay for a lawyer. I said, "Jane, you know I'll look after you." She squealed like a little girl and said, "Oh boy, are the heads gonna turn in Tylertown when I show up with my Jackson lawyer!" I wondered, "how will they even know." She said, "Mawk (it was never MaRk), the whole town will be talking the second we get there.

Jane and I drove down to Tylertown. As we grew near, she pointed out where she had grown up and told me who lived where and what the story was on each family. We found our way to the Courthouse and the Court held the docket call. In most cases, Courts in the smaller towns have only a couple of weeks of court and all of the cases are set for trial on the same day, so everyone shows up with their lawyers and the Court sorts out who is there and whether a case can be settled and when it might be tried. We learned we would have our trial after lunch.

Well, it was lunch time, so Jane said, "I'm gonna take you to \_\_\_\_\_. My \_\_\_\_\_ owns it. I can't wait to show you off to everyone....my fine Jackson lawyer." We got to the café and were met by a very friendly lady who was standing right at the door. She gave a great big smile and threw her arms around Jane and said, "Hey, Jane, how yoo." Jane said, "I'm fine, how yoo. How's yo momma an them?" "They're fine. Y'all come see us, hear." The lady looked at me and, without letting go of Jane, said, "Who's this Jane." "Miss Jones, this is my friend Mawk. He's my lawyer from Jackson." Ms Jones smiled at me like I was a first cousin and said, "Well, Hey, Mawk, how yoo." I smiled and said, "I am very good, thank you." She said, "Well we sure are glad to have you here in Tylertown, MEESEESSEEPPEE." "Thank you"

We then got up to the front of the line to pick up a tray. There was another lady. She gave

a great big smile and threw her arms around Jane and said, "Hey, Jane, how yoo." Jane said, "I'm fine, how yoo. How's yo momma an them?" "They're fine. Y'all come see us, hear." The lady looked at me and, without letting go of Jane, said, "Who's this Jane." "Miss Smith, this is my friend Mawk. He's my lawyer from Jackson." Ms Jones smiled at me like I was a first cousin and said, "Well, Hey, Mawk, how yoo." I smiled and said, "I am very good, thank you." She said, "Well we sure are glad to have you here in Tylertown, MEESSEESSEEPPEE." "Thank you."

We filled our trays and got to the end of the line where a lady was waiting to take our money. She gave a great big smile and threw her arms around Jane and said, "Hey, Jane, how yoo." Jane said, "I'm fine, how yoo. How's yo momma an them?" "They're fine. Y'all come see us, hear." The lady looked at me and, without letting go of Jane, said, "Who's this Jane." "Miss Williams, this is my friend Mawk. He's my lawyer from Jackson." Ms Williams smiled at me like I was a first cousin and said, "Well, Hey, Mawk, how yoo." I smiled and found myself saying, "Well, hey, Miss Williams, I'm fine, how yoo and how's yo momma and them." Suddenly, I was one of them. I wanted to be one of them. It was like a big family.

Jane and I ate and it felt like the eyes of the whole place were on us. Jane said, "They're all jealous me having lunch with my big Jackson lawyer." People came up to us during lunch and the scene was repeated over and over, "Hey, Jane, How you...." We finished lunch and walked back to court and put on our proof at the hearing. Since Jane and I had a two plus hour drive back to look forward to, it was fortunate for me that the ruling came down in Jane's favor. On the way back, we celebrated the victory and enjoyed remembering the commotion that had been caused by Jane bringing her Jackson lawyer to Tylertown. The thing that made it special for me was seeing where special people like Jane come from; its places like Tylertown, MEESSEESSEEPPEE.