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McAlester News-Capital

McAlester's Justice Taylor to be named to Oklahoma Hall of Fame

By James Beaty
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— A McAlester native is set to be bestowed with the state's highest official honor. Oklahoma Supreme Court Vice-Justice Steven Taylor has been selected as a 2009 inductee into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Another area resident, football great Lee Roy Selmon, who grew up in Eufaula, has also been named as a 2009 inductee.

They are among seven Oklahomans who will be inducted during a program to be held on Nov. 12 at the Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center.

“Justice Taylor has been widely recognized for both achievements in his career and his reputation as a public servant,” said Shannon L. Nance, president of the Oklahoma Heritage Association & Gaylord-Pickens Museum.

“His influence, leadership and enthusiasm are assets to any organizations that have the privilege of his presence.”

Taylor will join others from McAlester who are among the 628 individuals who have been inducted into the Hall of Fame since its beginnings 1928.

Others from McAlester who are in the Hall of Fame include former U.S. House Speaker Carl Albert, former Gov. George Nigh, country music superstar Reba McEntire, who was born in McAlester and attended school in Kiowa; Clark and Wanda Bass, one of the few husbands and wives inducted into the Hall of Fame; Air Force Four Star Gen. Bennie Davis and J.G. Puterbaugh.

Taylor has already been inducted into the Oklahoma State University Hall of Fame and has received the Regents Alumni Award from the University of Oklahoma — the only person to have received the highest alumni honors from both colleges.

A McAlester High School graduate, Taylor joined the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as the youngest judge in the U.S. armed forces. Returning to McAlester, he became the youngest elected mayor in the city's history in 1982.

Taylor subsequently served as a judge for more than 21 years, serving as an associate district judge for Pittsburg County and then as district judge for Pittsburg and McIntosh counties, where he presided over more than 500 jury trials.

In 2004, Taylor presided over the trial of Oklahoma City bomber Terry Nichols. Later that year, Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry appointed Taylor to the state Supreme Court.

Among those who will be joining Taylor and Selmon as 2009 Hall of Fame inductees are basketball great and best-selling jazz musician, the late Wayman Tillsdale, of Tulsa; C. Kendric Ferguson, of Altus; Marlin G. “Ike” Glass Jr., of Newkirk; V. Burns Hargis, Stillwater; and Polly A Nichols, of Oklahoma City.

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T. Boone Pickens, left, who has been touring the country to tout alternative energy, talks with Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Steven W. Taylor, right, who will be inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in November. They are pictured before Pickens spoke at the Sovereignty Symposium in Oklahoma City on Wednesday.