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Tribute to Memory of Justice Thomas Harris, of Fifth Appellate District

Justice Harris was California Judge for 23 Years

Fresno—Administrative Presiding Justice James A. Ardaiz, of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, has paid tribute to the memory of Associate Justice Thomas A. Harris, who died on November 12, 2008, after a brief illness.

Justice Harris served as a California trial judge and later as an appellate justice for 23 years. He was appointed to the municipal court in Fresno in 1985 and was elevated to the superior court two years later. In 1990, he was appointed to the Fifth Appellate District.

“Justice Harris was a valued colleague and highly respected jurist,” said Presiding Justice Ardaiz. “A man of steadfast loyalty and strong principles, Justice Harris was a very private man, but when he shared his views on an issue or a case his thoughts were succinct and his words brief. He was committed to the truth. He will be missed by his family, his friends, his community, his profession and his colleagues on the Court of Appeal.”

Presiding Justice Ardaiz continued: “Of the thousands of cases he either authored or participated in he was most proud of *In re Donna Sue Hubbard*, an unpublished opinion he authored reversing a conviction of multiple child sexual abuse concluding there was a ‘substantial likelihood’ the children’s testimony was false because of the manner in which it was obtained. He had participated years before in affirming Hubbard’s conviction and, while separating his views of the merits of the issues on appeal, had long held personal concerns about the reliability of the verdict. Upon subsequent writ of habeas corpus Justice Harris found vindication for his concerns and was outspoken in addressing what he felt was an injustice.”

(over)

Justice Harris received an undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California. He received his law degree in 1964 from Stanford University School of Law and began practice as a deputy district attorney for the County of Fresno before entering practice with his father as Harris & Harris from 1967–1985. Justice Harris is survived by his wife, Judy; his son, Michael; his daughter, Hilary and three grandchildren.

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