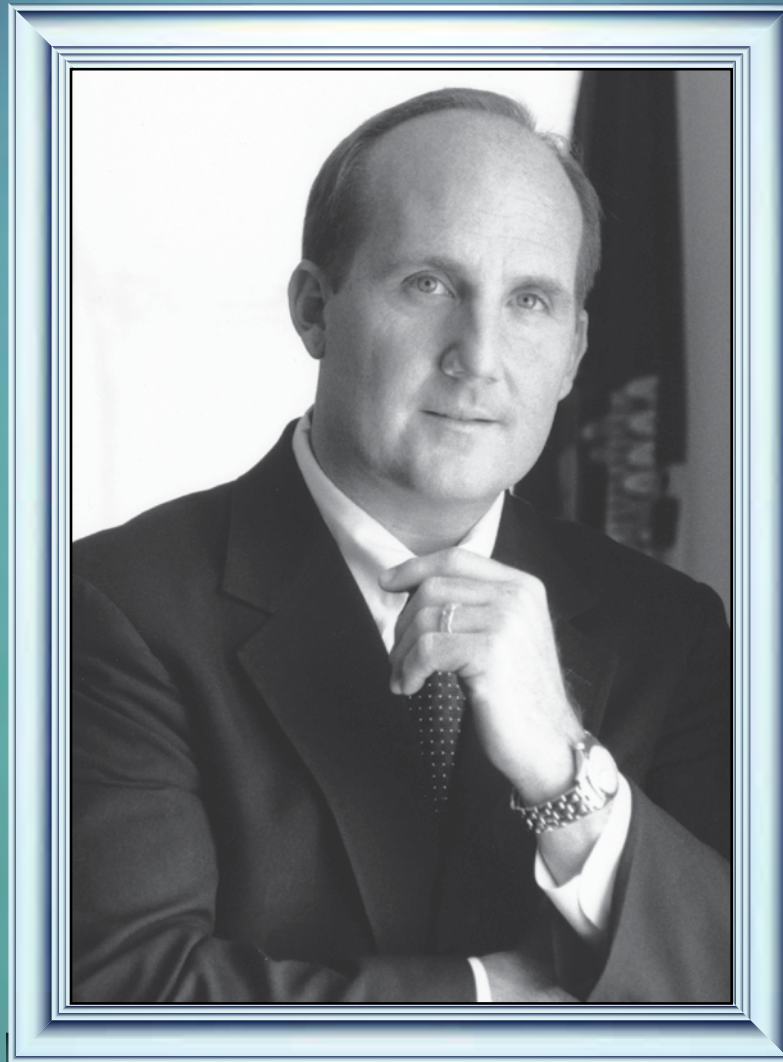


# **Portraits & Perspectives: Louisiana Supreme Court Associate Justices**



**One on One with Louisiana Supreme Court  
Associate Justice Greg G. Guidry**

**Interviewed by Margaret E. Judice**

Associate Justice Greg G. Guidry has served on the Louisiana Supreme Court since January 2009.

Previously, he was a judge on the Louisiana 5th Circuit Court of Appeal and a district court judge for the 24th Judicial District Court in Jefferson Parish.

He was employed in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis, A.P.L.C., as a member of the commercial litigation section. For nearly 10 years, beginning in 1990, he served as an assistant United States attorney with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Justice Guidry is a past president of the Judge John C. Boutall American Inn of Court and the Louisiana 5th Circuit Judges Association. He was appointed to the Louisiana Sentencing Commission by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal. He is the Supreme Court's representative to the Louisiana State Law Institute and the Louisiana Commission of Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice.

He is a 1985 graduate of Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center where he was inducted into the Order of the Coif and selected for the Louisiana Law Review. In 2010, he earned a master's degree in judicial studies from the National Judicial College.

**Journal:** Tell us a little bit about yourself.

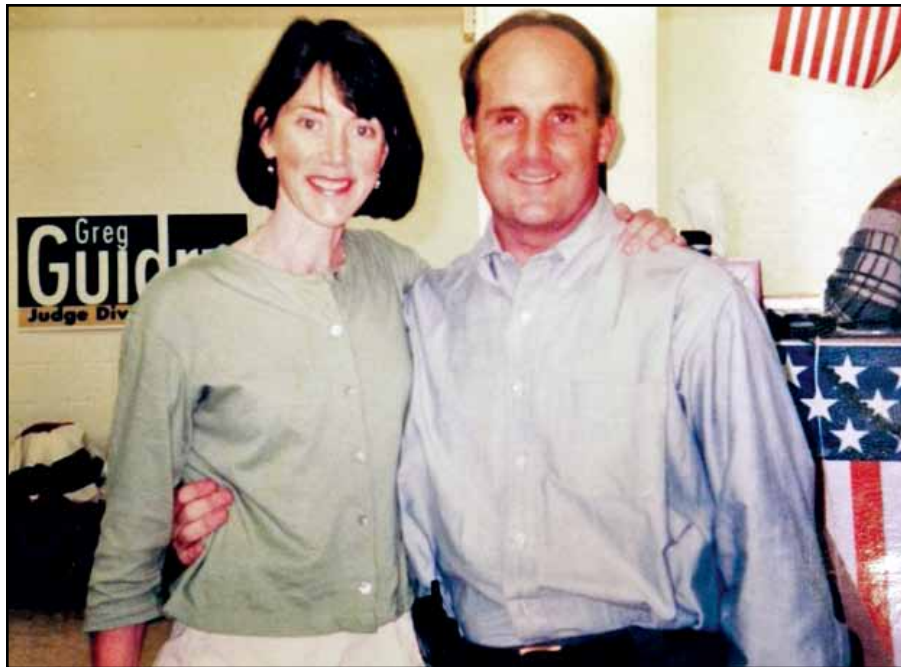
**Guidry:** I was born and raised in Jefferson Parish where I attended public schools from the first grade all the way through high school. I attended Louisiana State University for my undergraduate studies and law school. I also earned a master's degree from the National Judicial College in judicial studies.

**Journal:** What was your undergraduate degree?

**Guidry:** My major was political science with a minor in classical civilizations. I was fortunate to be able to study subjects that interested me.

**Journal:** At what point in your life did you decide you wanted to become a lawyer?

**Guidry:** In high school. I did not have



Louisiana Supreme Court Associate Justice Greg G. Guidry and his wife Cathy Guidry on election night. Photo provided by the Guidry Family.

a specific idea of exactly what I wanted to do as a lawyer, but that is when I decided to go to law school. I really never strayed from that goal. Even back then, I could see that lawyers played an integral role in public life, and I wanted to be a part of that. It was an easy decision for me.

**Journal:** Do you have any lawyers in your family?

**Guidry:** No, my background is much more blue-collar. One of my grandfathers was born on a sugar plantation in Lafourche Parish. He was taken out of school in the first grade and put to work bringing water to people working in the cane fields. He later became one of the first bulldozer operators for Boh Brothers Construction Co. in New Orleans. He loved that company and worked well into his 80s. My other grandfather was an Italian barber. He loved being with his family and making wine from Japanese plums.

**Journal:** I noticed in your biography on the website that you have served as a court of appeal judge and now a justice of the Supreme Court. What made you decide to run for the Louisiana Supreme Court?

**Guidry:** I wanted to serve the people of Louisiana in the most meaningful way possible. The decisions we make on a

daily basis are important and difficult. The high volume of work makes it even more challenging. Yet, the Supreme Court is a wonderful place to work.

I have been blessed in that I have enjoyed every one of my jobs. I was a district court judge for six years. Nothing is more interesting than presiding over a jury trial. There are critical moments in a trial that are absolutely fascinating to watch. The court of appeal was equally rewarding.

I must say that I also found my campaign to be quite rewarding. My current district covers both sides of Lake Pontchartrain from the Mississippi/Louisiana state line in the north to the west bank of Jefferson Parish in the south. I now have wonderful friends in six parishes that I remain in close contact with. The campaigns allowed me to understand the people and culture of my election district in a manner that could not be duplicated.

Before I became a judge, I was a federal prosecutor with the United States Attorney's Office in New Orleans. I was there for almost 10 years and could have made it my career. It was a difficult decision to leave. I prosecuted scores of cases involving political corruption, fraud and civil rights violations. Many resulted



in federal jury trials, and I argued cases before the United States 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. I served as a supervisor, ethics officer and grand jury coordinator.

I began my career in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis where I was able to learn good habits from some of the best lawyers in the nation.

**Journal:** Which judicial position has been the most challenging?

**Guidry:** They are each challenging in their own way. District court judges are in the middle of the action. They interact with the public much more than appellate court judges on matters that are extremely important to the people appearing in their courts. I have tremendous respect for, and confidence in, our jury system. It was an honor for me to serve as the guide and host for jurors while they served in my court. We should never take them for granted. They are called upon to make difficult decisions, and this pressure takes a toll on them. However, I never met a juror who did not find the experience gratifying or who did not walk away with a greater appreciation for our system of justice.

Of course, the Supreme Court is much quieter. However, it is a misconception that we live an isolated existence. We interact with each other, and the members of our staff, on a daily basis. The Supreme Court enjoys an incredibly bright and dedicated group of employees. Quite the opposite from being alone, I am part of a very impressive team.

**Journal:** Have any of the cases you have heard during your service as a Louisiana Supreme Court justice been particularly significant or stand out in your mind?

**Guidry:** The ones that stand out to any judge are those involving the death penalty and the termination of parental rights. These are the two categories of cases that are most likely to cause me to lose sleep at night because of their extreme consequences. However, every case is critically important to those involved. Our work at the Supreme Court includes civil cases involving hundreds of millions of dollars, matters of constitutional importance, and all types of criminal cases. I try to never lose sight of the hard



Louisiana Supreme Court Associate Justice Greg G. Guidry has been riding and showing Western performance horses since he was nine years old. Photo provided by the Guidry Family.

work put into these cases by the dedicated attorneys involved. They are all difficult and interesting in their own way, but we are required to pick and choose from the thousands of writ applications we receive every year in accordance with our rules.

**Journal:** I've noted that you have basically been in the judicial system since the year 2000. Have there been any changes or anything noteworthy or significant in the practice of law or any other area in the past 15 years?

**Guidry:** The cost of accessing our court system has risen to a level which I believe is not acceptable. Hiring an attorney, and litigating a case through the justice system, is beyond the financial reach of many people. I believe that is why the majority of cases settle before trial. It appears to me that attorneys and members of the public are selectively using our district court judges to resolve significant pre-trial issues on an inevitable path towards settlement. Very few civil cases actually go to trial.

With regard to criminal cases, we cannot ignore the fact that court costs,

finances and fees are always moving in only one direction — up. A first offense misdemeanor charge could lead to a massive financial obligation for someone of meager means. Sometimes, we are setting people up to fail.

**Journal:** Is there any kind of movement that the judges are pushing for with the Legislature to try and make it somewhat more affordable for the indigent or the lower socioeconomic people?

**Guidry:** Yes. Our Judicial Council is currently reviewing each and every cost imposed in criminal cases. It is my hope that some could be reduced or eliminated. In the civil context, there is a continuing effort to raise money for free legal representation. Our attorneys have been generous in donating their time on a pro bono basis. I am extremely proud of them.

**Journal:** Do you have any advice for lawyers who are preparing to argue before the Supreme Court?

**Guidry:** Lawyers should be organized, concise and completely accurate in everything they represent to the Court. We do read the briefs. We do delve into the record. A misleading or false statement will inevitably be revealed. Attorneys should be able to attribute every factual statement they make to the record on appeal. A surprising number of attorneys cannot answer the simple question of whether or not a fact they referenced is in the record.

**Journal:** What part of your seven years on the Supreme Court have you enjoyed the most?

**Guidry:** I enjoy our collegiality. There are seven of us, and all seven discuss and vote on every matter that comes before the Court, no matter how important or insignificant. We have quite different personalities and philosophies, but we are required to work with each other. We know each other's families, hobbies, likes and dislikes, and it makes us close. This helps us get through the rough spots. This collegial atmosphere extends beyond the justices to include the members of our staff. They are all part of the Supreme Court family. We have a tremendous amount of respect for each other, and this has been very rewarding.

**Journal:** If you had not been a lawyer, what other career do you think you would have chosen?

**Guidry:** I would have chosen a career in the foreign service. In fact, I was offered a position as a Foreign Service Officer with the United States Department of State but turned it down to become a judge. I love traveling and suffer from wanderlust. When I was in law school, I was awarded a Rotary Foundation Scholarship for International Understanding. I spent a year in South Africa where I studied classical civilizations and Roman law at the University of the Witwatersrand. This was where Nelson Mandela earned his law degree many years earlier. When I was with the United States Department of Justice, I served as a legal advisor and trial advocacy instructor to the Republic of South Africa and the United States Virgin Islands. I have also helped to train judges and prosecutors in the African nation of Malawi as they come to grips with complex financial fraud and corruption cases.

**Journal:** I would like to lighten things up a bit. Tell us about your family.

**Guidry:** I am married and have two

children. My wife is from Canada. We met while I was in South Africa. She is an emergency room nurse. She loves Louisiana! My daughter recently graduated from Louisiana State University and is beginning her career as a teacher with the St. Tammany Parish Public School System. My son is in high school. He has always wanted to be a firefighter, and I believe that he will actually become one. He is only 16, but he has already been taken in by our local fire department. He works entire shifts and goes on calls. However, he is not allowed to go into a burning building, much to his chagrin. His parents have no problem with that restriction. Both of our children are public service-oriented, and that makes us proud.

**Journal:** Is there anything fun or interesting about you that we do not know that you care to share with us?

**Guidry:** Most people do not know that I have been riding and showing Western performance horses since I was nine years old. It has been the greatest constant in my life and something I could not do without. It is my great passion and the perfect escape.

**Journal:** Do your children share your love of horses?

**Guidry:** My children were brought up around horses in a way that I could not have imagined when I was young. But the love of horses is like the love of sailing or riding motorcycles. You are either born with that affection or you are not. If you are, nothing can replace it. They have little interest in riding horses at all, but my wife does. So there were many times over the years when the kids were inside watching television while we were outside riding horses. Can you imagine that?

**Journal:** How many horses do you have?

**Guidry:** We have three horses, two dogs, three cats, four chickens and about 30 cows on a farm in St. Tammany Parish. Do you think that is enough?

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