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DAILY REPORT

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INSIDENEWS

Savannah Law School sells its building, plans closure. **p. 5**
Alabama says it will execute mail bomber who killed a judge and terrorized the South in 1989. **p. 6**

Newsreel

Colorado AG Will Speak at GSU Law Commencement

Georgia State University College of Law has announced that Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman, an alumna, will be its commencement speaker in May.

Coffman, who earned her J.D. in 1991 from GSU Law, has spent almost 20 years in Colorado government after starting her legal career at the Georgia Attorney General's Office. A Republican, she is running for governor of Colorado.

The Colorado attorney general said in a statement that her GSU Law education "provided me with a launching pad that took my legal career further than I ever imagined when I crossed the stage at my own graduation."

"My time at Georgia State instilled in me the value of service, and I hope to share with the graduates how service not only shapes strong lawyers, it forms active and engaged community members who can make a lasting impact," she added.

In the Georgia Attorney General's Office, Coffman defended the departments of Juvenile Justice and Public Health in litigation, then became a lawyer for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. After the pipe bomb explosion in Centennial Olympic Park, she acted as the group's liaison with victims and their families.

Coffman moved to Denver and joined the Colorado General Assembly's Office of Legislative Counsel in 1997. After a brief stint in private practice, she became legal and regulatory director for the state's Department of Public Health and Environment, then deputy executive director. Then-Gov. Bill Owens made her his chief counsel in 2004, and the following year then-Attorney General John Suthers appointed her chief deputy attorney general.

Coffman threw her hat in the ring to succeed him and was elected attorney general in 2014.

GSU Law's commencement ceremony will be Friday, May 11 at 10 a.m. in the GSU Sports Arena at 125 Decatur St. S.E.

—Meredith Hobbs

HYOSUB SHIN/AJC

Emory Police officer Frank Stroupe testified Thursday in the murder trial under way at Fulton County Courthouse that he heard Tex McIver tell his attorney, "What do I say? What's the plan?"

Police Officer Testifies Tex McIver Discussed 'Plan' With Attorney Before Wife Died

R. ROBIN MCDONALD
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AN EMORY UNIVERSITY police officer testified Thursday that he overheard Atlanta attorney Claud "Tex" McIver in the hospital emergency room asking his attorney, "What do I say? What's the plan?" as McIver's wife was dying.

Officer Frank Stroupe testified in McIver's ongoing murder trial that emergency room personnel were treating McIver's wife, Diane McIver, for a gunshot wound as he passed by the waiting room where McIver and his lawyer, Stephen Maples, were talking.

McIver, who has never denied firing the shot that killed his wife, is on trial on charges of malice murder, felony murder and three counts of influencing witnesses. McIver and his lawyers have always insisted the gun fired

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Jury Adds $125K in Punitive Damages to Ogletree's $1.8M Malpractice Verdict

GREG LAND | gland@alm.com

AFTER AN EIGHT-DAY trial, the jury in a legal-malpractice case awarded nearly $2 million to a British wildlife filmmaker who lost her job with National Geographic over forged signatures on visa documents prepared by Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart and a former lawyer there.

The total includes $125,000 the jury tacked on Thursday following a short trial on punitive damages.

Lead plaintiffs attorney Linley Jones said her client, Karen Bass, was vindicated after four years of grinding litigation.

"*We feel great," said Jones. "We think this* establishes for Ms. Bass the wrongdoing by Ogletree Deakins. It speaks volumes for what she went through."

Jones said she also will seek about *$250,000* in post-judgment interest because the defendants turned down an offer to settle the case.

Ogletree and former associate Brandi Knox are represented by Carlock Copeland & Stair partners Joe Kingma and Shannon Sprinkle and associate Matthew Gass.

Kingma declined to comment Thursday.

During closing arguments Wednesday, Jones said Bass lost her job with National Geographic because of "falsehood and forgery" she ascribed to Ogletree and Knox.

Jones said Bass suffered financially and professionally when National Geographic learned that four years of Bass' visa applications included the forged signature of one of its officers. National Geographic terminated Bass shortly after the revelation.

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Revenue, Partner Profits Jump at Morris Manning

MEREDITH HOBBS | mhobbs@alm.com

MORRIS, MANNING & MARTIN posted substantial gains in revenue and profit in 2017.

Revenue jumped 8.4 percent to $129.8 million, after a slight dip in 2016, and net income increased 12.6 percent to $49.7 million for the Atlanta-based firm.

That boosted profits per partner by $108,000 (10.2 percent) to $1,172,000. Revenue per lawyer increased $40,000 to $770,000, even though Morris Manning increased average annual lawyer head count by a net of five lawyers to 169 lawyers. The equity partner count was flat at 42, out of 82 total partners.

Louise Wells, the firm's managing partner, attributed the revenue and profit increase to "second-generation partners coming into their own," plus the payoff from the six lateral partners that Morris Manning added in

See ***MORRIS MANNING****, page* ***3***

JOHN DISNEY/ALM

Managing partner Louise Wells said the firm, which turned 40 last year, is seeing its investment in younger partners pay off.

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OGLETREE, from page **1**

The unauthorized signature was written by Knox.

The alleged forgeries and lack of oversight by Knox's superiors at Ogletree did "real damage," said Jones, costing Bass her position at National Geographic and scuttling opportunities for other projects.

"Some projects never got made," said Jones, and National Geographic has still not rehired her, though Jones said she is well-regarded there.

Bass was fortunate to have found an Asia-based media company that was willing to hire her, Jones said.

"Who would want to get caught up in all this baggage?" asked Jones, representing Bass with Linley Jones Firm senior associate Angela Forstie.

Jones suggested the jury award total damages of more than $3 million, plus punitive damages.

Kingma said Knox had admittedly made "mistakes" and that the firm was agreeable to paying Bass "reasonable" damages for several months when she was unable to get a visa and was out of work, as well as for her "aggravation."

But, he said, Bass should not be delivered a windfall worth millions of dollars for that mistake.

"You've heard a lot about forgery in this case," said Kingma. "Why are they calling it forgery? Because Ms. Bass wants to demonize Brandi. She wants you to think she's a horrible person."

"This was a misunderstanding, not some capital crime," said Kingma. "She didn't take any money. She made a mistake."

The case began in 2010 when Bass was hired to work on National Geographic's "Wild America" television series. Because she had to travel to the U.S. frequently, she and National Geographic retained Knox in 2011—then an associate with Littler Mendelson—to help secure an O-1 work visa for people possessing particular talent in the arts, sports, business or athletics.

GREG LAND/DAILY REPORT

Linley Jones (left) and Angela Forstie of The Linley Jones Firm represented plaintiff Karen Bass (center) in her legal-malpractice suit against Ogletree Deakins and one of its former lawyers.

Knox discussed the petition with Megan Edwards. National Geographic's senior vice president and associate general counsel.

According to Bass' account, Knox forged Edwards' signature on the petition and sent it to the U.S. State Department.

The defense said Knox simply signed the petition on Edwards' behalf and filed it. After moving to Ogletree, she continued to sign Edwards' name for the next three years as the time came to renew the visa.

In 2014, the visa processing center contacted Edwards with questions about the visa, and she said she had not signed the renewals. Bass was terminated the same day.

In 2016, Bass and her production company, Karen Bass Media, sued Ogletree and Knox in Fulton County Superior Court, asserting claims including legal malpractice, breach of fiduciary duty, breach of contract, negligent representation and fraud.

The defense team challenged Bass' damage claims, arguing that she has worked for other outlets and that her reputation was apparently unharmed. Bass, defense lawyers pointed out, was awarded an Emmy after her dismissal from National Geographic and was inducted into Britain's Royal Geographical Society.

> **"We feel great. We think this establishes for Ms. Bass the wrongdoing by Ogletree Deakins. It speaks volumes for what she went through."**
>
> —Linley Jones, The Linley Jones Firm

Late Wednesday afternoon the jury awarded nearly $1.8 million, including $565,000 in general damages.

The jury apportioned 2 percent of the liability to Bass.

After Thursday's trial, Bass said the series of events had been like an "emotional roller-coaster."

"It's like I said on the stand," said Bass. "If you make a mistake, you apologize, you remedy it, and you move on. That never happened." DR

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