



CHIEF PROSECUTOR

by Jenny Starling Foss photos by Frank Fortune

THE SIGN ON THE WALL READS: "PROSECUTORS SAY CATCH AND Release is for Fish not Felons," a reflection of the unique combination of keen sense of humor and no nonsense approach that defines Richard A. Mallard, District Attorney. As DA of the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit, a four-county area that includes Bulloch, Screven, Effingham, and Jenkins, Mallard oversees the prosecution of felons in Superior Court.

To do the job sometimes you have to be able to laugh at the absurdity of things. Things like budgets and case loads and ridiculous criminal defenses. When he started working for the circuit in 1991, Joe Martin was the DA and there were five employees in all. The office employees handled cases from all four counties with no computers to aid them. Martin and Mallard shared the court room duties and handled their own investigations. On any given court day, Mallard could be in

Jenkins County prosecuting a case while Martin was in Screven County doing the same. Today, the Effingham County office alone has five fulltime employees, a sign of the areas' growing population and the subsequent growing rates of crime for all of the counties within the circuit.

What started as an opportunity to gain courtroom experience for Mallard at some point became his career. He found early on that he liked prosecution much better than private practice. For Mallard, corralling criminals was more rewarding than refereeing divorcing spouses.

The son of retired businessman, Jack, and longtime Statesboro High School English teacher, Esther, Mallard moved here in seventh grade and grew-up on East Grady Street with his three brothers: John, Mike, and Bobby. All four boys attended area schools and Georgia Southern College. Mallard graduated from SHS in 1973, GSC in 1978, and went on to attend Mercer Law

School. After graduating from Mercer in 1981, Mallard was first a law clerk in the Tallapoosa Circuit, then, took a job as Prosecutor with the Cobb County Solicitor's Office. While working in Atlanta, Mallard attended First Baptist Church, and it was at a Wednesday night supper that he met future wife, Janet. From Cobb County, Mallard and his new wife moved to Savannah, where he took a job in the DA's office, then to Columbia, SC, his mother's hometown. It was in Columbia that Mallard went to work in private practice. By 1988, he was back home in Statesboro, where he soon joined the office he is in charge of today.

On August 1st, 2002, Mallard was appointed Ogeechee District DA by Governor Roy Barnes. He was the only one nominated and the only one who applied. By 2004, he was facing election and ran unopposed. He has been in charge of overseeing the growing number of cases in our area since then. For 20 years he has been

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– D.A. Richard Mallard

"I simply want to tell you that there are some men in this world who were born to do our unpleasant jobs for us."

– Miss Maudie Atkinson, *To Kill a Mockingbird*



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COURTROOM BOUND

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prosecuting felons, for 17 of those 20 years, he has been doing it here. His office also handles probation revocation, bond hearings, preliminary hearings, appeals, juvenile prosecutions, drug prosecutions including condemnations of property, and welfare fraud, among other things like providing victims’ services.

What motivates a man like Mallard to dedicate his time to fighting crime? “I feel an obligation to do everything I can to make this community as safe as I can. I moved back here because I wanted to live in a small college town. My parents live here and my kids live here. I want their home to be safe.” Mallard’s children include oldest daughter Christie, 20, a student at College of Charleston; son, Rob a recent graduate of Bulloch Academy and Region Eight Star Student for 2008; youngest daughter, Anna, 13, a seventh grader and recent DAR Essay Contest winner.

Mallard isn’t alone in his desire to keep our area safe. “Everyone who works here

feels the same way. You couldn’t be a prosecutor if you didn’t feel that way. That’s where the satisfaction comes from in a job like this: the personal stake in it. That’s who we hire.”

Mallard believes in finding the best people for the job and putting them in place. He understands the need for experienced prosecutors. He says, “I learned a lot about dealing with people from Joe Martin.” As a result, he has a loyal staff with little turnover. Attorney Kathy Bradley handles juvenile prosecution. Eva Hickman is in charge of Victim Services. Scott Brannen handles all local felonies including those from arrests by the Sheriff’s office, the State Patrol, and GSU. Daphne Jarriel is in charge of prosecuting cases generated by the Statesboro Police Department. Tom Woodrum is Chief Investigator with the DA’s office and he also coordinates scanning court records for the computer system. That’s just a small portion of the dedicated staff at the Statesboro office. Mallard also oversees a staff of six in Effingham County. He has two full-

time lawyers there. Two others split Jenkins and Screven Counties. He has a full time Drug Prosecutor as well. It now takes a staff of 23 with more personnel and more office space needed.

What types of crimes are on the increase? According to Mallard, burglaries and armed robberies increase dramatically each year, 75 – 80% of which involve drugs. Because of this he relates, “Criminals are just getting meaner and meaner.”

No matter how mean the bad guys get, however, Mallard will continue to fight to keep his part of the state safe for law abiding citizens. For the Ogeechee Circuit, an experienced District Attorney with a personal stake in prosecutions is key to curbing crime. As the population continues to increase, especially in Bulloch and Effingham Counties, so will the need to prosecute the criminals that growth brings. The old saying goes – *It’s a dirty job, but somebody has to do it.* Richard Mallard does the dirty work for us. ■