Webster Hubbell

Webster Lee “Webb” Hubbell (born 1948), is an author, lecturer, consultant, advocate, and Arkansas lawyer who practiced law from 1974-1993 in Pulaski County. He has held executive level positions in government and industry including: U.S. Associate Attorney General, Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, Mayor of Little Rock, Managing Partner of the second largest law firm in Arkansas, and Executive and Chief Counsel for a large Washington based Commercial Insurance Company. While he practiced law he was Mayor of Little Rock from 1979 until 1982, one of the nation’s youngest mayors. He also served on Little Rock’s City Board from 1978 to 1984. He was appointed by Bill Clinton as Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court in 1984 at age 36. When Clinton became President of the United States, Hubbell was appointed as Associate Attorney General, which is the third highest ranking individual in the Justice Department. In 1997, he wrote an autobiography, Friends in High Places, and in May 2014 his first in a series of legal thrillers, When Men Betray, was published by Beaufort Books. In May 2015 he published book two of the Jack Patterson Thriller Series, Ginger Snaps.

1 Personal

His wife is Suzanna “Suzy” Hubbell (née Ward). He has four children, Walter, Rebecca (Dietz), Caroline (Yingling), and Kelley. He has seven grandchildren. Born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas, Hubbell was a three sport letterman at Hall High School. He attended the University of Arkansas on a football scholarship where he played offensive tackle for the Razorbacks. In his senior year, the Arkansas Razorbacks were SWC co-champs and beat undefeated Georgia in the Sugar Bowl. He was drafted in the National Football League draft by the Chicago Bears, but a serious knee injury ended his football career. He graduated from Arkansas with degree in Electrical Engineering in 1970, and then graduated with a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Arkansas School of Law with honors.

He began the practice of law with the Rose Law Firm in 1973. In September 1978, he was appointed to Little Rock’s City Board of Directors, and in 1979 he was elected Mayor of Little Rock. He served in that position until 1981. He was also re-elected to the City Board of Directors in 1980 where he served until he resigned in 1984 to become the Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court. After his service on the Court, he returned to the Rose Law Firm where he remained until he left for Washington, D.C. in January, 1993.

He was active in community affairs including, serving as President of the Visiting Nurses Association, on the Board and Treasurer of the Arkansas Arts Center, on the Board of the UAMS Foundation, and on the Board and Chairman of the State Board of Bar Examiners.

2 Federal government career

After the 1992 election, Hubbell was one of the Clinton Administration transition’s senior officials, Counsel to the Transition Board and responsible for vetting appointments to the Cabinet and other top positions, among others George Stephanopoulos, Henry Cisneros, and Jim Woolsey, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency and Bernard W. Nussbaum, White House Counsel.

After Clinton’s inauguration, Hubbell became White House liaison to the United States Department of Justice, arriving at Justice on January 20, 1993. During the period before a Attorney General was approved, Hubbell worked as the assistant to the Attorney General, but reported to Bush appointee Republican Acting Attorney General Stewart Gerson. Clinton floated Hubbell’s name for the Attorney General job on January 30, 1993, after Zoë Baird’s name was withdrawn, but Clinton nominated Janet Reno. Hubbell was formally nominated as Associate Attorney General on April 2, 1993, and was immediately attacked for his ties to the Clintons. Hubbell’s nomination was quickly confirmed by the U.S. Senate, however, and he served as Associate Attorney General until April, 1994. He oversaw all the civil divisions of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and was appointed by Janet Reno as the Chief Operating Officer of Department and its 100,000 employees and $10 billion budget.

3 Resignation

During the Whitewater controversy, Hubbell was indicted for alleged overbilling of clients while in private practice. Hubbell had previously resigned as associate attorney general on April 14, 1994 to avoid controversy regarding his work at Justice and in hopes to reach a civil resolution with his old firm. In December 1994, Hubbell
4 Additional criminal charges

During the months after Hubbell’s resignation, he entered into legal consulting contracts with several clients including the Indonesian Riady family and Revlon.[8] This activity became the focus of another Starr investigation while Hubbell served out his sentence. Despite years of investigation, and although Independent Counsel Starr alleged that Hubbell “did little or no work for the money paid by his consulting clients,” Starr ultimately concluded there was insufficient evidence to prove that any legal consulting contract or payments were intended to influence Hubbell’s cooperation with investigators in the Whitewater investigation.[7] Probably due in no small part because Hubbell and his clients disputed each and every one of Starr’s assertions, providing evidence of the work performed for each and every client.

Starr and his prosecutors were convinced that Hubbell knew all the Clinton’s secrets that were under investigation and that, if pressured enough, Hubbell would tell all. On April 30, 1998, Hubbell and his wife were indicted for conspiracy, tax evasion and mail fraud. Hubbell had, in the course of Starr’s investigation, provided documents as part of an immunity agreement with the Independent Counsel about his consulting agreements. Despite this agreement, Starr used this information to obtain an indictment of Hubbell, his wife, his accountant and his tax lawyer.

District Judge James Robertson dismissed the charges against Hubbell and his wife on July 1, 1998, ruling that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr had overstepped his authority in bringing the Hubbell indictment. Judge Robertson ruled that Starr had violated Hubbell’s Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination by building a case that relied on materials collected under an immunity agreement with Hubbell.[9] Starr appealed to the Court of Appeals and Judge Robertson was affirmed. Starr then appealed to the United States Supreme Court. In an 8-1 decision (with Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist the lone dissenter), the Supreme Court also ruled in favor of Hubbell.[10]

On November 14, 1998, Starr obtained an indictment of Hubbell for a third time, this time for alleged fraud and allegedly giving false testimony to the House Banking Committee and federal banking regulators.[11] On June 30, 1999, the day Starr was required to step down as Independent Counsel, Hubbell entered into a plea agreement resolving the indictments and bringing Starr’s pursuit of him to an end. Hubbell pleaded guilty to one charge of failing to disclose a potential conflict of interest that occurred ten years earlier. He was sentenced to one year of probation in exchange for the prosecutor dropping all charges against his wife, his lawyer, and his accountant and an agreement by Starr not to bring further charges against Hubbell ever again.[12]

5 Life after Starr

During the six years of Starr’s investigation Hubbell worked for criminal justice think tank NCIA. After all the investigations were finally over, Hubbell worked as an independent legal consultant, general counsel for an Internet start-up, and general counsel and senior vice-president for a large commercial insurance company until July 2010. After a liver transplant caused by a rare form of hepatitis, he moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where he now writes novels, posts regularly at www.thehubbellpew.com, www.clydefitchreport.com, and www.talkradionews.com. His first novel, When Men Betray, was released in May, 2014 by Beaufort Books.[13]

6 References


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