

# Torts and Insurance Practice Section Seminar

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*by order of presentation*

### **Rachel Igdal**

*The Steinberg Law Firm, LLP  
North Charleston, SC  
(Course Planner)*

Ms. Igdal is an attorney with the Steinberg Law Firm in Charleston, South Carolina. Her practice focuses mainly on personal injury, workers compensation, and construction defect litigation. Ms. Igdal earned her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her Juris Doctor from the Charleston School of Law. She currently serves as Chair of the Torts and Insurance Practice Section of the South Carolina Bar, is a member of the Bar's Construction Law Section, an active member of South Carolina Women in Law, and a Board Member of Operation Home based in Charleston, South Carolina.

### **Julie Moore**

*Duffy & Young  
Charleston, SC*

Julie devotes her litigation practice to representing people who have been harmed by a product or medical malpractice, pursuing wrongful death claims for families who've lost a loved one, and advocating for people and small businesses who have been the victims of fraud, insurance bad faith and breaches of fiduciary duty. She is a partner with Duffy & Young, a litigation firm based in Charleston.

Frequently recognized for her service to the South Carolina Bar and her community, Julie was previously named Young Lawyer of the Year by the South Carolina Bar for her contributions to her profession and community. Julie just finished service on the board of directors for Charleston Legal Access and previously served as a member of the board of directors for Special Olympics South Carolina. She has also served on the City of Charleston's Commission on Women. She previously served as the chair of the Torts and Insurance Practice Section Council of the South Carolina Bar, on the editorial board of the SC Lawyer magazine, and as an adjunct faculty member at the Charleston School of Law.

## **The Honorable Stephanie McDonald**

*S.C. Courts of Appeals  
Columbia, SC*

After graduation from the University of South Carolina School of Law, Judge McDonald returned home to Charleston, where her practice focused on civil litigation and appellate matters in state and federal courts. In 2011, she was elected to the Circuit Court and in 2014, she was elected to the South Carolina Court of Appeals.

Judge McDonald has been active with the Bar and in her community, serving as an attorney member of the South Carolina Commission on Judicial Conduct, an Attorney to Assist Disciplinary Counsel, and a South Carolina Bar Foundation board member. She is a former President of the Junior League of Charleston, St. Philip's Church Women, and Charleston Lawyers Club. Prior to joining the bench, she served on a number of local boards and commissions in the Lowcountry, including the City of Charleston Mayor's Commission for Children, Youth and Families.

Judge McDonald's proudest achievement is her daughter, Susanne. In her very first role, Susanne played "Scout" in the Charleston Stage production of "To Kill a Mockingbird" and later attended the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. Susanne is a summa cum laude graduate of the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. She lives in New York, where she works in film and theatre.

## **Jay Berly**

*Berly Rouse Attorney at Law  
Mount Pleasant, SC*

Jay completed his undergraduate studies at Wake Forest University and graduated from Wake Forest School of Law in 2017. Following graduation, Jay served as a law clerk for the Honorable Mary Geiger Lewis and then for the Honorable R. Bryan Harwell. After his clerkship experiences, Jay worked at a large civil defense firm in Charleston for 4 years before opening his own firm with his childhood friend and current law partner Greg Rouse. Jay has been active in the Young Lawyers Division of the South Carolina Bar, including graduating from the Leadership Academy with the Class of 2022 and serving on the Annual Bar Convention Committee for YLD. Jay was voted as the "Rising Star of the Quarter" in YLD for the first quarter of 2024. Jay is an active member of the South Carolina Bar Association, the Charleston County Bar Association, and the South Carolina Association for Justice.

## **The Honorable Jane Merrill**

*S.C. Circuit Court  
Greenwood, SC*

A Greenwood native, Jane H. Merrill is the daughter of Leslie Lusk Hawthorne, a retired social worker, and the late John R. Hawthorne. She is married and has two children.

Judge Merrill earned a B.A. degree magna cum laude from the University of South Carolina in 2002, and a juris doctor from USC Law School in 2007, where she was on the Editorial Board of the South Carolina Law Review. Academic honors include Phi Beta Kappa, President's List, and Dean's List.

After graduation from law school, Judge Merrill clerked for the late Honorable Wyatt T. Saunders, Jr., Circuit Court judge, served as an assistant solicitor with the office of Eighth Circuit Solicitor, and worked for the McDonald Patrick Law Firm as a litigation associate. In 2013, she started her own law firm and represented clients in criminal, civil, and family courts, and before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. She also taught as an adjunct professor at Lander University.

While practicing law, Judge Merrill was active with various civic and community organizations including the Greenwood Community Theatre, Kiwanis International, Greenwood County Community Foundation, Greenwood County First Steps, coach for the Greenwood High School mock trial team, and as senior warden at the Church of the Resurrection. In 2022, she completed the SC Bar Leadership Academy, and in 2019, she received the G. Dewey Oxner, Jr. Mentor of the Year Award.

## **Heyward Grimball**

*Richardson Plowden & Robinson, PA  
Mount Pleasant, SC*

I joined Richardson Plowden in the Charleston office in 2015. I have been lucky to focus my practice on construction law and litigation, general litigation/insurance defense, and land use/municipal work. While studying for a joint degree in Law and International Business, I participated the Moot Court Bar, the Journal of International Law and Business, and the Moore School's Consulting Case Competition Team, which placed second at the John Molson School of Business' International Case Competition in Quebec. I am most proud to be the father of two wonderful children, Ellerbe (10) and Nelson (9), and most grateful that my amazing wife, Paige, has not seen through my flimsy charade after 13 years of marriage. I grew up surrounded by lawyers, and I love being a part of the practice of law. Like Jimmy Buffett, I've never won any awards or been nominated for anything. I'm just hangin' on while this old world keeps spinning - And it's good to know it's out of my control.

**Laura Paton**

*Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani  
Charleston, SC*

Laura Paris Paton is an experienced litigation partner celebrating her twentieth year of practice in South Carolina. Her practice concentrates on construction disputes, product liability, and premises liability matters. As a partner at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP, she serves as lead defense counsel across multiple jurisdictions, representing general contractors, subcontractors, construction material manufacturers, and insurance carriers in high-stakes litigation. She is certified as a South Carolina Civil Court Mediator, served eight years on the Board of the South Carolina Women Lawyer's Association, and is a graduate of the South Carolina Bar Leadership Academy class of 2014. She is a published author and a regular speaker at construction industry events.

Laura earned her J.D. from St. John's University School of Law and her B.A. in Political Science from Georgia State University.