

Title: **Retirement beckons Cranfill**
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Retirement beckons Cranfill

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After more than 10 years serving on the bench, Fifth District Judge Steven Cranfill has retired. It took effect on July 31.

Cranfill grew up in Worland and served as a parole and probation officer in the early 1970s. In 1975 Cranfill began his service as a state representative for Washakie County. His term ended in 1978. At the age of 34, he received his Juris Doctor from the University of the Pacific in California in 1984.

For the next 20 years Cranfill worked in private practice and served as Cody's city attorney from 2001 to 2006.

In 2006, Gov. Dave Freudenthal named Cranfill to the bench.

"It has been a real honor to serve," said Cranfill at this retirement party at the Big Horn County Courthouse on Monday. "People don't come to court because they want to. But we try to prevail and try to work through whatever issue they may have. It has been a challenge but an honor."

One of the areas in which

Cranfill has seen a change is technology and how it is now used in cases over the last 10 years.

"Technology plays a role in cases now," said Cranfill. "You don't see a custody case anymore without pages of text messages from people."

Cranfill also said while serving he has seen 75 to 100 jury trials come through his court.

"You learn a lot from juries," said Cranfill. "The people here take jury duty seriously which is great. They see it as an obligation and duty."

Cranfill adds that he has done his best to ensure the court process for those who come into his court has been a speedy one during his time.

"Getting decisions is just as important as what the decision is," said Cranfill. "And I think we have that for the most part. I'm proud of that."

During adoption cases, Cranfill is known for making adoptions special for the children in his court often by giving them a stuffed animal on adoption day.

"We give out pens and stuffed animals and try to make it a special event for them," said Cranfill.

Cranfill has also made an effort to educate those on the law in the Big Horn Basin, often times going to schools and talking to students about the law.

"We live in a free country with the rule of law and I have made an effort to talk to students about it," said Cranfill. "If we didn't have the law then we wouldn't be here."

Cranfill plans on doing some mediation in retirement and some pro bono cases.

"I'm going to fish more and catch up on reading and do all those things you think about doing in retirement," Cranfill said.

On July 31, the day Cranfill's retirement takes effect, newly appointed Judge Bill Simpson will put on the robes for the Fifth District.

Gov. Matt Mead appointed Simpson in late June. Simpson, a Cody High School graduate, has a bachelor's in science and

a Juris Doctor degree from UW College of Law. He has been in private practice for 33 years and has worked for the Wyoming Public Defenders Office.

"The Judicial Nominating Commission sent over three great candidates, making this decision very difficult," said Gov. Mead in a press release. "Bill Simpson received supportive letters from judges, fellow attorneys, a victims' services organization, and members of the community from many walks of life, as well as from others around the state. His long and strong commitment to the Cody area, his criminal and civil legal experience acquired over decades of practice, and his considerable volunteer legal work to help those in need were important in making the final selection," added the governor.

In reaction to his appointment, Simpson said: "I am truly and deeply honored by Governor Mead's appointment. I will work as hard as I can for the people of the Fifth Judicial District — a place I know and love."

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PHOTO BY KYNLI SMITH

Steven Cranfill has hung up his robes after a long career on the bench.