



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2017

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*Carolina Center for Civic Education*

**"Investing in our future, creating tomorrow's leaders"**

### **BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENT DIES IN FIRE; FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED**

*By Robin Thomas, Investigative Reporter for Utopia Eyewitness News, WUNN  
(AKA Sue H. Johnson, CCCE Mock Trial State Coordinator)*

**May 19, 2017: Breaking News!** *11:10 pm (newscast transcript)*

Reporter Robin Thomas here, with Utopia Eyewitness news. I'm standing in front of Spaller Dorm at Arcadia Forest Preparatory Academy in Arcadia. Behind me you can see the enormous fire that's threatening to engulf this dorm and the others nearby. Fire crews are working hard to get the blaze under control. At this time, we have no idea what caused the fire, or if anyone is caught inside. We'll stay on the scene to update our viewers as we learn more.

**May 19, 2017:** *11:20 pm (newscast transcript)*

Robin Thomas again. I've just learned that one student, Dakota Pope, was in a third floor dorm room when the fire started. Pope was able to escape out a window but was injured and is awaiting transport to the hospital. Even more shocking, Pope reported that a classmate is trapped inside. Firefighters are in the building now, attempting to rescue the student. Thankfully we've learned that other students were away from the dorm at an end-of-semester school dance. Oh, look...the firefighters appear to be carrying a badly burned individual to the ambulance. This is just horrible, horrible....Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected by this terrible fire.

**May 20, 2017:** *6:01 pm (newscast transcript)*

Reporter Robin Thomas here, with another update on the heartbreaking events at Arcadia Preparatory Academy. Early this morning the Arcadia Police announced that the fire at Spaller Dorm was deliberately set, and they detained Alex Buckley, a student at the school, as a person of interest. Only hours later we learned that the student pulled from the burning dorm, Carly Walsh, died from her injuries. It seems likely that criminal charges will be filed. We will continue to follow this story as it unfolds and will keep you apprised as we learn more about these tragic events.

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Reporter "Robin Thomas" will soon have much more to report, for the case of *State of Utopia v. Alex Buckley* will proceed to trial on **February 3, 2018**. The case, co-authored by Elise Wilson and CCCE State Coordinator Susan H. Johnson, was the brainchild of Elise Wilson, a 1L law student at the University of Georgia School of Law. Elise participated in our state mock trial program at Hoggard High School in Wilmington before attending UNC-Chapel Hill, where she competed all four years as both a witness and an attorney and served on the Executive Board. Elise and Sue both look forward to watching the teams bring the case to life at Regional and State Finals competition in the spring.

The authors want to thank Michael D'Ippolito for his extensive comments, as well as Ben Felder, Kevin Harrison, David Yasinovsky, and CCCE Case Committee members Brooke Schmidly, Brad Bannon, and Chair Gordon Widenhouse for their insights and expertise in refining this year's case.

## **MOCK TRIAL EXPERIENCE INSPIRES CASE CO-AUTHOR ELISE WILSON**

*By Sue H. Johnson, CCCE Mock Trial State Coordinator, and Elise Wilson, 2017 Case Co-Author*

It has been my pleasure to work with Elise Wilson over the past several years. Now a 1L at UGA law school, Elise has been involved in our program in several capacities: student competitor, team mentor, summer camp counselor (4 years), and case co-author. As Elise details below, mock trial has played an enormous role in her life and her plans for the future.



**How did you first get involved in mock trial? What made you want to do mock trial at UNC, too?** My joining mock trial was totally an accident. During my last year of high school, one of my friends convinced me to participate on a mock trial team in the YMCA's National Judicial Competition in Chicago. I wanted to go to Chicago, so I agreed. I'm really glad I did – our team took third at the competition and I was hooked. Because I had only worked with one high school case, I had very little experience coming into college, but that didn't stop me from relentlessly working to continue my involvement in the competition. I liked the fact that mock involved more creativity than other types of debate, and, as someone who spent 10 years doing musical theater, I loved the acting and theatric aspects of it too. Plus, nothing is more fun than cross examination and objections!

**Did mock trial prompt your interest in attending law school, or was it already something you knew you wanted to do?** I had thought about going to law school prior to mock trial, but I think doing mock definitely solidified that as a goal. A "career in the law" is a huge, abstract concept, and mock trial made it seem a lot more concrete. Mock trial made it clear to me that I really enjoy litigation, and that I would be content pursuing that as a career.

**You helped coach a local high school team while at UNC. What led you to do that? How did you benefit from that experience? Why should others get involved as team mentors?** Mentoring was one of the best things I did while I was in college. One of my good friends, Matt Burke, started mentoring teams when he was studying at UNC Law, and he invited me to get involved. I had captained teams in college before, so I had some familiarity with teaching people who had no mock trial experience. But mentoring for high school was a lot more rewarding. The kids always impressed me with how hard they worked and how much they were able to accomplish; there were definitely several times they schooled me with their knowledge of the cases.



I think everyone who can mentor should mentor; I will be looking hard for a team to work with here in Georgia. It feels really good to teach kids how to do a thing I love doing and to see them feel bold and empowered in trial at the end of the year. I

have never felt prouder than I did seeing my kids compete at States the past couple years, and I would not trade my mentoring experiences for anything.

**What made you interested in writing a mock trial case? What did you learn from that experience?**

I wanted to write a case that would be fun for competitors – a case that I would have enjoyed when I was a high school student. I think that for most students, a murder charge and a fire will do that. I wanted to create a case that retains a high amount of complexity but is a bit shorter and less intimidating to high schoolers than cases the past few years. I also wanted to give teams a way to discuss an important issue (i.e. relationship violence) that didn't put anyone in an uncomfortable position like having to blame a victim or portray an abuser. Writing the case was extraordinarily fun and surprisingly difficult. We had a few short months to create material that hundreds of students and coaches will pore over for an entire school year, so there was pressure to evaluate the potential significance of every word and phrase. I've never written anything like that before, and it was a really interesting challenge (one that I hope I will be lucky enough to get to face again in the future). While I'm sure there are things we missed, I hope it's an enjoyable case and that people like it!

**How do you like law school so far? Has it been what you expected? What are your future plans?**

Several people have told me that mock trial is the best preparation you can get for law school, and so far, that seems true. The types of thinking and reading I've had to do for law school feel similar to mock trial,



and having a head start on the legalese definitely doesn't hurt! That's not to say it isn't difficult – contracts class alone has more work and reading than I ever encountered in college – but I think it will all be worth it in the end. Once I graduate and pass the bar, I hope to work in civil litigation, preferably in a firm that will let me get trial experience. While I love North Carolina and it will always be my home state, I hope to stay in the Atlanta area for at least a few years and get a taste of city life here in the Peach State.

**The CCCE is grateful** for alumni like Elise Wilson who invest in our students, making it possible for them to reap the benefits of mock trial participation. We hope you'll consider how **you** can help "create tomorrow's leaders" by mentoring eager high school students. Teams in **Asheville, Greensboro, and Davidson** have asked for attorney advisors to mentor their teams. If you can help or would like more information, contact State Coordinator Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com).

**CALENDAR 2017 – 2018 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

Early Registration Deadline	Friday, Sept. 22, 2017
Final Registration Deadline and \$175 Team Fee Due	Friday, Dec. 15, 2017
Team Member List, Code of Ethics, Release Forms Due	Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2018
**Last Day to Withdraw Without Penalty**	Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2018
Regional Competition	Saturday, Feb. 3, 2018
Widhouse Award Nomination Materials Due	Weds., Feb. 21, 2018
State Finals Competition	Fri. – Sat., March 9-10, 2018
National Championship, Reno, NV	May 10-12, 2018

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2017 – 2018 COMPETITION SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!**

State Finals:	TBD
Asheville:	TBD
Fayetteville:	Britton Law, P.A.
<i>Supporter:</i>	Cumberland County Bar Association
Gastonia:	The Sumwalt Law Firm
Greenville:	Hardee & Hardee, LLP
High Point:	TBD
Pittsboro:	Glenn Mills Fisher & Mahoney, P.A.
Raleigh:	TBD
Salisbury:	TBD
Wilmington:	TBD

**CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW** - partnering with CCCE to host our State Finals!

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR** – also hosting rounds at State Finals!

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2017 – 2018 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSOR!**

**Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Company of North Carolina**

### ***IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .***

***Special thanks to our 2017-18 Regional Coordinators and CCCE Board Members:*** Asheville Regional Coordinator Mark Melrose, Fayetteville Regional Coordinator Rebecca Britton, Gastonia Regional Coordinators Holden Clark and Daniel O'Shea, Greenville Regional Coordinators Jeffrey Cannon and Phil Entzminger, High Point Regional Coordinator Rich Manger, Pittsboro Regional Coordinator Robert Jessup, Raleigh Regional Coordinators Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados, Salisbury Regional Coordinator Darrin Jordan, Wilmington Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr.; and CCCE Board Members Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Rich Manger, Bradley Bannon, Adrienne Blocker, Christine Scheef, Brooke Schmidly, Mark Sumwalt; Valerie Johnson (ex officio).

### ***Special thanks also to our 2017-18 Site Coordinators:***

***Asheville:*** Brett Pinkston, ***Fayetteville:*** Tanja Shurling and Karen Kueny, ***Gastonia:*** Beverly K. Moore, ***Greenville:*** Jessi Cannon, ***High Point:*** Rose Pratt, ***Pittsboro:*** Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, ***Raleigh:*** Michelle Keely, ***Salisbury:*** Emily Applewhite, and ***Wilmington:*** TBD.

***\*\*If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the NCAJ High School Mock Trial program, please contact Sue Johnson, State Coordinator, at [sueheathjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:sueheathjohnson@gmail.com), or Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Mock Trial Committee Co-Chairs, at [rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com) or [mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com](mailto:mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com).***