



STEPHEN B. RUSSELL
Office of the State Attorney
20th Judicial Circuit

Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee

July 29, 2013

We are pleased to announce that Chief Assistant State Attorney Randall McGruther is the 2013 Eugene Berry Award recipient. The award was presented today in Orlando by the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association. Former Berry Award winner, State Attorney Steve Russell presented the award.

Eugene “Gene” Berry was a former prosecutor in Charlotte County. In 1982, he was murdered at his home by the wife of a man Gene sent to prison on drug charges. Gene was 46 years-old when he was shot to death. The award is in honor of this Assistant State Attorney who dedicated his life to his profession and his community.

Mr. McGruther began his prosecutorial career in the 20th Circuit in 1979. He has prosecuted numerous complex and noteworthy cases during his more than 30 years as a prosecutor. In 1990, he prosecuted Valentin Bereza, a Soviet defector who came to the U.S. and began working for Lee County as an engineer. Bereza shot and killed his wife and older daughter. He attempted to kill his 17-year-old daughter but she survived a gunshot wound to the eye.

Mr. McGruther was the lead prosecutor of the “Lords of Chaos” case which involved a group of four Riverdale High School students who murdered a band teacher in 1996. He also handled the Fred Cooper case involving the 2005 murder of a 28-year-old couple in a gated Fort Myers community. In 2009, he led the trial prosecution of Juan Mendez for the murder of his wife and mother-in-law.

In addition to successfully prosecuting cases, McGruther is an administrative leader and mentor to the staff of the 20th Judicial Circuit. He has served as the Chief Assistant State Attorney since 2003. He has been an innovator in championing many technological and organizational changes resulting in more efficient and effective prosecution and court services.

“I am proud of the achievements of Randy McGruther. He has done a tremendous amount of work in his role with the State Attorney’s Office that has made Southwest Florida a safer place to live. It is an honor to work with him.” – Steve Russell, State Attorney

A photo is attached.

Samantha Syoen
Communications Director
State Attorney’s Office
239-533-1125
ssyoen@sao.cjis20.org