

The Honorable Sam A. Joyner III

November 3, 1941 – June 21, 2026

SOURCES & REFERENCES — companion to the full obituary

Sources & References

Each note below points to where the corresponding fact was drawn from. “Lawton Constitution” refers to articles from swoknews.com (The Lawton Constitution) and “Tulsa World” to articles from tulsaworld.com; book and exhibition references are to Sam’s own published works and the 2013 Oklahoma State Capitol exhibition placard.

- [1] Parents Sam Joyner Jr. and Ora Simpson Joyner: confirmed in the obituary of his sister, Doris “Dee” Hunt (Lawton Constitution / swoknews.com, Dec. 18, 2022), which names her parents as “Sam Joyner Jr. and Ora Simpson Joyner” and lists “brother, Sam Joyner III.”
- [2] Mother died when he was young; raised by stepmother Hazel Joyner: provided by the family. The two-marriage structure — his father married Ora, and after her death married Hazel (mother of Debbie, Janice, and Judy) — was confirmed directly by the family.
- [3] “Finally, a federal judge with a sense of humor”: quoted from fellow Magistrate Judge Shon T. Erwin, in “Joyner speaks at Law Day luncheon here,” by John Bear (Lawton Constitution, May 2, 2008).
- [4] George Washington University B.A. 1963; OU Juris Doctorate with Honors 1966; Order of the Coif: from his federal judicial biography (provided by the family) and “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995). Note: the 1995 article states the J.D. was earned in June 1966.
- [5] Law firm Godlove, Joyner, Mayhall, Dzialo, Dutcher & Erwin: “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995), which gives the full firm name and address (802 SW C); also appears in a 1993 “Legal Briefs” column authored by Sam for the firm.
- [6] Oklahoma National Guard 1965–1970; U.S. Navy Reserve 1970–1975; lieutenant commander (resigned commission 1976): “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995). This is the most detailed single account of his pre-Tulsa career.
- [7] Nineteen years as part-time Lawton magistrate; most active part-time position in the U.S.: “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995). The dates 1975–1995 are corroborated by “Courthouse ‘gem’ shines at 100” (Lawton Constitution, Nov. 8, 2017).
- [8] January 1994 appointment to the eight-person national advisory group: “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995).
- [9] Full-time appointment June 1, 1995, Northern District of Oklahoma (Tulsa): “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995); also “Judge Sam Joyner to speak at Law Day luncheon here” (Lawton Constitution, Apr. 27, 2008).
- [10] Electronic Discovery Guidelines; 300+ mediations; retired Jan. 1, 2009: from his federal judicial biography (provided by the family).
- [11] Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers, 1983: “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995), which states he was inducted as a Fellow in September 1983.
- [12] Editor-in-Chief, Federal Courts Law Review; adjunct professor teaching Professional Responsibility at OU College of Law (fall 1989 and 1990): judicial biography (provided by the family) and “Joyner named U.S. Magistrate” (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995).

- [13] Master of Liberal Studies thesis on humanities and moral development: his photography CV/biography (provided by the family), thesis titled "Humanities in Law School for Moral Development" (University of Oklahoma, 1987).
- [14] "Outstanding Young Man of Lawton" 1970; civic board service: "Joyner named U.S. Magistrate for Tulsa area" (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 6, 1995).
- [15] Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge anecdotes: "Joyner speaks at Law Day luncheon here" (Lawton Constitution, May 2, 2008) and "Courthouse 'gem' shines at 100" (Lawton Constitution, Nov. 8, 2017).
- [16] Advice to younger lawyers ("if it doesn't feel right, don't do it," etc.): "Joyner speaks at Law Day luncheon here" (Lawton Constitution, May 2, 2008).
- [17] First workshop with Bernard Plossu (~1985); shift from color to black-and-white: "McMahon Memorial Auditorium: Sam Joyner black-and-white photograph collection held over through May" (Lawton Constitution, May 11, 1991).
- [18] Film equipment (4x5 view camera, Hasselblad), silver gelatin process, selenium toning: "And I too Love the Light" 2013 exhibition placard, Oklahoma State Capitol (provided by the family). Digital adoption later in life: confirmed by the family.
- [19] Study with master photographers and at named workshops: his photography CV (provided by the family) and the 2013 exhibition placard; partial lists also appear in "Photography show opens in Pride Gallery" (Lawton Constitution, Oct. 21, 1993).
- [20] Co-founder/president of Wichita Wildlight Photographic Society; secured tax-exempt status: "Wichita Wildlight returns to meeting in-person" (Lawton Constitution, Jan. 9, 2022), quoting founding member Clark Smith; founding role also in "Photoub planning to move donated building" (Lawton Constitution, Nov. 18, 1994).
- [21] "Preserved these images of the Wichita Mountains...": "Shutterbugs show wildlife, nature images" (Lawton Constitution, Feb. 21, 1994), quoting Sam as club president.
- [22] Arts for All Volunteer of the Year 1994: "Arts for All names volunteers of the year" (Lawton Constitution, Apr. 29, 1994).
- [23] 2019 return to Lawton to speak on "The Value of the Arts": "Sam Joyner to [speak] at arts luncheon," by Gary Reddin (Lawton Constitution, Feb. 17, 2019).
- [24] Exhibitions and awards (Gilcrease, Leslie Powell, M.A. Doran, State Capitol, Liggett Studios; Best of Show/first-place/juror's awards): photography CV (provided by the family); "Photography exhibits to open at Liggett Studios" (Tulsa World, Jan. 5, 2025); "Photographer nabs Duncan Fallfest prize" (Lawton Constitution, Oct. 3, 1993); "Four to open show at Leslie Powell Gallery" (Lawton Constitution, Nov. 6, 2005).
- [25] Michael Wallis wrote the forewords to *Art Deco Tulsa* and *Echoes of Light* and, a close friend, officiated Sam and Deborah's wedding: provided by the family. Suzanne Fitzgerald Wallis wrote the text of *Art Deco Tulsa* [32]; Steve Gerkin wrote *Echoes of Light* [34].
- [26] "The evidence of 'yes'..." artist statement: Sam's foreword to *The Way We See Now* and the 2013 exhibition placard (both provided by the family); also paraphrased in "Photography exhibits to open at Liggett Studios" (Tulsa World, Jan. 5, 2025).
- [27] Light as consciousness/transcendence; devotion to Carl Jung: Sam's preface to *Echoes of Light* (provided by the family).
- [28] Survivors and those preceding him in death: provided by the family, with parents and sister Doris corroborated by Doris "Dee" Hunt's obituary (Lawton Constitution, Dec. 18, 2022). Birth date Nov. 3, 1941, passing June 21, 2026 (evening, Father's Day): provided by the family.
- [29] Post-retirement private mediation; 2010 offer (with retired Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Daniel Boudreau) to mediate, free of charge, the disputes between the Tulsa City Council and Mayor Dewey Bartlett: "Sucker-punching" (Tulsa World editorial, Aug. 14, 2010); "Judge had hand in effort for council-mayor mediation," by P.J. Lassek & Brian Barber (Tulsa World, Aug. 18, 2010); "Tulsa City Council votes against formal mediation with mayor," by Brian Barber & P.J. Lassek (Tulsa World, Aug. 27, 2010). The council declined formal mediation, but Joyner and Boudreau had offered to conduct it at

no cost. His post-retirement work as a private mediator and arbitrator is also noted in "Judge picturing his retirement" (Tulsa World, Jan. 6, 2008) [38] and "New federal magistrate advances to the bench" (Tulsa World, Jan. 4, 2009) [39].

- [30] Tulsa community service — Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa board member and gala committee: "People & Places: Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa honors late John H. Williams," by Tracey Norvell (Tulsa World, May 21, 2014). Tulsa Area United Way 2011 campaign division chair ("community volunteer"): "Tulsa Area United Way volunteers plan fundraising campaign," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, May 8, 2011). Donor to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Art in Architecture silent auction: "People & Places: Art in Architecture fundraiser to benefit Cystic Fibrosis Foundation," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Sep. 11, 2012).
- [31] Chairman of the advisory board of Nimrod International Journal (University of Tulsa); long board service; friendship with Francine Ringold: photo caption identifying him as "chairman of the advisory board" in "People & Places: Nimrod gears up for writers conference" (Tulsa World, Oct. 5, 2011); board and planning involvement in "Nimrod weekend coming up" (Tulsa World, Oct. 20, 2010) and "People & Places: Nimrod International Journal hosts awards weekend, invites public" (Tulsa World, Oct. 4, 2012); the Nimrod connection to Ringold described in "Former Oklahoma Poet Laureate, photographer and former Tulsa judge collaborate on new book," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Jul. 12, 2020).
- [32] Art Deco Tulsa — text by Suzanne Fitzgerald Wallis, photographs by Sam Joyner, published by Arcadia Publishing; book signing at the Philbrook Museum of Art: "This and that" (Tulsa World, May 11, 2018); "Local artists, writers to be featured at Sweet Tooth," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Dec. 2, 2018).
- [33] The Way We See Now — twenty-eight black-and-white photographs paired with Francine Ringold's poems written in response to the images (ekphrasis); published by Coman & Associates (2020), designed by Susan Coman: "Former Oklahoma Poet Laureate, photographer and former Tulsa judge collaborate on new book," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Jul. 12, 2020). Oklahoma best-seller: listed at No. 2 on the fiction list in "Oklahoma Best-Sellers" (Tulsa World, Jul. 26, 2020).
- [34] Echoes of Light: Images Into Writing — photographs by Sam Joyner with writing by Steve Gerkin, designed by Carl Brune, published by Twin Feathers Ink; winner of the 2025 Oklahoma Book Award for design (Brune's fifth such award): "'Echoes of Light' gives designer Carl Brune a fifth Oklahoma Book Award win," by Jimmie Tramel (Tulsa World, May 29, 2025).
- [35] Named awards (Best of Show, 1995 Lawton Arts for All Festival; juror's awards, 1998 and 1999 Tulsa Mayfest Invitational), exhibition at the Hardesty Arts Center, the January 2025 Gallery at Liggett Studios show, and the "looking for that revelatory light that causes the magic to occur" quote: "New photography exhibits highlight buildings, surreal scenes," by Steve Liggett (Tulsa World, Jan. 5, 2025) — the same Jan. 5, 2025 article cited at [24] and [26].
- [36] Frequent exhibitor at the M.A. Doran Gallery: "Events support area artists, show works of realism," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, May 5, 2011) and "Arts Scene: 'Newsies' sets final edition; abstract show at M.A. Doran," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Aug. 19, 2018), both listing him among the gallery's exhibiting artists.
- [37] 2022 letter to the Tulsa World urging prosecution of war crimes in Ukraine: "Letter: Prosecute Putin for war crimes," by Sam Joyner (Tulsa World, Apr. 22, 2022).
- [38] The 2008 retirement profile — the "Am I too narrowly focused? Is there more to life than this?" reflection on turning to photography; the "black and white is more subtle" remark; his courtroom demeanor ("I don't think that sort of thing is productive ... even though some of them may have deserved it"); the 2000 assignment to Thailand by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts; and the M.A. Doran Gallery representing his work, with co-owner Mary Ann Doran's praise ("a very talented photographer and a

terrific person"): "Judge picturing his retirement," by David Harper (Tulsa World, Jan. 6, 2008).

- [39] Successor Lane Wilson's tribute ("some really big shoes to fill"; "treated me with respect and walked me through the process"): "New federal magistrate advances to the bench," by David Harper (Tulsa World, Jan. 4, 2009), which also confirms Joyner's last day was New Year's Day 2009 and that he continued with private mediation and arbitration.
- [40] Golden Rule Award, Tulsa County Bar Association, 2006 (fourth quarter): "Tulsa County Bar Members Praised for Work, Accomplishments," by Ralph Schaefer (Tulsa World, Aug. 28, 2006).
- [41] Koch v. Koch oil-theft litigation in Tulsa federal court; Judge Joyner's pretrial evidentiary ruling: "The Koch family saga," by Russell Ray (Tulsa World, Aug. 29, 1999), which reports that U.S. Magistrate Judge Sam Joyner denied a plaintiffs' motion as the case headed to an October 1999 trial before Chief Judge Terry Kern. The whistleblower suit, brought by William ("Bill") Koch against his brother Charles's Koch Industries, alleged the theft of oil from federal and Indian lands.
- [42] Reappointment to a second eight-year term, January 2003; merit-selection panel and Chief Judge Terence Kern's praise ("outstanding judges"): "Two Northern District magistrates reappointed for eight-year terms" (Tulsa World, Jan. 31, 2003). Joyner and fellow magistrate Frank McCarthy were both renewed after the panel interviewed them and surveyed attorneys appearing before them.
- [43] Additional charitable art donations: Sam is listed among the contributing artists for the Tristes Center's first fund-raiser silent-art exhibit in "Tristes Center nets \$35,000 in first fund-raiser," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Nov. 12, 2002); and among the artists donating work to Nimrod's "Art for Literature" benefit auctions in "Long live Nimrod," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Apr. 8, 2005) and "Sketchbook: Inca-descence," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Apr. 21, 2005).
- [44] Named photographs and a juried biennial: "Multnomah Falls," singled out among the photography in the Mayfest Invitational Gallery in "Let's get small," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, May 16, 2002); "World Peace Begins in the Imagination," a framed photograph by Sam presented as a gift, in "Nimrod writing workshop, symposium set Oct. 25-26," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Oct. 16, 2002); and his selection for the 10th biennial "Oklahoma: Centerfold" juried exhibit at the Leslie Powell Gallery in Lawton (which then traveled to the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha), in "Sketchbook: 'Dreams and Visions' show opens at Ryan Gallery," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Oct. 17, 2002). Note: the Oct. 16, 2002 item mislabels him a "Municipal Judge"; he was a U.S. magistrate judge.
- [45] Nimrod advisory-board leadership and a law-and-literature panel: identified as advisory-board "president-elect" in "Nimrod writing workshop, symposium set Oct. 25-26" (Tulsa World, Oct. 16, 2002) and as the board's "new advisory board president" in "Actress speaks at awards luncheon," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Nov. 10, 2002); described as board president, and as paying tribute to late founder Ruth Hardman, in "Looking at two sides of writing," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Nov. 1, 2004); and as "chair of the advisory board" in "Plans for Nimrod awards dinner and conference detailed," by Danna Sue Walker (Tulsa World, Oct. 10, 2005). His seat on the "Deglazing Law and Literature" panel (with TU law dean Martin Belsky, author William Bernhardt and Dobie Langenkamp) is detailed in "Nimrod kicks off Friday," by Judy Randle (Tulsa World, Oct. 15, 2000).
- [46] Family heritage and forebears: an email from Sam Joyner to his son Jeff Joyner ("Re: Ancestors," Mar. 14, 2010, provided by the family), in which Sam describes the family's Scotch-Irish roots; his grandfather Sam Sr.'s move from Tennessee through Arkansas and Texas to Lawton in the late 1800s; the family's emphasis on "integrity and hard work" and on being "civicly and politically involved ... it's in the blood"; his grandmother's work sending telegrams for Western Union (c. 1910); his grandfather's

surveying of much of Fort Sill (after an earlier career as a pharmacist); and the family's custom of welcoming soldiers from Fort Sill to its Thanksgiving and Christmas tables. A published biographical sketch, "Samuel A. Joyner," in a History of Oklahoma biographies volume (family records), corroborates much of this but does not mention Tennessee: it records that Sam Sr. was born in 1860 on a plantation near Little Rock, Arkansas; that his father, Thomas A. Joyner, was a native of North Carolina who came to Pulaski County, Arkansas, about 1845; and that Sam Sr.'s path ran from Arkansas to Texas (1884-1888) and New Mexico (a druggist in Roswell before he took up surveying) to Lawton, where he arrived at the 1901 Kiowa-Comanche opening and was elected county surveyor of Comanche County (1902, re-elected 1904 and 1906), surveying and mapping the county. The sketch confirms the pharmacist-turned-surveyor detail and the Lawton/Comanche-County surveying, but "Tennessee" appears only in Sam's email — it may reflect an earlier generation's migration (the North Carolina-to-Arkansas route commonly ran through Tennessee) or a recollection not captured in the published sketch. Separately, per family knowledge, Sam Sr. is featured in a display at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton believed to include some of his surveying equipment.

- [47] "Gallery House" — the contemporary Tulsa home designed and built for Sam by architect George E. Day Jr. (completed in the fall of 2017), with an interior ramp winding past his framed black-and-white photographs in the manner of the Guggenheim, and Sam's recollection of his first meeting with Day ("Instead of interviewing George, he interviewed me ... that we were about to embark on a creative journey together"): "You know his work — now meet George Day," by Morgan Phillips (Tulsa People, March 2018). The gallery-house collection of "over 75 images" and the Miłosz line are also noted in the family's 2021 "Save the Date" invitation for Sam's 80th-birthday celebration (provided by the family).
- [48] "The Three Amigos" exhibition at the Pictures Gallery in the Tulsa Promenade — works by Wichita Wildlight Photographic Society members Andrus Clark, David Gill, and Sam Joyner — and the description of Joyner's photographs as displaying "a kind of heightened reality, an image more real than real": from the "Three Guys Snapping" review section of "Philbrook Pulls Out All the Stops for Multitude of Masterpieces ... / 'Three Centuries' Exhibit a Real Italian Explosion," by James D. Watts Jr. (Tulsa World, Oct. 2, 1994). Named works include "Against the Wind, El Rito, New Mexico," "Calla Lily No. 2," and "The Colonades and Pyramid of Kukulcan."
- [49] Honorable mention (one of five \$100 honorable mentions) in the Seven-State Biennial at the gallery of the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha, for a black-and-white photograph of a sculpted Buddha head that "almost seems to be part of a banyan tree in Thailand": "City man wins first at USAO exhibit," by John Brandenburg (The Oklahoman, Oct. 31, 2003).
- [50] 2013 solo exhibition "And I Too Love the Light" at the Oklahoma State Capitol (North Gallery), sponsored by the Oklahoma Arts Council, featuring large-format, film-based black-and-white photographs: "Photographs by Tulsa artist on view at Capitol" / "Large-format world view offered in photographs," by John Brandenburg (The Oklahoman, June 7, 2013). The exhibition takes its title from the Czesław Miłosz line that opens this obituary; the same article describes Sam as "a U.S. magistrate judge in Tulsa, before his retirement in 2009."
- [51] 1997 Halloween costume-contest judging by area federal jurists (Chief U.S. District Judge Terry C. Kern, U.S. District Judge Michael Burrage, U.S. Magistrate Judge Sam Joyner, U.S. Senior District Judge James O. Ellison, and U.S. District Judge Sven Erik Holmes) at the Page Belcher Federal Building, capping the courthouse's October United Way fund-raising activities: "Judicial Conference" photo caption (Tulsa World, Nov. 1, 1997).
- [52] High-school honors and leadership — "Most Courteous" (a "Who's Who" superlative shared with Stella Price); Junior Class President (1958); Key Club President (1959);

Student Council (1958–59); National Honor Society; Boys’ State (1958); Elks’ Leadership Award (1959); “Who’s Who” (1959); National Thespian Society and National Forensic League (1957–59), Speech letterman, band, and staff of both the school paper (the Tatler) and the yearbook: from two pages of Sam’s high-school yearbook (provided by the family). The activity listings span 1957–1959, indicating a Class of 1959. Note: with the corrected Nov. 3, 1941 birth date, a Class of 1959 is consistent (graduating at 17). The school was in Lawton; the obituary names the honors without fixing a year.

[53] Appointment to the Elmer Thomas Memorial Commission: State of Oklahoma gubernatorial commission signed by Governor David L. Boren and attested by Secretary of State Jerome W. Byrd, dated April 26, 1977, appointing Sam Joyner III a member of the Elmer Thomas Memorial Commission (original certificate provided by the family). Elmer Thomas (1876–1965) practiced law in Lawton from 1901, represented the Lawton area in Oklahoma’s first state senate, and served in the U.S. House (1923–1927) and U.S. Senate (1927–1951); he is memorialized by Lake Elmer Thomas in the Wichita Mountains near Lawton. A personal letter from Governor Boren to Sam accompanied the commission (Office of the Governor, Apr. 28, 1977, provided by the family), welcoming him to the administration: “I signed your Commission with confidence knowing of the contribution you will make to our State.”

[54] Boy Scouts involvement with all three sons, including joining each at the Philmont Scout Ranch (Cimarron, New Mexico): provided by the family.

[55] Lawton Philharmonic Society presidency: an “Our Town” arts column reporting that “Sam Joyner III, newly-elected president” of the Philharmonic Society was steering the orchestra past a modest end-of-season deficit toward a 1976–77 season headlined by Doc Severinsen — the column praised the Society as having “the most astute business-minded board of any arts organization in Our Town” and ran his photograph captioned “SAM JOYNER III ... Philharmonic prexy” (Lawton newspaper arts column, c. June 1976, clipping provided by the family).

Note: Items marked “provided by the family” came from family knowledge or family-supplied documents rather than from a published article. A few figures vary slightly between sources (for example, the number of years Sam had been studying photography was reported as 12, 20, and 35 in different articles, reflecting the year each was written); where this happened, the obituary uses cautious, broadly accurate language such as “over the following decades.”