



Judicial Profile-Moses Baker, Jr.

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West of Tampa the orange groves extend for miles and miles. Dade City, in the center, is a small town with a few stores, and one stop light. Before the Big Freeze, everyone in town worked for Pasco Packing, or in the groves. The Judge's mother made fruit salad. Hardly anyone lives in Dade City, but in the country, in the surrounding small "crossroad" towns. When the Judge goes "home", he goes back to Dade City.

During the he was in school, he was thinking about college. The Judge's father had been a semi- pro baseball player, and Moses took to sports naturally. He wanted to get to Gainesville to play basketball and football, and knew he would need a sports scholarship. After an injury in his junior year, his sports career was over. His mother told him she would give him \$190.00 a quarter for tuition to go to Florida A& M. She may not have considered that he would need books, housing and food. Being bright, ambitious and energetic, he decided to work his way through college. Starting in 1970, he graduated in 1973 Magna Cum Laude. He seemed to be in a hurry. He went through the University of Florida Law School in 2 years. The Judge had worked his way through 7 years of college in 5 years.

In the 1970 college orientation, he met a very attractive freshman, Rosalyn. This was the only girl that he dated in college. They were married four years later after her graduation as a sociology major.

The Judge had planned on pursuing a civil law career. In law school he interned with the State Attorney in Gainesville. Bob Moses was his supervisor. He was selected as the most outstanding intern, and supervised the new interns. He pretty much had his pick of jobs in various State Attorneys' Offices. He enjoyed being a prosecutor, and that became his career goal.

Maurice Hall talked to him. He interviewed with Dan Hurley, who put him to work trying misdemeanors in County Court. Then moved up to felonies, and finally became the senior homicide trial attorney. If there was a murder indictment, Moses would do the trial work. He loved this job; said it was the best job he ever had. He remained there eight years.

In 1983, Judge Rodgers and Judge Hurley became concerned that the major law firms in Palm Beach County did not have minority members. These Judges met with partners of major law firms. After getting some commitments, they then went to Moses to convince him to go into civil practice. He was not that interested, as he loved being a prosecutor. Nevertheless, he was "talked into" civil practice. He interviewed, and was hired by a prominent plaintiffs' firm. As a result of this program, Bettye King was hired. Then Cone Wagner, Gunster Yoakley, and Jones & Foster hired minority lawyers. When

he started his civil practice, Moses was given a caseload. Within one year he had developed his own caseload. In fact, an overflow. He was made a partner in two years. This had come faster than anyone else in the firm. When asked the reason for this, he replied “it’s a matter of billing; you have to pay your own way.”

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When he left the State Attorney’s Office, his career plan had been to spend ten years in civil practice. The ten years was up March, 1994. He applied for a Circuit judgeship, was nominated and then selected by the Governor.

When asked why he left a civil law practice for a Judgeship, he stated that his life was not committed to making money. That money was not that important to him, other things were.

Since he has been on the bench from July, he has made changes. The Judge attempts to solve the “complicated motion” problem by setting these at 8:00 a.m., over the lunch hour, and from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. He is instituting his version of the new Federal Court rules that witness lists and documents must be exchanged early. An early meeting, without a Mediator, to discuss a written demand. If nothing comes of this, presuit Mediation. He states that the Rules of Judicial Administration require the Judges’ active and early participation in the settlement process.

He believes he has a very happy marriage and family. Sia (19), Destinie (14), and Little Bake (8), would attest to that.

He has a history of lectures, speeches, and community involvement’s. “My peers know me because they have seen or read where I have personally handled the most complex of criminal cases and civil cases. I have prosecuted capital murder cases, complex drug cases, and I have handled complex civil cases. My peers have seen me lecture and teach at continuing legal education seminars. Moreover, lawyers from around the country have attended ATLA’S National College of Advocacy where I am part of the faculty.” We are sure his mother is real proud of her son. I know we all are.