



Judicial Profile- Robert Hewitt

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Bob Hewitt was born on his mother's kitchen table in Jasper, a little Florida town near the Georgia border. Jasper had a population of 1800 in 1917, and probably still does. The doctor charged \$17.50 for the delivery. His pioneer family had been there since the 1880's, having moved from North Carolina. Farmers on his father's side, and Judges on his mother's side. Bob's father was the Tax Collector, and owned the hotel. The family moved to Gainesville when he was fourteen. He graduated from high school in 1935, and went to undergraduate and law school at the University of Florida through 1940. Finishing his second year of law school, Bob was caught up with the events in Europe. Paris was occupied by the German; England was bracing for an attack. He patriotically volunteered for active duty. Having taken ROTC, Bob went to Fort Benning as a Lieutenant. He helped organize the artillery support for the Fourth Infantry Division. One of his duty stations was Fort Dix near Trenton, New Jersey. He had met a local girl, FL, and fell in love. They were married one year later.

As a Battery Officer, Bob went to England with the Fourth Division in January, 1944. In six months, the Fourth went to the Channel. On D-Day Plus One, June 7, 1944, he landed on bloody Utah Beach. As Commander of Headquarters Battery, he was in continuous combat until the end of the War. His job was to lob five-inch shells over the heads of the men in the front line into the German lines. They were unaware of the impact of their actions until they advanced past the craters, burned out buildings, vehicles, and bodies of the enemy. The Fourth Division fought in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe. There were heavy casualties. The Judge was awarded the Bronze Star. In July 1945, Captain Hewitt was back in the U.S., and was preparing for the invasion of Japan. Two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. The War was over. Bob Hewitt returned to law school. He had joined the Army at 23, and he was now 28, much sobered by this experience.

After graduation, he came to West Palm Beach. He worked for L.A. Mooney in the Comeau Building, then a solo practice, and in the early 50's joined the Newman and W. Miller firm. The Millers had a general practice. Al Cone joined the firm in 1955. It became a plaintiffs' law firm Miller, Hewitt, Cone, Owen & Wagner. Judge Hewitt had been a good friend of Judges White and Chillingworth. In the early 50's, the Court started to expand, Russell Morrow and Jimmy Knott were appointed Circuit Judges. Leroy Collins became Governor. His first appointment was Culver Smith, and then Bob Hewitt. This made him the fifth Judge appointed in our Circuit. He remained as a Circuit Court Judge for twenty-six years, from 1959 to 1985. He retired when he was 68 years old. During this time, he spent one or two years in Criminal Court, but mostly

worked in the civil Division. After his retirement, he retained senior status and worked on special assignments. In 1988, he became a Mediator. He is now 77 years old.

Bob and Flo Hewitt have two sons. John is a lawyer in North Palm Beach and David is an artist living near Quito, Ecuador. For years, Judge Hewitt has walked two or three miles every morning at daybreak. Also, the Saturday morning golf game with Jim and Dan Downey, and Larry Kukey. His golf has slowed to some extent; but he still plays every week. His current favorite activities include grandchildren, reading and trips to Europe. Living in the south of West Palm Beach most of his life, he has loved yard work and gardening. When asked what the most astounding thing was in his judicial career, he replied: The day Judge Chillingworth disappeared, he happened to visit his old friend, Judge White. Suffice it to say, Judge White and the Courthouse were stunned, and they remained stunned, until that murder was solved. When he was asked what improvement could be made in our justice system, he replied that many Judges had urged that the Criminal Court be built near the holding facility rather than downtown. This would save the transporting of thousands of prisoners to the Courthouse.

Ron Bishop, in a summary of Judge Hewitt in a 1985 article on the Judge's retirement, said: "Now, however, the grandfatherly Judge, who sports a shock of snow-white hair and who was dubbed by the Palm Beach County Bar Association a "the gentleman judge," has only kind word for those he has worked with over the years. In a 1980 poll of the county's lawyers, 96 percent rated him as "highly qualified." In an interview, he returned that compliment: "The local bar is excellent and ranks at the top of the list of any county in Florida." Retiring with Hewitt will be his secretary of 23 years, Elizabeth Randolph. She said: "He is the archetypal Southern gentleman. I think he was born that way."