

Judge Caroline Shepherd

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by Leslie Kroeger

Judge Caroline Shepherd built a reputation as a no-nonsense prosecutor with a passion for getting it right in her search for justice. She is one of our newest Judges in Palm Beach County and when you meet her, you'll know why we are lucky to have her on the bench.

Caroline was born in Pasadena, California, but grew up a mid-west girl in Peoria, Illinois. California's weather drew her back for college, where she attended USC. In the height of the Cold War, she studied International Relations with an emphasis in Defense and Strategic Studies, studied Russian, and sought opportunities for experience with policy makers.

She moved to Washington, DC and worked for then-House Speaker Robert Michel in both his Congressional and House Leadership Offices on Capitol Hill. She went on to serve as the Director of Programs for the American Defense Institute founded by former Hanoi Hilton POW Capt. Eugene B. "Red" McDaniel, USN (Ret.). At ADI she furthered their agenda of promoting the value of freedom along with the responsibility for protecting it with a strong national defense. But national defense was only part of it, ADI and Caroline also worked with families and policy makers to continue efforts to return our Vietnam War POWs.

The next course in her life is one that came at her rather unexpectedly. While visiting a college friend from the US Virgin Islands, Hurricane Hugo hit and decimated St. Thomas. She stayed to help... and that short vacation trip turned into a five year stint working (without running water or electricity for the first several months) as a project manager for a small construction company to help rebuild the island.

Island fever set in and she knew it was time to leave the small, but beautiful confines of St. Thomas and venture out to start the next part of her life. She enrolled at the New England School of Law in Boston. She made the most of that time serving her student body as the President of the Student Bar Association.

She left Boston, missing the nice weather of the tropics, and entered the legal profession as an Assistant State Attorney (ASA) in Miami-Dade County – that's where I first met Judge Shepherd. In the courtroom everyday, she was diligent, hard-working, conscientious, and always the consummate professional. Little did I know that even then, her goal was to take the bench. Her commitment to public service and protecting those who weren't able to protect themselves served her well in Miami, and eventually led to a position as an Assistant United States Attorney in Washington D.C. Fortunately for the citizens of Palm Beach County, she returned to Florida. She came back to Florida as ASA in Palm Beach, and was

recently appointed to serve us all as a County Court Judge.

It wasn't until I sat with Caroline to write this story that I learned her inspiration for the bench came during her second year of law school. While an intern in Boston, she had the opportunity to sit and watch a murder trial which was being conducted by a female judge. While she wasn't able to articulate specifically what brought about the revelation, she knew from that moment that she was meant to serve.

I asked what the most difficult and most rewarding parts of the job were so far. In listening to her responses, I realized that the skills she brings from that diverse personal and professional background is what makes her such a thoughtful judge. She recognizes that for many people, especially pro se litigants, she is perhaps their first and only encounter with legal system. She strives to let litigants be heard and to show them respect, even when the rule of law dictates a ruling against them. There are of course the challenges of keeping the docket moving, and reviewing all the motions and memos submitted....Yes, she reads everything! But somehow she gets it all done.

She juggles this with a busy family life. Her husband, William N. Shepherd, is the Statewide Prosecutor for the state of Florida. Together they have two adorable young boys. Between homework, t-ball, and taking care of a one-year-old, she occasionally manages to fit in yoga, pilates, and sometimes even a little surfing. Yes, if you just did the math in your head, that's right, she had her interview with the JNC the week after her youngest arrived!

If you haven't met my friend, Judge Caroline Shepherd, I would encourage you to introduce yourself, you'll be glad you did.

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