

Judge Carolyn Bell

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By Jean Marie Middleton (on behalf of the Judicial Relations Committee)

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Judge Carolyn Bell is no stranger to public service. Her love for public service is evident in her conversation and career history so it is no surprise that she has continued her legal vocation as a Circuit Court Judge.

Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Bell spent the majority of her career serving as a federal prosecutor for the United States Department of Justice. Judge Bell began at DOJ in Washington, D.C., where she worked as a Senior Trial Attorney for the Tax Division, Criminal Section. In that capacity, she traveled the country prosecuting all kinds of crimes with a tax angle. Her cases included everything from individuals who willfully failed to pay their taxes, to the silent owners of a Las Vegas Casino, to community leaders profiting from one of the largest drug organizations in Southern California. While in Washington, Judge Bell also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney prosecuting street crimes, and on a detail in the Deputy Attorney General's Office. She also taught legal writing and trial advocacy as an Adjunct Professor at George Washington School of Law.

After Washington, Judge Bell served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the West Palm Beach office of the Southern District of Florida. Although while there she prosecuted virtually every type of federal crime, the bulk of Judge Bell's work was in white-collar economic crimes. She recently prosecuted an ophthalmologist who falsely diagnosed elderly Medicare patients with eye diseases they did not have, and lasered and injected their eyes with treatments they did not need. After a two-month trial, he was sentenced to seventeen years in prison shortly before Judge Bell left the U.S. Attorney's Office. Judge Bell also served as Professional Responsibility Ethics Officer for the U.S. Attorney's Office, and regularly taught law enforcement, prosecutors and state and local bar associations on a wide variety of topics.

Not only has Judge Bell worked in public service positions, she is also active in Palm Beach County and Florida Bar committees. She has served as Chair of the Florida Bar Standing Committee of Professional Ethics and the Advertising Standing Committee. Her Palm Beach County Bar service includes serving as Chair of the Professionalism Committee.

Judge Bell received her undergraduate degree from the University of California at Berkeley. After graduation, Judge Bell took a year off and backpacked throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. She supported herself by doing odd jobs including working as a photographer, working on an Israeli kibbutz, and playing the piano in bars.

After she finished her backpack tour, Judge Bell returned to the University of California at Berkeley to attend law school. Once again, after graduation she took time to do some more traveling. This time, she traveled the Pacific Rim and toured places like China, Malaysia and New Zealand. Her legal career began at a large law firm in Los Angeles, California where she practiced bankruptcy law and commercial litigation.

A fun fact about Judge Bell is that coincidentally, her husband, Judge Bruce Reinhart, was sworn in as a United States Magistrate Judge for the Southern District of Florida in the same week Governor Rick Scott appointed her to the Circuit Court bench. Judge Bell and Judge Reinhart are the proud parents of two sons, Jake and Brian, both of whom will be in college in the fall. (See picture)

Judge Bell is currently assigned to Juvenile Division JK.

Jean Marie Middleton has the pleasure of serving as a Senior Attorney for the Palm Beach County School District practicing employment and labor litigation. She can be reached at jean.middleton@palmbeachschools.org.

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