

# Judge Edward Garrison

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Published January 1998

by Thomas Hoadley

Ed Garrison's father, of English descent, was a brick mason who traveled extensively to work on various construction jobs. Ed was born in Pensacola in 1952 while his father was working on a job there. There is one older sister. The family moved to Tampa when Ed was very young, and he attended public school, and the University of South Florida. He was involved in normal college activities. His first thought was to be an electrical engineer. He describes his conversion to a legal career as a "flash" sitting in a classroom watching his engineering professor put a long complicated engineering formula on the black board. His immediate reaction to this engineering equation was that you couldn't reduce life to a formula. Following this, he immediately walked across campus, and signed on as a political science major to prepare for his law career. He graduated from South Florida in 1973.

Ed then headed for law school at Florida State. He graduated in two and one-half years on the law school quarter system. He worked at various part time jobs in Tallahassee, including as a research aide to a Legislative Committee. Contrary to established local opinion, "Fast Eddie" did not get his nickname by pushing civil cases through his docket on the fourth floor of the Old Courthouse. It happened in law school, as he was the first law student to finish each of the 16 freshman law school final examinations. During law school, he worked as an intern in the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office, mostly with Dan Hurley and Barry Krischer. He had never been to West Palm Beach, but thought it might be interesting place to live. ED was offered a job to come back to work as a Prosecutor after he completed law school, and he accepted.

Graduating in 1975 on a Saturday morning, he started work in the Palm Beach County Courthouse that next Monday. He was an Assistant State Attorney here for a year and a half. Then he decided to try "country life." He took a job for six months as an Assistant State Attorney in the Third Circuit (Perry) in North Florida. Deciding this country life was not for him, he came back to West Palm Beach in 1977 to go to work for Kohl, Springer, Springer & Garrison. He went to the Courthouse to try criminal defense and personal injury cases, admitting that he did not like office work that well, but loved trial work.

From his college days as a political science major, he had always been interested in politics. He wanted to run for something, maybe to be a State Representative. He was intrigued by the election process. (He says that everyone ought to run at least once for an elective

office). In 1980, he decided to run against Judge Michael Shalloway for County Court Judge. He was elected with a large majority, and became the youngest elected Judge in the County, and second youngest Judge in the State (by three weeks).

He was county Judge for two full terms (eight years), and was the Administrative Judge for two years. He also became a Director and President of the Conference of County Court Judges.

When Judge Bill Williams resigned, Ed immediately filed for his Circuit Court position. He ended up running unopposed in the 1988 election. Sworn in as a Circuit Judge in January 1989, he was assigned to the Civil Division, and spent five years on the fourth floor of the Old Courthouse. He stated that he loved civil cases, saying that to him many times they are more intellectually stimulating than criminal cases. He described every civil case as somewhat different, as the cases run a broad spectrum, such as medical malpractice, riparian rights, commercial cases, auto accidents, and a multitude of civil conflicts.

In talking to Judge Garrison, and observing him working in his hearing room, lawyers couldn't avoid reaching a conclusion that he always was a quick study of a case, and the arguments presented; his mind was running many times way ahead of the attorneys. He admits to having an active, quick mind, and says he has a photographic memory (although he says it is not as "focused" as before). Well known in the Courthouse for his policy on continuances, he says he obviously grants these, but his "good cause" list is sometimes shorter than others.

Judge Garrison is currently active as an instructor on Evidence and Case Management for the Conference of Circuit Judges, and Advanced Judicial Studies.

After five years in the Civil Division, he was assigned as one of the "roving" Judges, and has been in the Criminal Division for the past three years. For several years, Ed had been a very eligible bachelor. Commissioner Carol Roberts arranged a blind date with Kris, who at that time was the Palm Beach County Director of Zoning. Kris was a native of Buffalo, and had obtained a Masters Degree in Urban Planning. She is now the Town Manager for Gulf Stream. It was not love at first sight, but over a period of time, they fell in love, and married.

When asked about his activities outside Court, Ed states that he and Kris own a 40-foot motor cruiser. They boat up and down the Intracoastal on weekends. Currently, they are leaving the boat docked in the Abacos, and cruise the Green Turtle and Marsh Harbor areas, fishing and diving. Since they live on a North Palm Beach canal, they keep the boat next to their house. Ed states that he played a lot of golf when he was single and living at PGA. Since he has been married, his handicap has gone from 11 to 18.

When asked whether he liked being a Judge, he said: "I love what I am doing. I couldn't imagine doing anything else!" To make it short and simple, we love having him as a Judge.

