

Judge James Martz

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by David A. Greene

Judge Martz has devoted his career to making his community a better place for all. As a self-described “wild kid” growing up in Rockland County, New York, few would have anticipated the career path that Judge Martz would embark upon. However, it is apparent that he learned many important lessons from his father, a Police Officer, and his mother, a high school teacher whose classes he often visited as a child.

At 20 years old, Judge Martz decided to leave New York to become a police officer in Santa Monica, California. To his father’s astonishment, Judge Martz got in his van and drove across country to take the necessary tests and enroll in the Los Angeles Sherriff’s Academy. Serving as a police officer in California is where he met and worked with Scott Gordon, who became a life-long friend. After a few years in California, he returned home to Rockland County and served as a police officer for 15 more years, holding virtually every position within the department, from road sergeant to investigator. During this time, Judge Martz also kept busy maintaining a real estate development business.

Judge Martz then made a decision that would change the course of his life. With the encouragement of his good friend, Scott Gordon, Judge Martz decided to leave the police force and attend law school. He and his wife moved to Parkland and attended Nova University, earning his degree in only two and one-half years. He interned at the State Attorney’s Office, but then spent a year in private practice. While much of his work during that time was criminal defense, he also handled interesting landlord-tenant, family law, and commercial litigation matters, learning much from the diverse practice and the fine attorneys that he faced.

State Attorney Barry Krischer then called Judge Martz and asked him to come back and work for the State Attorney’s Office. Judge Martz gratefully accepted the position and spent 11 years working in the State Attorney’s Office. During that time, he devoted much time and effort to a “weed and seed” program called the Community Based Anti-Crime Task Force. He is most proud of his accomplishments in this regard, having assisted law enforcement, the community and government to work together to reduce crime and encourage urban redevelopment without displacement. This program has been very successful in places such as Delray Beach, where the community has truly bought into the concept and attitudes have been changed. Some of his most memorable moments with this program included participating in “drug marches”, where community members get together outside at night

and reclaim their neighborhoods from drug dealers and other criminals. He is also proud of his involvement in working closely with law enforcement and the community to complete the successful prosecution in the case concerning the murder of Jimmy Webb.

Judge Martz also worked to improve communities around the world. He and Scott Gordon continued their public service by providing pro bono service in Europe and Africa. Specifically, they worked with the United Nations War Crimes Tribunals of the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, assisting with the prosecution of genocide crimes in those regions.

Like many others, Judge Martz eventually submitted his name for consideration for a position as a County Court Judge. After applying two times, he decided he would not apply again and would continue his career in the State Attorney's Office. However, several judges, including his good friend Scott Gordon, who had by then become a Judge of the Superior Court in Los Angeles County, California, again encouraged him and he applied one more time. The third time proved to be the charm and Judge Martz still recalls that Monday morning when Governor Jeb Bush called him at the office to advise him that he had been selected to fill the County Court Judge vacancy, as long as Judge Martz would remain true to what he said during his interview.

As a jurist, Judge Martz is guided by the principle that, if you stand for the law, people will accept it. He works hard to make his a Court for the people and to provide creative solutions to provide long term solutions for people. He acknowledges that he has much to learn and appreciates a good lawyer who has done his homework. He strives to be patient and allow the attorneys appearing before him to have the full opportunity to develop their cases.

Judge Martz is truly grateful for the assistance of his Court Deputy, Stan Cale, who keeps everything running smoothly. He is also greatly appreciative of his Judicial Assistant, Joli Katz, whom he described as a "magnificent find." Judge Martz understands that Joli is the face of his administration and appreciates her exuberance and sophistication. While she is a taskmaster who ensures that Judge Martz gets everything done, she always has a positive attitude.

Judge Martz lives in South County, in the very community in which he works. This gives him the opportunity to see the people that appear before him in his courtroom and to make sure that they are working to improve their lives. Judge Martz lives with his wife of 23 years, who is a teacher and, while they didn't know each other at the time, they actually went to the same elementary school in New York. His older son attends the University of Florida, where he is working on developing fully-autonomous automobiles. His younger son attends Florida State University, where he is studying business with the hopes of becoming an entrepreneur. Judge Martz feels that he owes a great debt of gratitude to his devoted and loving family, without whom he would not be where he is or accomplished what he has today. A quick scan of Judge Martz's office reveals that he truly appreciates the road he has traveled and that he is a die-hard New York Yankees fan.

David A. Greene, Esq. is a partner with the law firm of Ruden McClosky, P.A., where he concentrates his practice on commercial litigation matters.

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