

# Judge Jonathan Gerber

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JUDGE JONATHAN GERBER. His father is a retired physician. His mother is a retired nurse. His brothers and sister are either doctors or lawyers . . . To the uninformed observer, it might seem that his upbringing or destiny put him on the bench. But, anyone who knows him knows that it was good old-fashioned hard work, not destiny, that placed him there.

Born and raised on ten acres of land in western Broward County, Judge Gerber grew up with a strong work ethic. As I sat with him and asked him about his childhood memories, it was clear that he reflected fondly on even the most laborious of tasks, like working on his family's plant nursery and taking care of cows and horses on what I call "Gerber Farm." Although the chores on the land helped create the person on the bench today, it wasn't all work and no play. There was a baseball field. Most don't know it, but Judge Gerber's father set up a makeshift baseball field on a piece of "Gerber Farm" so his children could take batting practice and get better at the game.

Baseball is a passion of Judge Gerber's. He played many games for city leagues and school teams – including his freshman year in college. Now, an avid Marlins fan, he continues the tradition of enjoying baseball games with the family, by taking his three young daughters (Kyra – age 7; Celia – age 4; and Morgan – age 1) to weekly minor league games during the season in Jupiter.

Judge Gerber was elevated to the County Court bench on May 6, 2002. For the first nineteen months, he has served in the Criminal Division of the County Court. In January of 2004, he will switch to the South County Civil Division.

Even as a young adult, Judge Gerber planned on a career as a lawyer and new that his ultimate goal was to enter into public service. His preparation for the bench began in 1990 when he graduated cum laude from Princeton University with a major in politics and then attended the University of Florida College of Law. It is there that he immersed himself in the legal profession by becoming president of the Trial Team, an editor of the Law Review, and a clerk to Eighth Circuit Judge Frederick Smith.

His law school years also introduced him to the love of his life — his wife, Tracy. His eyes lit up when he spoke of his wife and told me about their first meeting in law school during a trial team competition. He indicated with true sincerity that Tracy has had the most influence on his life and his career. Tracy herself practices securities litigation with Greenberg Traurig and also is a certified arbitrator.

Prior to taking his position on the bench, Judge Gerber was a civil litigation attorney. His legal career began in September of 1993 with the law firm of Cadwalader, Wickersham, & Taft where he practiced general commercial litigation until November of 1994. At that time, he went to work for Shutts and Bowen, concentrating in the fields of insurance defense, general civil litigation, probate litigation, and appeals. He remained at Shutts and Bowen for the next eight years until he received his appointment to the bench from the Governor.

Even as a busy practicing attorney, Judge Gerber always found time for his family and the community. He was extremely active in the Palm Beach County Bar Association serving as President of the Young Lawyers Section, Chair of the Bar's Professionalism Committee, Bench Bar Conference, and Law Week. He also chaired a Florida Bar Grievance Committee, served on the Board of Directors of Legal Aid, and served as an officer for the local chapter of the American Inns of Court.

Judge Gerber's inspirations for his appointment to the bench were his grandfathers, who spent their careers as lawyers in public service. His paternal grandfather, Leo Gerber, served as a lawyer for the Veterans Administration, and his maternal grandfather, Coleman Karesh, served as a law professor at the University of South Carolina. Now, as he takes his place in public service alongside those who came before him, he states that the most satisfying part of being a judge is knowing that at every moment he is serving the community and, hopefully, making a positive difference.

It is a secure feeling to know that Judge Gerber's hard work and dedication, which have served him well thus far in the County Criminal division, will continue in January in the South County Civil division.

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