

Judge Peter Evans

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by Thomas Hoadley

Peter Evans was born in 1951, in Erie, P.A. His parents were divorced when he was eleven, and he and his two younger brothers were raised by their single mother. Since it was financially difficult to raise a family on a bookkeeper's salary, the children started to work early. Peter started with a paper route at 11, followed by a series of jobs, including delivery boy, as well as various jobs in restaurants. In high school, he worked the 4 to midnight shift in a Columbus, Ohio, factory making thermostats. Peter found time to play linebacker on the football team, and wrestled.

Graduating in 1969, he wanted to go to college, but had no money. He enrolled at Ohio U in Athens, in the hilly southeast corner of Ohio, thinking he might get an athletic scholarship. He made it the first year by working in the cafeteria, and sweeping by working out the math building. After, the first year, he did obtain a scholarship, but it was scholastic, not athletic.

Every year he made a 4.0, was put in the honors program, and was given full room, board, and tuition. (He explained there were 2 courses in which he did not make an "A"). With grades like this, Peter was destined to become a college professor. As a senior, he was a teaching associate, and taught political science to college students.

Graduating in 1973, he decided to go to law school. He chose Georgetown, because he wanted to live in Washington. It was the Nixon and Watergate years. Peter worked his way through law school as an investigator for the Public Defender's office.

He drove a motorcycle, lived on the Hill, and studied in the Library of Congress. It was a very exciting time.

In Peter's second year of law school, he carried his laundry to the laundromat. He noticed Deborah, and struck up a conversation about the Florida tags on her car. This approach must have worked, because they dated for a year and a half, then married six months after his graduation in 1976. Hired by veteran attorney Frank Weathers, Peter started doing insurance defense work; Deborah became a court reporter. In 1978, he hung his own shingle on Military Trail. He worked eleven years until he was elected County Judge in 1988. His last partnership was Evans, Scharf and Camber.

In 1988, Peter was in a three-way contest for Ed Garrison's county Judge's seat with Jose Sosa and Barry Weinstein. When asked why he wanted to run for Judge, Peter stated that he liked academic pursuits. He said he was better at answering questions, than billing clients.

Peter was elected after a hard campaign and a run-off. Assigned to County Criminal Court, he handled drunk driving, domestic assaults, and other misdemeanors. Over the years, Peter has been appointed Circuit Judge trying felony cases, served in every County Court Division, and for the past two years, has been in Civil Division downtown. He states that he hears many cases, including PIP, consumer complaints, debts, and mechanics liens.

Since being elected, Judge Evans has gravitated to the educational side of the judiciary. The list is endless, but for an example: He is on the faculty of the Florida Judicial College in Tallahassee. (a two week course for new Judges); Faculty advisor and discussion group leader for the National judicial College in Reno. Dean of the Florida Traffic Adjudication Program (for which he has received state and national honors). Faculty member of Advanced Judicial Studies, and he presents a yearly course for Florida County Judges.

Judge Evans is equally prominent as an author. He and Jack Ackerman write a yearly chapter in our Dissolution CLE Manual. Judge Evans the author of two books published by the Florida Supreme Court-one on Small Claims, and the other on Post-Judgment collections. And his crowning achievement: The yearly summarization of Florida law (recent decisions) which is made available to all Florida Judges in book form.

This is a happy family. Ben is 14, an undefeated wrestler, and attending a prep school. On good days, Peter still drives his motorcycle from Wellington to work, and last summer had a bonding experience with Ben was on a long motorcycle trip through the Midwest.

Not all lawyers know of Judge Evans' accomplishments as a lecturer and author to his fellow Judges, statewide and nationally. Let's just say that it is that sublimated college professor lurking in his psyche. Whatever it is, we should all be proud of him.

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