

Judge James C. Paine
By: Thomas Hoadley
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Judge Paine's family was from Valdosta, Georgia. His father moved here in the 20's. After Palm Beach High School, (class of '41), he went to the University of Florida, the Navy B-12 Program at Emory, and a mid-shipman's course at Northwestern. He served in the Navy for three years, mostly on a fleet tugboat, in the Aleutians. This was salvage, diving, target towing, and combat action when they bombarded the Kurile Islands.

The Judge got out of the Navy in 1947, enrolled at Columbia University, and graduated in 1950. Jim spent a lot of college time in the bookstore. He was not always looking at the books. Ruth Bailey was in high school, lived nearby, and worked in the bookstore. She had caught his eye, and heart.

He tells a poignant story about deciding on law school. His mother had been a local, long-time legal secretary. Later in her life, she went to law school. She graduated from the University of Florida in 1945 with honors. Unfortunately, she died two years later. But not before she had given her son a lot of encouragement to become a lawyer himself.

Jim headed to law school at the University of Virginia. Ruth went north to Smith College. It was a long distance romance. They graduated the same year. After graduation, they came home to West Palm Beach. The Judge became an associate, then a partner with a major insurance defense firm. When Culver Smith left that firm to go on the bench in 1950, the name partners were Bruce Jones (the Colonel), Sam Adams, Jim Paine, and Bill Foster. This defense firm grew and grew. It became the pre-eminent insurance defense firm in this region. Its members were considered to be excellent trial attorneys, with a high sense of ethics. Judge Paine enjoyed being a member and a leader of this firm. He enjoyed practicing insurance defense work. It was a major career change for him to become a Judge. His friend, Charlie Fulton, helped him make the decision.

Why was he selected a Federal Judge in 1978? He was not a sitting Judge. He was not in politics. We all thought at the time he was picked because he was the most competent, ethical, honest, and respected lawyer in the County. He had been building that reputation from his LLB in 1950, for twenty-eight years. The local Bar was ecstatic at his selection. He accepted this at a financial sacrifice.

At the time of his appointment, he had expressed displeasure that the West Palm Beach Judge did not necessarily sit here. The Clerk in Miami had one large wheel, which programmed which Judge would take what case. Judge Paine spent a lot of time trying cases in Miami and Key West. He very slowly convinced his fellow Judges by "gentle persuasion" that cases need to be tried in the area where the cause of action originated. Over a period of years, a second wheel was added, which included those cases from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Pierce. Finally, there is now a West Palm Beach wheel. All new cases in Palm Beach County are transferred to either Judge Ryskamp or Judge Hurley. As soon as Judge Paine finishes his backlog of old cases, he will join the two sitting Judges for Palm Beach County cases. His objective has now been attained. We owe him an extreme debt of gratitude for this.

Judge Paine attained the "Rule of 80" in 1992 (age sixty-six and fourteen years service). He went on Senior Status. Now, he is trying only civil cases.

The Judge did not let his family and community obligations languish. Jim and Ruth had three children. Jim Jr., was an architect for several years. He is now in law school at Nova. His

second son, Jonathan, represents at the Madrid Spain Chamber of Commerce in Coral Gables. His daughter, Jo Ellen, speaks Mandarin Chinese. She has spent the last six to eight years in the Far East as an English teacher. Ruth is a real estate broker.

Jim and Ruth sold their big house on Flagler Drive and bought a smaller house in the north end of Palm Beach. He gave up playing tennis. He walks, and enjoys family vacations in North Carolina. He has been active in his church, Holy Trinity, and prior to going on the bench, he was active with the Children's Home Society.

In conclusion, if there is a heaven, the Judge's mother must surely be watching. And how proud she must surely be to see her son follow her career after her death. To see him the most competent, ethical, honest, and respected lawyer in the county. To see him become a Federal Judge. Could any mother, or father, be more proud?