



Judicial Profile on Judge Vaughn Rudnick
Written after his passing in December 1993
By Thomas Hoadley

Great-grandfather, Anthony von Rudnick, left Prussia's "Great Depression" at the turn of the century. He arrived in Chicago, where Americans outnumbered Germans. He was appropriately nicknamed "Kaiser." The Judge's father "born in the USA" was a police sergeant who worked as a fingerprint expert in the Loop. The family had dropped the Prussian "von", but named the great grandson, Vaughn.

The Judge was a football and track star in high school. He was even described by some sports writers as "fleet-footed." He went to a small Illinois college, Augustana, two hours away. The Judge continued to play football and run record-breaking track. After a stateside tour of duty with the U.S. Army, it was on to law school at the University of Miami. His sister, Jackie, had moved here in 1949, and his parents came in 1956. He graduated in 1959.

His first law job was with Leo Chapman. He won his first case as a young criminal lawyer.

He was Judge Ad Litem of the municipal court from 1961 to 1966. He then ran for the Criminal Court of Record, and was elected. He became the first (and youngest) elected Republican Judge in Palm Beach County. This was mainly a misdemeanor and traffic court. He was re-elected in 1970. This position was elevated to the Circuit Court in 1972. He had followed his father to the Courthouse. The retired Chicago police sergeant had become a Bailiff years before his son became a Judge.

Judge Rudnick served as our Chief Circuit Judge, was admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court, and on occasion was an associate District Court Judge.

I will not list all the divisions the Judge worked on or all The Florida Bar and Circuit Judge Conference Committees he worked on. You know all about that. He was very serious about his work, meticulous. He worked home at night so that he would be fully prepared for the next day. His main reading consisted of current legal periodicals.

The Judge was the proud parent of two sons, Douglas, a restaurant manager (Governor's Club), and Keith, currently in Junior College, and two step daughters, Veronica and Valerie.

One remarkable thing about the Judge was his relationship with his children. He worked very hard at being a good father. When his sons joined the Indian Guides, he became "Big Buffalo." When they played youth baseball, he became President of the baseball field. At the funeral on October 5, 1993, they said: "Our father was always more than just a father; he was our friend as well. He always seemed to work harder than all the other dads yet he was there for us when we needed him. He never said he was too tired to help us with our homework...Dad was

also our coach. Whether it be helping Keith with his tennis and soccer or Doug with his swimming. There were countless times he would spend sitting in the stands for hours waiting to see Doug swim a 2-minute race.”

In 1989, Vaughn Rudnick married the former Veronica E. Van Allen, “Ronnie.” They met at the University of Miami Annual Barbecue the previous year. They made their home in Jupiter, were active in family and social activities, and traveled.

In February, Judge Rudnick, Ronnie, Jackie, and friends went skiing. He felt well and happy. In May, he and Ronnie went on a cruise. After he returned, he thought he had a stomach flu. He made a routine visit to his doctor. After several tests, he found out at the end of June that he had a mass in his stomach, which had spread to his liver. The doctors told him that he had less than a year to live. He tried experimental chemotherapy at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Texas. He went back to work and worked until the end of August. He did not live a full year, but only three and one-half months.

During his last few days, his family was ever present. His wife, Ronnie, and sister, Jackie, were at his bedside when he died. His children were in the next room. I think Doug and Keith said it best, for all of us: “Our father touched so many lives in the courtroom, at social events, and at home. Our father was a giving and loving man, parent, and friend. He was the perfect role model in a world lacking such values. We are thankful to God that he did not have to endure a long and painful illness. Our only regret is that he will not have the opportunity to enjoy his retirement in the Wild, Wild West as he had dreamed. Nor will his grandchildren be able to experience the love and friendship he shared with us. We love you Dad, and will miss you more than we could ever express in words.”

His stepdaughters, Veronica and Valerie said: “Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.”

Ronnie said: “We are suffering a great loss. Our beloved Judge left a legacy of love, honor, and respect. The orchids he tended so lovingly still bloom magnificently at his Jupiter home where he passed away peacefully on October 2, 1993, with his family at his bedside. May he rest in peace.”