



Judge Dave Clark

By *William E. Johnson*

After 32 years on the bench, Judge Dave Clark still dispenses justice with a smile. Every morning before starting court, Judge Clark says a little prayer:

Dear Lord:

Please help me be nice, do the right thing, and get out of Court by 5 p.m.!!!

Judge Clark was born and raised in Bad Axe, Michigan where he played football on the high school team. After graduating from Central Michigan University, Judge Clark worked as a ticket agent for American Airlines. After realizing that there was no future in being a ticket agent, his father recommended that he go to law school and follow the footsteps of his uncle who was the Chief Judge of the Michigan Supreme Court. Judge Clark decided to attend Stetson Law School because it was close to Daytona Beach where he had fond memories of his college spring break days.

After graduating from Stetson Law School, Judge Clark initially worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, and would later go on to work for the County Solicitors Office in Orlando and in Palm Beach County under Marvin Mounts, County Solicitor and later Circuit Judge. Judge Clark then worked as an Assistant Public Defender under Wally Colbath, Public Defender and later Circuit Judge.

In the late 1960's, Judge Clark became active in politics and served on the Palm Beach Port Commission, City Council of North Palm Beach, and in the State House of Representatives. While serving in the legislature, he met and became good friends with Senator Tom Johnson who subsequently went on to become a Circuit Judge in Palm Beach County.

In 1976, Judge Clark ran unopposed for a County Court seat which had recently been created by the legislature. Judge Clark began his assignment in the North County Courthouse where he was the only judge and for several years handled all of the traffic infractions in the entire county. With the growth of the county, it now takes several magistrates and Judges to handle the county's numerous traffic infractions. Judge Clark later went on to serve in the South County Courthouse where he and Judge Howard Harrison were the "kings of South County" for many years.

Judge Clark explained that the County Court is known as the "people's court" because most of the people that appear before him are not represented by an attorney. When people appear in county court, it is generally their first visit to a courtroom and they are usually scared and anxious. As such, Judge Clark finds that common courtesy and a touch of humor from the judge goes a long way. Judge Clark has always been a "people person" and he enjoys doing the right thing. And if he can accomplish that by 5 pm, it is icing on the cake. Little did Judge Clark know that the customer service training that he received as a ticket agent for American Airlines would come to serve him so.

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