



Judicial Profile-Ronald Alvarez

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Judge Gary, one of the founders of U.S. Steel, looked around the Great Lakes for a suitable place to make steel. He chose Lake County, Indiana, just south of Chicago. He named the main town after himself, Gary. These behemoth ingot and rolling mills, in the 20's, 30's and 40's, pulled in immigrants from all over the world. The northern coast of Spain is a rugged, enclave of independent, small farmers. It was known as the Pilgrim's Way. For ages, Christians had traveled through to view the burial place of the martyred Disciple James in Santiago.

Ron's father left his family farm on the north coast of Spain. He immigrated to the U.S. via Cuba. He went to work in the ingot mills. His mother and father had left Spain separately. They met in Gary and were married in 1940. Mr. Alvarez left the steel mill, opened an ice cream store, which slowly expanded into the Madrid Restaurant. This became the focal point in the Spanish community.

Gary has always been an immigrant town. Ron's family lived next door to the Slovak club. These immediate neighbors were Spanish, Italian, Greek and Ukrainian.

Ron graduated from high school in 1962. He described those four years as social more than student. Seniors that go to college choose either Purdue or I.U. in Bloomington. Ron went to Bloomington. As pledge trainer for the ATO House, he turned Hell Week into Help Week, and served on the I.U. Student Foundation. It was an easy transition to the I.U. Law School and he graduated in 1969. In these seven years, his friends affectionately called him "Chico".

His wife, Elaine was from Hobart, a nearby town. She went to I.U. and during summer vacations, worked at Sears in the men's department. His cousin told him about her and he went for a look. He liked what he saw.

He took the Bar examination that summer. On September 26 at 10:00 a.m., he was handed a draft notice. This was quite a surprise as he had been accepted by the FBI, as a special agent pending release by his draft board. Seven hours later, he married Elaine as planned, in a large wedding, and went on a ten-day honeymoon to Puerto Rico.

Drafted as an enlisted man, after a year and a half at Fort Lee, Virginia, he was transferred to Korea as a legal clerk. While in Korea, he met a friend from home, Frank Callas. Frank advised Ron he was going to take the Florida Bar. Ron decided to do this also. He applied, took the Bar review, passed, and became a member of Ward Wagner's trial team. Although he was offered a partnership in January of 1978, he decided to go on his own. He was in the Comeau Building until 1986. Then he moved to the "Fred and Ted Motel" and shared offices with Rod Tennyson. He was doing ninety percent insurance contract work. Everyone agrees that his most famous case was the epic battle

over thermography with Steve McAliley. It might interest you to know that Steve is still digging in that gold mine. Apparently, Steve has won all of his thermography battles throughout the country except for Ron's Palma case, and New Jersey.

Ron is quite naturally proud of his wife, Elaine, who, as a volunteer, almost single handedly founded the Children's Services Council. Elaine became a member and

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Chairperson of the Board. She helped many other counties start their Children's Services Councils.

Newly elected to office, Governor Chiles did not re-appoint Elaine to the Board in 1990. Everyone was "up in arms" about this decision. Ron himself wrote a scathing letter to the Governor. As a result of this, the Governor and his wife invited Ron and Elaine to Tallahassee for lunch. Since then, Elaine was appointed by the Governor to the Florida Interagency Council for Infants and Toddlers where she serves as Vice Chair and she serves as Chair of our local HRS as well. Ron was selected over two other very competent candidates to fill the Circuit Judgeship when Tom Johnson retired.

Ron and Elaine live in Lake Clarke Shores. When asked what he does in his spare time, he states "mostly cut hedges." When his two sons were younger, he spent a lot of time with them and was the coach of their soccer and baseball teams for many years. His sons have now discovered girls and rock music, so Ron has turned to cooking. He starts cooking on Friday. He bakes bread and mostly Spanish dishes. Weekends is "blackbeans, garbanzos and garlic press" time. He goes skiing once a year, reads, plays some tennis, and generally enjoys his homelife.

His friends have been amazed at how well adjusted, and happy he was under most all circumstances. I asked him for the secret of this. He went back to 1955 when his father died. He was ten years old. He was devastated. Luckily his Spanish family came together; his mother, aunt, uncle and some cousins. His closely-knit family helped him through this devastation. From that point forward, he decided that if he could make it through his father's death that he could do anything because everything after that would be easy.