



Judicial Profile-Peter D. Blanc

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When I interviewed Judge Peter D. Blanc, one of our new County Judges, I was amazed at the way that this man was able to put me at ease in a potentially uncomfortable situation. I had never met the man before, yet I felt so comfortable that it was like I had known him for ages. I came away genuinely liking the man and feeling like he had done something for me.

Perhaps the reason Judge Blanc is the person that he is partly because of the family he came from. One of six children, he knew full well what it was like to share and learn to get along with others in this world. His father was a chemical engineer and worked doing research for a certain chemical company for 35 years. His mother and father have been married (successfully) for 53 years. Judge Blanc states that his family gave him a tremendous amount of support, especially emotional support, as he was growing up and any success that he has achieved, he fondly gives all the credit to his parents.

Our new County Judge has a family of his own now. He has been married over four years to his wife Juliana, and has two children, Anthony, who is 3 and Sarah, who is 1.

When asked if he always wanted to be involved in the law profession, he states that one job in particular after college helped him to decide to further his education and become a professional at last. He had graduated with distinction with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Illinois in 1974. He worked as a construction laborer for about nine months after graduating from college. What he remembers most about the job is that it was hard work and he had to work when it was very cold. He wore long underwear under his pants and a pair of overalls on top of that. One could hardly move with all that clothing. It was after that experience that he decided he wanted to continue to further his education and law school seemed a logical choice.

He attended the University of Miami Law School and was graduated from there with his Juris Doctor in 1978.

From 1978 through 1981, he was an Assistant Public Defender in Palm Beach County. From September 1981 through June 1982, he was an associate with the law firm of Altman, Colin & Friedland in Lake Worth. Then from June 1982 through April 1990, he was a sole practitioner here in Palm Beach County, with his practice focusing mainly on areas of criminal defense and marital and family law.

On March 12, 1990, he was appointed by Governor Martinez to fill a county court judicial vacancy, that of Judge Berman. He assumed the judgeship on April 9, 1990.

Judge Blanc is a risk-taker, for sure, albeit a successful one. He had closed down his law practice completely prior to April 1990. The appointment was for a few short months and if he wanted to continue as a judge, he would have to run in the elections in the fall of 1990. This was a serious concern because he was so new on the bench and didn't have the opportunity to establish a track record. However, luck was on his side because he ran unopposed and now will be due for re-election in the fall of 1994.

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When asked if there was one time during his law practice that stood out in his mind that he wouldn't mind sharing with our readers, in which he learned a good lesson about clients, he related the following:

"Back when I was doing criminal defense work, either for the Public Defender's office or in my own private practice and when Judge Sandra McSorley was a prosecutor in the State Attorney's office, I had a defendant going to trial for armed robbery and the defense was mistaken identity on the victim's part. Well, the morning session of the trial, the victim was put on the stand and said, 'Yes, I recognize this as the man. He had me in a corner in the apartment and he had a knife to my throat, and I am positive that this is the man that broke into my apartment.' In my cross-examination, I spent a lot of time questioning her about the knife, about the size of the knife and if she had spent a lot of time looking at the knife on her throat. The trial strategy was that I could argue later that because of the situation and because of the stress, she was really looking more at the knife than at the defendant, and that could contribute to the possibility of mistaken identity. While the defendant was in custody during the trial, we took a lunch break, and Sandra McSorley was sitting outside in the hall with the victim that had just completed her testimony. My defendant was taken back down the hall toward the holding cell and as he passed Sandra McSorley, he says, 'You're crazy. I didn't have a knife.' Obviously, my defendant had blown his whole defense by admitting that he was there but didn't have a knife."

The lesson learned from all this is that an attorney can never be overly confident about his case or how it will be presented. Although Judge Blanc views the incident as humorous now, it certainly wasn't humorous back then.

Judge Blanc has some advice to attorneys who find themselves in situations similar to what has been described. Though he cautions that it might sound trite, he advises to emphasize the positive and minimize the negative. Take the good out of a situation and deal with the not-so-good the best way you know how. This is important, he feels, because lawyers should not look at a case and treat a case only for a certain result. Instead, he advises to treat that case just like it is going to shape and form one's career for all time because people will not judge an attorney on his last case but ALL of the cases that help to build his career.

Good advice from our new County Judge Peter D. Blanc.