



Judicial Profile-Walter Colbath, Jr.

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Wally Colbath's father was the first Wheaties "Jack Armstrong-The All American Boy" on WGN in Chicago. He was a real All American, as Intercollegic diving champion three years in a row. His roommate and boyhood friend at the 1928 Olympics was Johnny Weissmuller. His mother was Swedish, and voted "most beautiful girl" in her senior class at Northwestern. Wally's father was brought up in Chicago near the theater where John Dillinger was shot.

Wally's father was in steel warehousing. Wally and his parents lived on the Northshore until after the War, and then moved to Indianapolis. Like high school classmate Jim Stewart, he attended Broadripple High School, played football, and joined the Marines.

He attended Indiana University where he played on the football team. Coach Bernie Crimmins referred to Number 82 as "Oops" Colbath; he says he should have caught more passes? He was hurt in his second year, and ended up on the golf team, which has remained his passion.

He had earned a college ROTC commission, and after graduation in 1956, he went back in the service as an officer, stationed in Germany. After intelligence school, he was assigned part-time duty with the CIA, doing missions that are still classified, but most involved observation and recording of Russian and East German troop movement at railroad heads.

Coming back to the United States in 1958, he worked in sales for Kaiser Aluminum in Cleveland. His father opened a steel warehouse in Riviera Beach, and Wally moved to Florida in 1959. There was a slump in construction, and in the family business, and his father urged him to go to law school. He had a B average in college, but was accepted at Miami because he had one of the highest scores in the State on his LSAT. Although selected for the Law Review, he didn't join because he was active in the Marine Corps Reserve, and was working his way through law school. He was the Treasurer of the Student Bar, helped found the yearly Equity Playhouse spoof, was second in this class, and was selected as the "most outstanding senior" in law school.

Coming back to West Palm Beach he worked for Andrew O'Connell for a year. Clyde Windham was Public Defender, and ran against Vaughn Rudnick in 1966 for Criminal Court Judge. Wally filed a Mandamus in the Florida Supreme Court to declare the Public Defender's position was open. He was given a last minute place on the ballot, and at the election, he was the only one qualified to run. He served as Public Defender from 1966 to 1972, being elected for another term in 1968. When he started as Public Defender in 1966, he had four assistants. When he left in 1972, he had twelve

assistants, and was doing all of the appellate work for the Fourth District. (He was making \$19,000.00 a year). Wally didn't run again because this position was to become a full time job. Richard Jorandby ran, and was elected.

He had extensive trial experience as the Public Defender, and then concentrated on personal injury trials. In 1972, he unsuccessfully ran in the Primary for State Senate. He has been actively involved in politics, first a Councilman, and then Mayor of North Palm Beach from 1973 to 1975. He was head of the Republican County Executive Committee in 1973 and 1974. The law firm he practiced with from 1967 to 1980 was Campbell (Angus), Colbath, Kapner (Norman), and Fine (Eddie). In 1980, the firm broke up, and Wally practiced alone in the Forum Place until 1984. Deciding that he wanted to be a Judge, he ended up running unopposed in the election. Shortly before he was to fill his elected position, he was appointed by governor graham to fill Lou Kapner's seat, who left the Bench August 31, 1984.

Wally worked in the Civil Division until 1988, and was one of a group of Judges who decided we needed a Family Division. From 1988 to 1990, he served with Judge Stewart, Lindsay, and Wessel in the newly created Family Division. He then chose the Criminal Court. He served as Administrative Judge for the Criminal court from 1991 to 1994. He is now back in the Civil Division. He retired from the Marine Corps as a Major in 1976. Wally lives at and plays golf at PGA every Saturday. He has an 8 or 9 handicap. Sunday is 'chore-day', such as cleaning the pool. He has been the Chairman of many national golf tournaments at the PGA. His vacations are planned around golf trips.

Wally is a devoted family man, married to Judy, children Wally III, Jeffrey, Stephanie, and grandchildren Newell, Cameron, Jason, Kelly and Riley.

They say we live out the dreams and expectations of our parents. Can we say that like his father on WGN, he has been the All American Man.