



## Judicial Profile-Jack Cook

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As a young man, Jack Cook's father moved from Alabama to Northern Ohio, and met Jack's mother at a Fourth of July picnic. Having a farming background, they bought an 80-acre farm north of Columbus. Jack was raised on this farm. They farmed corn, soybeans, wheat, and raised livestock on this level, black soil. Jack and his older brother had their farm chores, taking care of the cows, feeding the chickens, and putting up hay. Jack school bussed into the town of Radnor. When asked how to describe Radnor, Jack stated "let's just say that we didn't have a stop light in the town." Jack graduated from Radnor High School in 1961 with 23 other students. He and his brother had met some students at a summer religious camp who convinced him to go to Hope College in Holland, Michigan. This was a Dutch Reformed Church school of about 1,500 students. (Jack's family had been a very religious Southern Baptist). He graduated from college in 1965, having majored in history and English. His oldest brother had gone to Vanderbilt Law School, and he decided to go to law school at Ohio State. After three years, he was in the top third of his class.

The Vietnam War was in full swing, and Jack decided it was his duty to join the Army. He was assigned to Officers Candidate School, took his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, and picked an MOS of artillery. He was trained as a forward observer (FO) to radio back how to redirect outgoing artillery fire. After graduation from OCS, he was sent to Vietnam, and assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. This Division was stationed just below the DMZ in the northern part of Vietnam. He was assigned to Division Headquarters in charge of civil affairs, and North Vietnamese indoctrination. In 1971, President Nixon started a reduction of forces, and Jack came home to be discharged.

Jack took a position with the State of Ohio's AG's office, working on criminal appeals, and representing the workers compensation Defense Fund. Jack had met Dee in Texas while she was visiting from Buffalo and he was on leave before Vietnam. Dee went back to teaching, and Jack went to Vietnam. They corresponded. Dee was a chemistry graduate, and got a job in Buffalo. While working in the Ohio AG's office in Columbus, Jack made the long automobile trip every weekend to visit Dee in Buffalo. They were married in July 1973, and came to Florida for their honeymoon. In 1975, they became tired of chipping ice. Jack's parents had retired to Alabama, and they decided that Florida would be a good place to live. Jack came down to find a job. He first phoned Tom Mettler, that well-known Ohio State graduate. Tom knew Sam Phillips and Ted Babbitt had just obtained Palm Beach County's first million-dollar verdict, in a medical malpractice case against neurosurgeon, Dr. Schwab. He was offered a job, and became

the third man in the firm. Their law practice was workers compensation, personal injury, and medical malpractice. Deciding he would like to be a Judge, he applied for a Circuit Court position in 1981. Sam Phillips and Ted Babbitt, who knew most everyone in the Palm Beach Bar at that time, helped him immensely. He had many other good recommendations, and was chosen over the other candidates, Richard Burk and Hal Cohen, who later became Judges. To date, Judge Cook has been on the Bench for sixteen years, rotating between civil, criminal, juvenile, and family. In 1993-1995, after Judge Hurley left for the Federal Bench, he was elected by our Judges as Chief Judge. He describes this a 100% administrative, and a very difficult position at that time. The new County Courthouse had been under construction, and there were forty-nine Judges in the County. He describes being Chief Judge as a real experience, receiving in sight into the Court system operations, Court programs, and Court administration.

As for out of Court activities, Jack bicycles forty to fifty miles a week. He usually does this on Jupiter Island, because of lack of traffic. He bicycles off road at Royal Palm and Dyer Park. He has taken his longest bike rides with Judge Phillips. The last one was 600 miles in a ten-day trip from Glacier National Park, Montana, through Yellowstone. (It might be mentioned here that another well known bicyclist, Judge James Stewart has now completed his Florida to California bicycle trip, taking him well over a month, according to his former J.A., Laurel).

Dee now works for a travel agency in North Palm Beach. Jack likes to read novels and biographies. Their daughter, Kathleen, graduated from Davidson Phi Beta Kappa, and at age 22, has started medical school. Their son, Brian, is a junior at the University of Richmond.

His advice to young lawyers (which he gave in the Bridge the Gap seminar to young lawyers for 4 or 5 years) is: "you need to stress professionalism. It has become too prevalent that winning at all costs is acceptable, and becoming personally involved in the case is acceptable. It is not." Lastly, he gives this friendly tip: "Do not show a reaction to a Judge's adverse ruling."

It is obvious to lawyers working with Judge Cook that he is a thoughtful, caring, and sensitive person. Leaving aside the current genetic argument in vogue today, he describes it this way. Being small in size in a remote farm community, you aren't picked first to play on the baseball team. You early recognize that people have feelings. And lastly, the Midwest Ethic. Where there are no divisions of race, wealth, or creed. Maybe that is why he is such an even-handed, thoughtful Judge, and so respected.