

Judicial Profile on Judge Charles B. Fulton
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Charlie Fulton's parents were an odd mix. His father was a fur trapper in the mountains of Nevada, and a railroad engineer. His mother was an evangelical preacher with a Ph.D. from Indiana. They met on a train out West, fell in love, and were married. Charlie was born in 1910 in Fallon, Nevada. When Charlie was 10, the family moved to Jacksonville. His mother continued her evangelical career. His father headed back out West. Charlie's mother was called to the Lake Worth Congregational Church. They arrived in 1925. She was known for her electric stem-winders, and soon became the Pastor of the largest evangelical church in Florida. In the late 20's times were hard. It was the start of the Great Depression. Mrs. Fulton was frequently away on evangelical tent revivals for months at a time.

Charlie (at 6'3") and his brother Bob were great three-sport athletes at Lake Worth High. Bob became our Superintendent of Public Instruction. Charlie's sister, Mabel, married George Boutwell of the Boutwell Diary.

Charlie graduated from high school in 1928, and enrolled in Washington and Lee with his brother-in-law, George Boutwell. After two years of college, Charlie ran out of money. He taught at Conniston Jr. High School, and was the football coach. As a young boy, he sold newspapers on the corner near the Courthouse, and observed the lawyers in whites suits and white hats. He decided he wanted to be a lawyer. He enrolled in Law School at Gainesville, and graduated in 1934. He had worked his way through college waiting on tables and running a sandwich route with Russell Morrow. Russell was a great college friend, and later became a Circuit Judge.

Imogene was the daughter of M.D. Carmichael, who started to practice law in 1910, and was our first Bar President. Carmichael and his wife were musical, and founded the Palm Beach Band. Their daughter started playing the violin at 10. She studied at several schools, including the Cincinnati Conservatory. During Charlie's last year in law school, he met Imogene at a Christmas party. Imogene remained there, and Charlie went back to law school. They corresponded, and were married in 1936. He worked for his father-in-law for several years, then as a trial lawyer for the Attorney General.

He was on the golf course when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Charlie and Russell Morrow immediately joined the Navy. He got leave to come back and see his new baby, Doug, but was gone for four years. As a supply officer with the Naval Air Transport in the Pacific, he did some flying. He came back from World War II, and opened his office in the Comeau Building with Judge Morrow. This law firm had a succession of lawyers, including Kirk Sullivan, John Burns, Ralph Mabie, John Evans and Ronald Sales, among others. Always respected as a highly ethical lawyer, he was elected President of our local Bar in 1960. Then elected State Bar President in 1961.

In 1963, two of his very good friends, U.S. Senators Smathers and Holland, were deadlocked on a nominee for the Federal bench. The argument became quiet acrimonious. As a compromise nominee, they selected Charlie. Imogene said recently that this was completely unexpected, but he certainly was qualified to do the job.

Although Judge Fulton was led to believe he would sit in West Palm Beach and Fort Pierce, it didn't happen. He and his family moved to Miami in 1963 for 11 years. They lived near the University of Miami. Imogene said they really enjoyed it. In 1975, Judge Fulton was transferred here.

Charlie was very family oriented, and had three major passions. Golf, hunting, and fishing. Doug has happy memories of ducks flying off the Kissimmee River. Turkey, quail, and dove hunts. Camping near Fisheating Creek. Charlie played golf a lot. Imogene learned early that she had better learn to play golf if she wanted to spend time with Charlie. She was good enough to win a Palm Beach Country Club golf championship in 1940.

Judge Fulton took senior status in 1978. He and Imogene went to Leesburg. They built a house on the edge of a golf course. They lived in Leesburg for 12 years, and played a lot of golf.

Judge Fulton suffered a stroke four years ago, and it became painful to do anything physical. Judge Fulton was not only a legal scholar, but he loved physical action, golf, hunting, and fishing. His family believes that the crippling effect of the stroke put him on a downward spiral. He moved back to West Palm Beach to be near his family and died of colon cancer on May 15, 1996, at the age of 86. He will always be known to us as a true gentleman, patriot, a family man, a leader in our Bar, and our first local Federal Judge.