

Judicial Profile Judge Edward Malmed
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Judge Edward Malmed was the third arbitrator to serve in our Mediation system. The following is how he happened to come to Palm Beach County. The Judge went to the hills of Northern Pennsylvania, and graduated from Penn. State in 1933. He was a bright kid with a photographic memory. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1935, and had always been at the top of his class at both colleges. His roommate in college was a dancer, Gene Kelly and his best friend was Julius Epstein, who wrote the screenplays for Casablanca, Yankee Doodle Dandy, and many other movies. Julie tried to get Eddie to come to Hollywood, and he would have been a natural. He was a great writer and had a sense of humor, but he decided to take the more serious approach, and remained in Philadelphia. He started his own savings and loan, became its president and attorney, and practiced law until 1970 when he became a Judge of Common Pleas. How did the Judge get appointed? He started playing golf at the age of eight, and worked himself down to a handicap of four. One of his golfing buddies at his country club was Milton Shapp, the Governor. The Judge was very bright and friendly, and it was very hard not to like him. It is natural that Governor Shapp would have liked Judge and would have thought he would have been a great Judge. And he was a great judge in Philadelphia, and certainly one of the most popular judges to ever sit on the bench in that town. Although his first appointment was by the Governor, he ran on his own record in the following elections. He had been a Humphrey Democrat, but he was consistently endorsed by both parties in every election.

The most famous case tried by Judge Malmed lasted nine months, his life was threatened, and he was protected by armed guards. In the 1920s a Jamaican appeared as John the Baptist, talking about the impending triumph of Africa. A group following him called the Rastafarians believed that the Pope, America, and the police were to be destroyed. A group ended up in Philadelphia in the 1970s called Move and headed by John Africa. They wore Dreadlocks and spread feces and garlic over their bodies. Move barricaded themselves in a building and killed a police officer. They did not want to be tried for murder by a jury and selected the very popular Philadelphia trial judge, Judge Malmed, to try the case. The leaders of the group were convicted. A few years later, you may remember that the Mayor of Philadelphia dropped a bomb on the Move building, ending the movement in Philadelphia.

In 1981, all of the Judge's friends were buying condominiums south of Sloane's Curve in Palm Beach. He and Charlotte bought a condominium on the beach at Halcyon. Charlotte had been an x-ray technician and had run an x-ray department in a hospital for 18 years. A mutual friend introduced her to the Judge in 1963. He had been single since his wife died four years before, and he had been taking care of his son, Richard, and daughter, Peggy, alone. He and Charlotte married in 1974.

In 1986, Judge Malmed was thinking about retiring; Al Silverman heard about this and contacted him. Judge Silverman told Judge Malmed about the mediation program in Palm Beach County and asked him if he would come down and mediate a couple of days a week. This would give him and Charlotte five days to play golf, but this

was not to happen. Judge Malmed became so involved in the mediation process that his golf suffered.

Eddie and Charlotte joined a golf club west of Lake Worth and they were ready for retirement. The problem was that Judge Malmed became a very popular mediator and was consistently asked for by local attorneys. Judge Malmed became busy night and day. He mediated cases all day long and read mediation summaries every evening.

I asked Charlotte what Judge Malmed thought of the County Bar. She said that the Judge was frankly amazed at the quality of the Bar, and consistently commented at the high caliber of legal ability in the local Bar. He described his work as being “in heaven” and a much better challenge than he had faced in Philadelphia as a Trial Judge.

Judge Malmed’s last year was not pleasant. He had macular degeneration; and he was unable to read. Charlotte read the case summaries to him every evening. He had a bout with cancer in 1982 and 1986; and it became painful for him to walk, and he had heart problems. He had three bouts with pneumonia. On his last day, he got a cold, had trouble breathing, and Charlotte put him in the car to go to Good Samaritan. She realized she would be unable to make it. She stopped at the fire station in South Palm Beach; and the Judge was rushed to the hospital.

What do we remember about Judge Malmed? He was intelligent, funny, and witty; and he settled our cases. He was very bright and he loved to laugh. He was certainly one of the most pleasant judges to ever grace the fourth floor of the Courthouse. Although Judge Malmed practiced law in Philadelphia during most of his career, we are grateful that he was able to give us his last six or seven years.