



Judge Sandra McSorley
By: Thomas Hoadley
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Midwesterners. For one thing they don't push on subways; mainly because they don't have any. They don't have to face these insane questions about where you went to prep school. They don't care where your father works, your religion or your race. They are a democratic breath of fresh air in a crowded world.

Judge McSorley is a Midwesterner. The judge was born in 1947 in Dearborn Heights, a blue-collar Detroit suburb. She said she was shy and quiet as a child, but liked to read. Her growing-up years were somewhat uneventful. She went to grade and high school in Dearborn. She lived at home and was a day commuter to Wayne State for both college and law school. She was able to work her way through college as a substitute teacher, sorting mail for Ford Motor Company, and recreation director. The future judge was interested in athletics. Judge McSorley played right field and was the manager of a Class B softball team that won the Michigan championship in 1971.

While in law school, her career took a strangetwist. She was one of ten law students from the Detroit area to be selected to intern at the prosecutor's office in Pontiac. She was selected because she had high grades in law school. She was the only female. So, here was a kid with a midwestern mentality, never in trouble, who was thrown into an office handling the most heinous crimes.

She described this work in Pontiac as opening a door to a blast furnace. A news story was written about her later in a major newspaper. This was a headline in the Detroit News, "How does a slim, attractive blonde from a sheltered Detroit suburb cope with battered children, murder, mayhem in Pontiac, Michigan?" This intern project had a very lasting effect on the judge, because after she graduated in 1972, she went back to Pontiac to join the prosecutor's office. She worked in juvenile courts and homicides, and was a senior felony trial attorney in Michigan.

Having weathered too many Pontiac winters, she took The Florida Bar in 1975. She passed and moved to Florida. She interviewed with Dan Hurley, who at that time was recruiting Assistant State Attorneys. She was offered a job on December 1, 1975. She became a felony assistant and then chief felony prosecutor for ten years. She was also an assistant U.S. attorney for 2 ½ years and in private practice for 1 ½ years.

While working for the U.S. Attorney's office, she met Joseph McSorley who was then Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District. They maintained a four-year long distance relationship and were married in 1990. After they married, he moved from Miami and joined the West Palm Beach office of Shutts & Bowen.

She ascended to the bench after being appointed by Governor Martinez. It was a very easy transition for her in County Court judging criminal cases because of her background in criminal law. She more recently has been assigned to the County Court Division since January 1992, and

loves it. When I asked another judge her opinion of Judge McSorley, she stated that she is a very solid person, the judges uniformly like her, she a dry, wonderful humor and is a very up-beat person.

I asked Judge McSorley how she prepared for each day in Court. She replied that she takes files home for the next day and reviews them. When asked how well prose litigants do, she stated that business people do very well. But that is very helpful for non-sophisticated and uneducated persons to have a lawyer. She stated that many hearings, issues and conflict could be avoided if attorneys would only pick up the telephone and talk to each other prior to the hearing. She finds that mediation at the pretrial level is progressing very nicely.

Judge McSorley conducts Small Claims Court all day Tuesday. In the morning, the attorney cases are heard, and the prose cases are tried in the afternoon. At the present time, all jury trials are sent to one judge for trial. Although the jurisdiction in county court is currently \$10,000.00, it is soon going to be \$15,000.00 on July 1, 1992. With this new jurisdictional limit, there is going to be a relative explosion in jury trials in County Court on the civil side.

So, there you have it. A happy, small town girl with a midwestern work ethic and naivete is suddenly thrown into the maelstrom of convicting criminals. She said, "I never thought I would be a prosecutor, and I spent 17 years at it.

We wish Judge McSorley much success as she continues to serve our community.