



Judge Paul Moyle
By: Thomas Hoadley
October 1994

Paul Moyle's home and school life did not produce a clear path to late night calls to murder scenes, and the investigation and prosecution of murderers.

He was the son of a successful corporate executive. This meant moving a lot. Home had been in Georgia, Charlotte, and St. Paul, Fort Wayne and other places. The past few years, the family retired to an exclusive summer island off the coast of North Carolina, Wrightsville. This is where Paul spent summers as a lifeguard. His educational years were in Minnesota, where he went to high school in St. Paul. And from 1968 to 1972, Hamline University. As a sociology major, he became a volunteer worker at the Juvenile Detention Center setting the tone of his future career.

After graduation from college in 1972, he went back to Wrightsville and worked as a road patrol police officer. Then for a land development company in Miami. Finally a decision was made to go to law school. Cumberland accepted him. For 3 years he studied in the bowels of nearby Alabama medical school. In his last summer before graduation, he was a summer intern for David Blutworth.

After passing The Florida Bar, he was hired as an Assistant State Attorney. Dan Hurley started him in misdemeanors with Moses Baker, Maurice hall and Joel Weissman. Then on to felonies and the career criminal division. That was three felonies and no negotiated pleas. In 1981, he became the Chief Homicide Prosecutor and legal advisor to the Grand Jury. He remained in charge of murder investigations and prosecutions for 11 ½ years. Paul was constantly busy. Calls from 33 different police departments, 7 days a week. Midnight visits to crime scenes, search warrants, arrest warrants, critical witnesses to interview, charges to draft evidence to submit to the Grand Jury. Maybe four to six homicides a month in the early 80's. Then in the late 80's cocaine. This increased the homicides to over one hundred a year. Not only turf wars, but killing for money to buy drugs. In those 10 years, the criminal justice system had changed a lot. The Reagan presidency has responded with the "War on Drugs." Restrictive state laws and mandatory sentences seemed to be the legislative answer, but the criminal justice system became clogged. The Florida prisons stated to fill with low level drug cases, not violent criminals. As the Miami herald pointed out in an article on September 5, 1994 "Drug sting operations brought in hundreds of arrested felons per day. Annual prison admissions rose to 44,000. The result: Inmates served as average of only 33.7 percent of their sentences by 1989, freed early to relieve prison crowding."

Beleaguered prosecutors had to negotiate pleas to lighten caseloads. These pleas were accepted because Judges knew that prisons were over crowded. How bad is this problem now?

According to the Miami Herald, convicted robbers in Palm Beach County spend an average of 77 days in prison.

Compare this to 1 ½ years in prison from Panama City.

Judge Moyle's last major stint as a prosecutor was in Juvenile Court. This has been described as the worst of the revolving doors. Lack of funding for custodial bed space, few treatment programs and lack of HRS personnel. The recidivism is staggering. He has nothing but high praise for Judge Karen Martin's work in that Court.

Paul Moyle was one of our best prosecutors. But one wonders that after eighteen years of dead bodies and aggrieved families, he might well have "prosecutor burnout." That overwhelming frustration and hopelessness that criminals are overwhelming the criminal justice system. No wonder judge Moyle describes himself now "as happy as a person can be!"

In 1980, Paul's secretary fixed him up with her college roommate. It was supposed to be a one-night date to a benefit. Paul described it thusly "God meant it to be." They had many things in common. And out of this union, came Paul IV (12), Eric (11), and "Little Angel" Emily (9). All are in Kings Academy. They live in Palm Beach Gardens and are very family oriented. He has described his nonwork interests as spending time with his children, boating, skiing, fishing and scuba diving. But wait, there is a little rebellion here. Like Judge Burk, there is the Harley Davidson motorcycle.

When asked what was the most important to him, he said "watching my kids grow up." When asked what his final goal in the law was, he replied "to retire as a County Court Judge."

Asked to describe why he would be a good Judge, he himself has said: "I believe my broad range of experience with people has enabled me to become a person with a reputation of being a good listener, always trying to make a fair and reasoned decision even though it may not be popular, having a good sense of humor, always being polite to people; and being considered a very ethical lawyer.