



Judge John Phillips  
By: Esther Zaretsky  
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Robing ceremonies are scheduled January 17, 1986 for John L. Phillips, the newest judge appointed by Governor Bob Graham to the Palm Beach County Court. Judge Phillips' first day on the bench is January 6, 1986.

Judge Phillips has gained wide experience in trial law since graduating from Ohio State University College of Law in 1976. He was an assistant state attorney here in Palm Beach County from 1976 through 1979, then an associate with Magill & Reid, P.A. for several years doing primarily insurance defense litigation. For the last four years he has worked as a plaintiff's advocate in personal injury and wrongful death matters with Theodore Babbit, and most recently as a partner in the law firm of Babbit, Hazouri and Phillips, P.A. Judge Phillips believes his experience in such a wide variety of litigation settings will be an asset he can draw on in his career as judge. The county court poses some interesting new challenges for Judge Phillips. He will begin his work as a county court judge in a criminal division, one of the busiest courts in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. "The job we do in the county court is so important," stated Judge Phillips, "because for most people, the only contact they will ever have with our court system is when they come to traffic court, or to criminal court for a misdemeanor charge, or when they bring a civil case of relatively small value to small claims court. The judge who handles any of those cases will, in large part, create the impression the litigants have of our judicial system after their case is decided. I hope anyone who appears before me will feel they have been treated with respect, and that their problem has been handled efficiently and justly."

Judge Phillips is aware that the county court criminal division is oft-times a training ground for new assistant state attorneys and assistant public defenders, and is hopeful he can give some helpful advice and assistance to these newer litigators. In a way, Judge Phillips' return to county court brings him full circle in his legal career, since he began his work in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit as an intern with the state attorney's office assigned to the county court, in 1975.

Judge Phillips lives in Lark Clarke Shores with his wife Lynn, a native of West Palm Beach, and two children Amanda, age 9, and Angela, age 7. In addition to the family activities, which Judge Phillips reports seem to be increasing all the time, the judge devotes his free time to a variety of sport and hobby interests, ranging from auto mechanics to bicycling. He has almost completed building a replica of a Lotus II racing car, which was started from a bar frame and fiberglass body almost a year ago. He is an avid long distance bicyclist who trains approximately 125 miles per week and has taken a number of weeklong bicycle camping trips in the mountains of North Carolina and Colorado. He is a "fairly mediocre" guitarist, and does some jogging and target shooting on the side.

Judge Phillips is an easygoing people-oriented person who is eager to begin his new career on the bench. "The decision to seek a position in the judiciary was one I made after a lot of soul-searching and evaluation of the things I felt my experience, personality, and education allowed

me to do most effectively. I feel very fortunate and very honored to have the chance to begin a new career where I believe I can best use my abilities, and at the same time contribute something to our community and the legal system which has treated me so well over the years,” said Judge Phillips in reflecting on his reasons for becoming a judge. One gets the feeling that, having experienced many of the options and rewards available to trial lawyers, Judge Phillips has made a long-term commitment to the judiciary as best filling his goals of putting something back into the community while using his own talents and experience to fullest advantage.