

Judicial Profile of William C. Williams III
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Robert Williams settled in Massachusetts in 1637. One hundred years later, William Williams signed the Declaration of Independence. In 1885, there was a severe Midwest farm depression. Saginaw Postmaster Linton, bookstore owner Swinton and a few farmers left Michigan to farm a tangle of tropical growth. They settled near the (1976) House of Refuge No.3. This was one of five shelters for shipwrecked sailors who found themselves abandoned on the wild, untamed, eastern coast of Florida and a stopover for the Barefoot Mailman. At the time there were a few settlers in Lake Worth. Then, sixty miles of uninhabited wilderness down to Biscayne Bay. These pioneers grew pineapples, tomatoes, and snap beans along the canals. They lived in crude thatch shelters and cooked outdoors, like their Seminole neighbors.

Flagler's railroad was built south from West Palm Beach to "Linton" in 1895. The train had a wind-burning engine pulling one coach. Henry Sterling, Judge Williams grandfather rode that train from Pennsylvania to the end of the Flagler line. He came to open the first store. Mr. Sterling and their daughter (the judge's mother) followed the next year. The family lived above the store. This also became the area's Seminole trading post. Bands of colorful Indians would camp near the store. They traded fresh deer and hog from the Everglades for catalog items.

Linton was primarily known for its pineapple production, until the advent of Cuban pineapples. The name of the town was changed from Linton to Delray in 1901.

The Sterling's daughter Ethel, a schoolteacher married a prominent local physician, William C, Williams, Jr. It was thought that Dr. Williams delivered one half of the population of Delray. He was in the Florida senate and was the founder of Bethesda Hospital in Boynton Beach. Their son Bill Williams led a very normal Florida native life. He attended St. Ann's School in West Palm Beach, Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, Davidson College in North Carolina, the University of Florida and obtained his low degree from Stetson Law School in 1959. His first job was as an assistant to State Senator, Fred O. Dickinson, Jr. He entered private practice with O'Connell & Cooper.

In her native Norway, Ann Fagerberg dreamed of the tropics during the long Arctic winters. Speaking six languages she became a Pan Am stewardess. She met Bill Williams on a visit to Delray Beach. She was a tall, slender, suntanned blonde. It was love at first sight. They were married in Oslo. She gave up skiing, hiking and mountain climbing, for sailing, swimming, and raising a family-two sons and a daughter.

Who amongst us will ever forget Small Claims Court Judge "Banzai" Currie dispensing justice on the fourth floor of the Old Courthouse? In the 60's, the Small Claims Cases seemed to multiply. A second judge was needed. In 1966, Bill Williams, who had been a Municipal Court judge in Delray, decided to run. His decision had not

been based on money considerations, but public service. In Florida's Judicial Reorganization in 1973, he was elevated to County Court Judge. In 1975, Governor Reuben Askew appointed him to the Circuit Court. He had become one of the youngest Circuit Court judges in the state. He was to remain on the bench for twenty-three years.

Bill Williams was an avid outdoorsman. He had grown up on the Intra-coastal. He loved to fish and was considered one of the county's premier snook fishermen. The family spent weekends on their boats with the family fishing. He and Anne divorced in the mid 70's; he was a bachelor for ten years. He married Zoe Hatcher Williams in 1985. Unfortunately he had a defect in his heart and underwent heart surgery at Emory University in 1986, three years later he retired from the bench. Despite his heart condition, he continued to serve as Court Mediator.

On January 14, 1995, Bill Williams fell asleep reading Kissinger's Book, Diplomacy. That night, in his sleep his heart failed and he quietly died. Bill had always been a genealogy and history buff. If there is a Heaven, I am sure Bill is talking to his relatives about the founding of Williams College with Robert the United States with William and Bethesda Hospital with his father. Oh, yes, and listening to his grandmother's favorite story about the Seminoles who borrowed their shiny new family stew-pot at the Trading Post.