

Judge Marni Bryson

When by the age of 35 you've been an assistant attorney general under three attorneys general, served as an assistant public defender in county and felony divisions, led prosecutions of Medicaid fraud in five counties, argued over 50 jury trials, litigated corporate civil actions and engaged in extensive appellate work all the way to the Florida Supreme Court, many attorneys would settle into a lucrative private practice and take some time to smell the roses.

Not Marni Bryson.

Believing she had the right approach and qualifications to translate her legal experience to the bench, she made the decision to seek a judgeship. Realizing an appointment to the bench at her age could be difficult, Bryson instead chose perhaps the more challenging path by running a judicial election campaign against three other contenders. While the political process proved to be painful at times, she appreciated the opportunity to share her qualifications and experience.

"I found that many people agreed that time in the courtroom as a litigator, trying jury trials day in and day out, is a critical component to being an effective judge from day one. It certainly was for me."

In the end, the year-long process culminated with a win in November, 2010. AAG Bryson-turned APD Bryson-turned civil litigator Bryson became Palm Beach County Court Judge Marni Bryson.

A Miami native, Judge Bryson graduated from the University of Florida with a BA in Criminal Justice and earned her Law Degree from Nova Southeastern University. The sister of a trial attorney, the daughter of a trial attorney, the granddaughter of a trial attorney and the great granddaughter of a circuit court judge, she was born into a family where a respect for the law was a way of life.

After graduating law school, Judge Bryson engaged in a wide range of legal pursuits. After doing appellate work under Attorneys General Bob Butterworth and Charlie Crist in the Third and Fourth District Courts of Appeal as well as the Supreme Court of Florida, she worked as an Assistant Public Defender in the County and Felony Divisions of the 15th Circuit. After a stint at Cole, Scott & Kissane focused on civil litigation, she returned to public service under Attorney General Bill McCollum to lead prosecutions throughout South Florida in health care fraud-related cases, elder abuse, as well as patient abuse and neglect. During this time she became well known for managing and coordinating complex legal cases and developing successful strategies for jury and non-jury trials.

All that experience proved valuable as Judge Bryson presided over more than 140 jury trials in just her first year on the bench. She is known for her efficiency when dealing with a crowded Monday docket. The youngest judge in Florida's 15th Circuit, she has earned a reputation as being a tough yet fair jurist. Judge Bryson holds attorneys in her courtroom to the highest professional standards and her time as an appellate attorney made her sensitive to the intricacies and details of the litigation process. But through it all she always seems to have a smile for those with whom she interacts because she understands walking into a courtroom can be intimidating.

"This process isn't just about attorneys. When a defendant or juror walks into 9G it is often the first time they have ever set foot in a courtroom," said Judge Bryson. "I want them to respect the process, but not be fearful to stand in what I always try to maintain as a place of justice."

So what is next for Judge Bryson?

"I once read a reporter describe the Palm Beach County Courthouse as a 'Monument to human misery', and I could not disagree more. I see our courthouse as a place where justice is served and people can expect to be treated equally under the law. I don't know what is 'next'. I just know that I love what I do. I feel like I have the best job in the world – and I try to do it better each day."

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