



THE CIRCUIT TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE 20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

SPRING 2017

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Farewell to Circuit Judge R. Wallace Pack

One of the first Circuit Judges for the 20th Judicial Circuit, Judge R. Wallace Pack, passed away on January 24, 2017 at the age of 88. The judge was known as a well-read, well-educated gentleman. He was respected by his peers at every level of his career and held in high regard for his ethics and professionalism.

“Judge Pack was everybody's favorite judge. He provided everyone with a fair and polite hearing as well as a prompt ruling,” stated Circuit Judge John Carlin. “Judge Pack serves as a role model for me as a judge and his memory will live forever with those who had the privilege to work with him.”

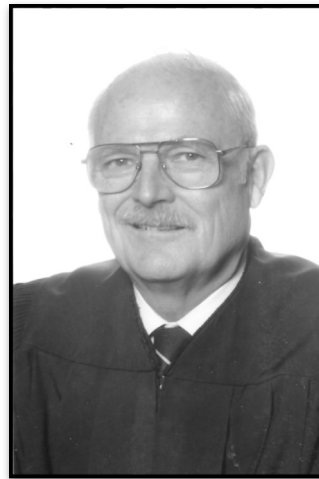
Judge Pack, also known by his friends as Wally, was born on December 25th, 1928 in Beaumont, Texas. He earned his bachelor's degree from Davidson College. In 1953, he received his law degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX where he was also on the SMU Law Review staff. After graduation from SMU Law School, Judge Pack practiced law in Dallas and then became a Landman for Sun Oil Company.

In 1965, Judge Pack and his wife Anna moved with their two sons, Robert and John, to Fort Myers, FL. While in south Florida, he continued working for Sun Oil Company overseeing field operations. He went into private practice in 1967 at Alderman, Johnson, and Pack. He worked there until his appointment to the Lee County bench in 1970. In 1972, he became one of the first circuit judges of the newly formed 20th Circuit. Judge Pack served as Chief Judge from 1981 to 1985 and had dockets in both the criminal and civil division.

“Judge Pack was a most honorable Jurist. His de-

isions were thoughtful and well-reasoned. His integrity was never questioned. He contributed to my growth as a new lawyer in Lee County. He will be missed,” stated Senior Circuit Judge Radford Sturgis.

“During his 1996 contested re-election, he showed grace, humor and dedication to retain his seat on the bench,” said Lee County Judge Josephine Gagliardi, who worked as his campaign manager during the election.



Judge Pack retired from the bench in 1999. Not only did he serve the citizens of the 20th Judicial Circuit for 27 years, but he also was a community leader. Judge Pack was active in Kiwanis, Goodwill, the Presbyterian Church, and the Calusa American Inns of Court, which he helped create. He was greatly respected and admired by the many lawyers who appeared in his courtroom, as well as court staff and his fellow judges.

“Judge Pack was a true gentleman. He gave me advice and encouragement about becoming an attorney,” said Circuit Judge Frank Porter.

“He taught me how to graciously look back on my mistakes, learn from them and laugh,” stated Circuit Judge Leigh Hayes.

Friends described Judge Pack as a practical joker with an incredible sense of humor. They say you could hear his whistles echo the halls on his way to court.

“The courtroom always grew quiet when they heard the whistling judge,” said Carole Beach, Judge Pack's longtime Judicial Assistant. “He had the perfect character and temperament for a Judge.”

Continued on next page...

After Judge Pack retired, he enjoyed sailing, bridge, fishing, traveling, sail planes and was an avid photographer. He was preceded in death by his wife, Anna Rogers Pack, in January 1990. He is survived by his sisters, Margaret Buchanan of Dallas, TX, Sarah Thomas of Black Mountain NC and his sons, Robert of Ocala, FL and John of Shreveport, LA.

“There was never a more gentlemanly, considerate, and conscientious Judge than Wally Pack. I’ll miss him deeply,” said Senior Circuit Judge Hugh Starnes.

“If you were lucky enough to call him a friend, you valued his loyalty, and those of us who knew him as a friend will always value that friendship,” stated Carole Beach.

The Lee County Bar honored Judge Pack during their Luncheon on February 17th it was attended by members of the judiciary, colleagues, and friends.



Attorney Jeff Rice



Senior Judge Edward Volz and Chief Judge Michael McHugh



Attorney Beverly Grady, Carol Beach, and Attorney Steve Thompson



Senior Judge Thomas Reese, Judge Josephine Gagliardi, and State Attorney Steve Russell

Photos provided by: Jim Jett

Lee County Judge welcomed to the bench



On January 27, 2017 Lee County's newest judge was welcomed to the bench in front of friends, family, new and former colleagues.

Governor Rick Scott appointed Judge Zachary M. Gill as Lee County Judge in June. Judge Gill was born and raised in Lee County. He is a graduate of Bishop Verot High School, Florida State University, and Barry University School of Law.

"Today's investiture is not a recognition of individual achievement but rather a commemoration of a community's involvement in my life," said Lee County Judge Zachary Gill. "Achievement is the result of encouragement and positive examples set by others."

Judge Gill recognized all of the people who made an impact in his life from his teachers to his athletic coaches. Some of those who were his mentors growing up are now his colleagues today. That includes Judge G. Keith Cary who was invited to speak during the ceremony.

"I am very grateful to be a small part in hopefully helping you go a long way, said Judge Cary. "You have started a new chapter in your legal career and I can assure you that it will be one that is most rewarding."

Judge Cary first met Judge Gill's parents, Mike and Pat, while volunteering at the Edison Festival of Lights Parade when Judge Gill was only nine years old. Judge Cary talked about similarities between himself and Judge Gill—like how they were the same age when taking the bench, the number of children they had, and their first jobs.

Judge Gill comes to the bench from Goldstein, Buckley, Cechman, Rice, and Purtz, P.A, where he was a partner. Prior to working at Goldstein, Buckley, Cechman, Rice, and Purtz, P.A Judge Gill worked as a trial attorney for the State Attorney's Office in Lee, Orange, and Osceola Counties.

"I can assure you that the work you are doing now as a County Court Judge is work worth doing," said Judge Cary.

This isn't the work that Judge Gill's father always dreamed he would be doing. Instead, he thought Judge Gill would make a great shrimp boat captain. But, he is more than pleased with his son's chosen career path.

"I cant tell you how humbled I am," said Mike Gill. "The only thing a parent wishes for is that your children have it better than you, are happy, healthy and well educated and they live as good a life if not a better life than you lived."

Judge Gill was sworn into the bench by Senior Judge Ed Volz. As an Assistant State Attorney, Judge Gill appeared daily in front of Judge Volz for about a year and a half. Like Judge Cary, Judge Volz is longtime valued mentor and role model to Judge Gill.

Judge Gill fills the seat vacated by Judge Leigh Hayes who was appointed to the Circuit Court.

"I see this appointment as an opportunity to serve the legal community who has been so good to me," said Judge Gill.



Long time Human Resources employee to retire



How quickly does 25 1/2 years pass? Well just ask Mrs. Virginia “Ginny” Wegis, Assistant HR Manager, to whom we will soon bid Farewell and Best Wishes. Ms. Wegis started with the AOC as a Secretary I in our Probation department in December 1991.

From there she briefly worked in our Fiscal department and in March of 1992 she transferred to the Administrative Office working as Court Administrator William “Doug” Wilkinson’s assistant. She later transitioned to the HR department where she has been ever since. Her final day as an AOC HR team member will be May 26, 2017. During her AOC career she has gone from Secretary I to Assis-

tant HR Manager. The AOC as a whole has gone from using type writers to personal computers and from hand delivering messages and documents to life in a digital era sending texts and PDFs. She has watched the AOC family grow by leaps and bounds and endured the loss of several of its beloved members. The HR team itself has grown from two people to six in her lengthy career.

Now she will leave her HR team and she and Howard, her husband of 35 years, will team up as retirees. Their retirement will consist of spending time with family and friends. It will also largely consist of playing golf, biking, kayaking, canoeing, and hiking in many of our countries great states as they tour America with their little camper in tow. Within the next few weeks, please take the opportunity to THANK Ginny for her dedicated long-term service to our Circuit and wish them both safe travels and an abundance of good health and joyful memories as they embark on their retirement journey.

Lee County Pretrial and Probation to seek accreditation



The Lee County Criminal Division (Pretrial Services and Probation) will be seeking accreditation before the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission, FCAC, on June 20, 2017. This will be Pretrial Services’ third re-accreditation and Probation’s initial accreditation review. This is not only Probation’s first accreditation review; but, Lee County Probation will be amongst the first probation agencies to be state accredited. The accreditation process involves having independent trained assessors conduct on site assessments in order to review our business operations and processes’.

FCAC began accrediting pretrial agencies in 2008 and was seen as a means to increase judicial confidence in the use of pretrial release programs by providing standardized, accurate information. Standards address high liability areas, laws, rules, and procedures governing pretrial agencies and represent best practices throughout the discipline. The probation community expressed an interest of being included in the accreditation process in 2014. Subsequently, standards have been developed to address the particular interests of probation agencies.

Standards for probation agencies were developed using select standards from the pretrial standards, and input from subject matter experts from the Florida Association of Community Corrections. These standards address high liability areas and represent best practices throughout the discipline. Standards are also aligned with the American Bar Association’s standards, Florida Criminal Rules of Procedure, and Florida State Statutes.



Pretrial Services staff receive national training and certification

Pretrial Supervisor Shawn Carlson, Team Lead John Calderone and Pretrial Officer Nicol Annis (*below*) obtained their Certified Pretrial Services Professional Certifications through the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies Committee on Education and Training. Staff qualified in experience and education and passed an examination on both general legal issues and issues specific to pretrial investigation and release. This demonstrated an understanding of the pretrial movement and the history upon which it is based. The Certification Program is designed to advance the overall knowledge level of practitioners in the pretrial field, and help ensure familiarity with current information and best practices.



Pretrial Supervisor Scott Peckham (*below*) was afforded the opportunity to attend Orientation for Pretrial Executives in Denver, Colorado. This training was coordinated and sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections for pretrial professionals across the United States. This training focused on how to sustain public support for pretrial programs in opposition to bail programs or other services and how to enhance the effectiveness in maintaining and capitalizing existing services. The training highlighted National Association of Pretrial Service Agencies Standards, ABA Standards, legal foundations and current state law.



Collier County Probation Officer gives back to the community



On March 4, 2017, The Boys and Girls Club of Collier County hosted its annual Career Conversations program. This career-based presentation is designed to inform and inspire the middle and high school aged students in attendance. Collier County Probation Officer Brenda Torres was chosen to represent the department as one of the Conversation Leaders under the category of Law. Other professions represented included Education, Engineering, Finance, Government and Medicine.

Officer Torres was pleasantly surprised to see the large turnout of students so early on a Saturday morning and noticed a common thread among the four main speakers on the opening panel; many of whom admitted stumbling into their current careers. Officer Torres said the panel about the importance of perseverance and dedication. She said a student asked the panel to “Describe in one word the key to your success” The answer was resilience. Ms. Torres later told that student, “Life will throw you curve balls and we must be prepared for them by finding other means to reach our goals and dreams. Be a professional but never forget to be kind and caring, and most important learn from others. Your learning experience might come from those you least expect.”

When speaking with other students throughout the morning; Ms. Torres focused on the importance of knowing the law and protecting themselves in any career. “I also spoke about decisions and consequences, and how one wrong move could delay and possibly erase their chances to accomplish their goals and dreams. I spoke about what it meant for me to be a Probation Officer and the importance of keeping society safe and working with individuals that have lost their way. Many of us have it in us to be successful, we just need the tools and that one person that can deliver them. And last but not least, remember that the only person that can stop you... is the person in the mirror.”

The Collier County Probation Department is proud to have been approached by the Boys and Girls Club. The department is equally proud of Officer Brenda Torres’ willingness to share her story and her Saturday with local students seeking guidance and advice from successful professionals.

Triage expansion in Lee County



The Bob Janes Triage Center/Low Demand Shelter began in 2007 as the result of a multi-agency collaboration. The Center is a strong community asset shifting defendants away from the criminal justice system and allowing opportunities to provide services to assist those homeless with high needs. The Public Safety Coordinating Council, under the direction of both Chairs, the Honorable Tara Paluck and Honorable Frank Porter, recognized the growing need for enhanced services to prevent unnecessary and prolonged incarceration of defendants with a mental illness or dual diagnosis.

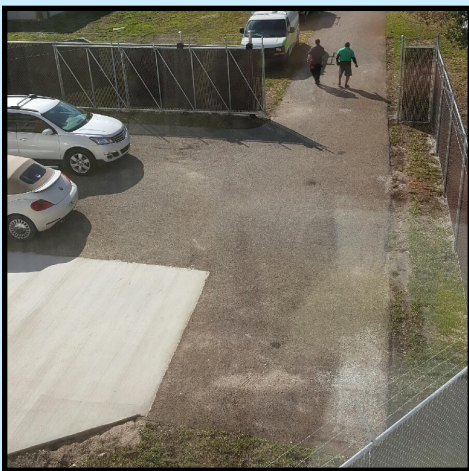
The Center received funding for expansion, thereby allowing referrals directly out of First Appearance and Specialty Courts beginning May of 2017. The Lee County Pretrial Services Department operates 24/7 interviewing and investigating all defendants booked into jail. Demographics and criminal history is researched. Pretrial officers will determine bed space availability and recommend defendants to the First Appearance judge who are eligible for the Triage Center.

Defendants who otherwise might remain in custody due to homelessness and lack of monetary resources will now

have the option to be transported by the Lee County Sheriff's Office and voluntarily go to the Triage Center while on pretrial supervision. Services provided include temporary housing with linkage to long-term housing, employment referrals and addressing substance abuse and mental health needs, education, transportation and prescription needs. The intent is to focus on defendants with low level, non-violent crimes where compliance is monitored through supervision.



Glades and Hendry County Courthouse improvements



A fence has been added to the sally area for the inmate entrance at the Glades County Courthouse. The fence adds security and privacy when inmates are brought in to court from the jail.



The final walk-through for construction on the Hendry County Courthouse took place on March 16, 2017. Projects included a new roof to the Judicial Wing, north and east façade and Administrative Wing of the Courthouse. Also, windows were reinforced on the 2nd floor of the judicial wing and foundation was stabilized for the Old Historic Courthouse wing that currently houses the School Board. We are hopeful this will eliminate the water intake through-out the courthouse complex.

Hendry County students get lesson in law

Each year in Hendry County, elementary school children are invited to an educational day of learning about the courts. The students act as certain parts of the court (bailiff, attorney's, clerks, and Jury). With Judge James Sloan presiding over the trial. The defendant is the one and only, Goldilocks, who prosecuted for her crimes of Criminal Mischief and Burglary.



Circuit Mediators and Arbitrators celebrated

The 20th Judicial Circuit's volunteer Mediators and Arbitrators were celebrated on March 30, 2017 at the Arbitration and Mediation Advisory Board's Annual Appreciation Dinner.

The dinner is put on each year to thank the volunteers who devote countless hours to Mediation and Juvenile Arbitration throughout the circuit. Mediators, arbitrators, judges and friends attended the event at the Crown Plaza in Fort Myers hosted by Alternative Dispute Resolution/Civil Manager Jack Hughes, the Honorable James Adams and the Honorable Michael McHugh.

Those who received service awards were:

5 years

Charles Brox Jr.

Charlotte County Juvenile Arbitrator

Joan Dudas

Cape Coral Juvenile Arbitrator

10 years

Dennis Slabaugh

Collier County Mediator

Claudia Tibbetts

Cape Coral Juvenile Arbitrator

20 years

Diane Slater

Lee County Mediator & Cape Coral Juvenile Arbitrator

Janet Cohen-Jackson

Cape Coral Juvenile Arbitrator



Judge Michael McHugh, Charles Brox Jr., and Judge James Adams



Judges who attended dinner from Lee, Collier, and Charlotte counties.

Lee County Security Officer retires; three awarded



CSO Harry Lafata, CSO Carlos Rivera, CSO Michel Berger, and CSO Carmen Fuster

On April 12, 2017, Lee County Court Security celebrated four of their Court Security Officers.

CSO Michael Berger is retiring after three and a half years as a part-time security officer. A native of Illinois, CSO Berger served over twenty years with the Central City (Illinois) Police Department as Chief of Police. After retiring from the department, he and his wife, Lisa, moved to Southwest Florida. Now, he says he's ready to retire... for real. He plans to spend his time fixing up his home and doing other household chores for his wife. Berger is the 2015 recipient of the Hubert "Eddie" Swords Award. The award is given out each year to the CSO who embodies excellent service to others.

Three members of the Court Security team were also given the Years of Service Awards. Harry Lafata, Carlos Rivera, and Carmen Fuster were each given pins to commemorate their five years of service.

Collier Co. Veterans Treatment Court graduate honored

The Collier County Board of County Commissioners honored Collier County Veterans Treatment Court graduate and former Army paratrooper Carlos Ruiz with the Against All Odds Award during their meeting on March 28, 2017. The award recognizes Ruiz for his perseverance and his dedication to his fellow veterans who have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Ruiz served in the 82nd Airborne Division and was deployed to Afghanistan for a year where, as an 18-year-old paratrooper, he saw excessive combat and lost many brothers and sisters at arms. He returned home with severe PTSD, which led to intense challenges and obstacles.

In 2014, Ruiz discovered and entered the Collier County Veterans Treatment Court Program, spending a year working closely with treatment professionals, case managers, Judge Janeice Martin, and other veterans. He accepted the support of volunteer veteran mentors, who offered a friendly ear, some firm direction and endless support and encouragement. At the same time, he threw himself into helping other veterans who were struggling as he had.

After completing the program and going back to school, Ruiz accepted a job as the disabled veterans outreach program specialist at CareerSource of Southwest Florida. He helps other veterans reach their goals and find meaningful work. In addition, Ruiz is a volunteer mentor for Veterans court. Nominating Carlos Ruiz for this award, Collier Veterans Mentor Coordinator John McLean wrote that giving the award to Ruiz would "assist him in his goal of helping other struggling veterans to know there are others out there like themselves and

there is help and hope for them, too."

The Board of County Commissioners chose to honor Ruiz for demonstrating fortitude, determination, passion and perseverance, and for overcoming challenges to achieve his dreams "against all odds."

"Carlos Ruiz is someone who has overcome great challenges that most of us have not faced and is someone who, despite his circumstances, has excelled and given back to his community against all odds," said Commissioner Penny Taylor. "We are honored to present him with this award."



Collier County Commissioners, Members of CareerSource Southwest Florida, Collier County Judge Janeice Martin, and Carlos Rivera

eWarrants coming to the 20th Circuit

Several months ago, our CJIS group started programming on an exciting new project called eWarrants. Hundreds of man-hours went into the design and business processes that included Law Enforcement Officers, States Attorney's Office, AOC, Programmers, Business Analysts, Judges, and Networking Staff. The result was a Portal (Website) where the LEO's go to and fill out a warrant with all particular information, contact information and notarized statements. Then they post the documents and contact the Duty Judge or SAO (Depending on the county) to let them know there is a warrant waiting. In the case of Lee, Glades, or Hendry the warrant goes straight to the Judge. In Collier and Charlotte, warrants would be routed to the SAO for further evaluation.

When the judge receives the call they log into their side of the Portal and are able to bring up the warrant and supporting materials. If they decide all information is correct, they can electronically sign, accept the warrant, and contact the LEO that the warrant is waiting. If there is something that isn't correct, the judge would reject the warrant and it would go back to the officer for correction. After corrections are made it would go back to the judge for signing. The process can take minutes rather than hours that it could take in days past. The Portal was designed to run on all major platforms, Windows, Android, iPad and iPhone. Once the process is completed and all documents

have been signed and processed, they are sent to statewide ePortal for filing.

This program started last month as a pilot in Lee County with search warrants. We will be looking to expand to arrest warrants in the future.

Judges and Officers have been giving feedback and programmers have been busy sorting out the bugs and honing the functionality to make eWarrants a great addition to the Criminal Justice team.

"One of our Duty Judges a couple of weeks ago was having dinner with his parents and received a call. He was able to excuse himself, go to the den, log in, speak with the officer, accept, review and sign the warrant, literally before his mashed potatoes were cold," said Chief Information Officer Craig McLean.

This also saves time for law enforcement who will not have to leave the scene to drive back and forth to the courthouse. If they have a printer in their patrol car, they can print and serve the warrant right then and there.

Charlotte County will be the next county to be brought up on the system. "We continue to refine the processes and programming to make eWarrants one of the most effective tools that has come off the programming table in a long while," said McLean.



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smiles@ca.cjis20.org

Circuit Times Newsletter

Chief Judge
Michael T. McHugh

Trial Court Administrator
Scott Wilsker

Deputy Court Administrator
Jim Sullivan

Editor
Sara Miles

Photos
Sara Miles
Amy Kinsey
Jim Jett

Contributors
Sharon Suhar
Craig McLean
Amy Kinsey
Jeff Nichols
Dawn Oliver
Craig McLean
Mike Sheffield