

Judicial Vignettes:



Our Newest
Superior Court
Judges in the
County of
San Bernardino

by Ed Butler

Judge David A. Williams

Longtime member of Bell, Orrock, & Watase, Inc., Judge David A. Williams brings many years of civil trial practice experience to his new role as Superior Court judge of San Bernardino County.

Appointed Aug. 12 and sworn in Aug. 22, 2003, Judge Williams presides over probate matters at the San Bernardino Central District court.

In his 15 years with Bell, Orrock & Watase (formerly Fidler & Bell) he did nearly all defense work representing law enforcement agencies, school districts, counties and cities.

His achievements include membership on the American Board of Trial Advocates, which screens on the basis of ethics and civil trial experience, and current service as president of the Joseph E. Campbell American Inn of Court, a mentoring program supporting civility, ethics and professionalism in the practice of law.

Judge Williams grew up in the San Gabriel area, attending school in San Marino where he played on the football and basketball teams.

Paying his way with truck driving on the side, he earned his bachelor's degree in business at the University of Southern California and his law degree in night school at the Whittier College of Law.

He was a sole practitioner for five years before becoming a staff litigator for Tigor Title Insurance Company and later general counsel for the California Thoroughbred Horsemen's Foundation, a health maintenance organization. He has been admitted to practice

in several federal district courts in California, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Judge Williams succeeds to the judgeship formerly occupied by Judge Joe Johnston, now retired, who on the basis of temperament encouraged Judge Williams to seek the role. His judgeship is up for election in 2004.

Judge Williams finds that presiding over guardianships and conservatorships compels him to disregard any personal opinions he may have about the lifestyle difficulties and choices of parties. He hears approximately 30 guardianships per week.

A resident of Rancho Cucamonga since 1987, Judge Williams has three children including one on a faith mission to Germany and another in college. The judge says his hobbies are hunting, fishing and playing golf.

Judge Marsha Slough

Once a college student on a basketball scholarship, Judge Marsha Slough competed as a legal advocate in San Bernardino County for 18 years before her recent appointment as judge of the local Superior Court.

Until recently a civil litigator at Welebir & McCune in Redlands, Judge Slough was appointed and sworn in as judge in August 2003. Taking the position of Judge Jeff King, who was elevated to state appellate court, she presently presides over misdemeanor criminal trials at the Central District court in San Bernardino.

Judge Slough grew up in Kansas where she attended Ottawa University, as a liberal studies major, on a basketball scholarship. She earned her law degree at the Whittier College School of Law in California.

Her first eight years as an attorney were in civil defense work. The subsequent 10 years were devoted to mostly plaintiff work, in medical malpractice and litigation of other civil cases. Before Welebir, she partnered with Jeff Raynes.

As a person who loves the law, Judge Slough said the work of judging attracted her as a broadening of horizons. She can see how civil litigation is "just one piece of the pie" in

jurisprudence and it excites her to be involved in other areas of the law. She appreciates the opportunity to use her background to serve the community in a bigger way, she says.

As for adjusting to wearing the judicial robe, she finds it challenging to adapt to a "totally different" role as compared to being an advocate.

She reports that her favorite off work pursuits these days include golf and travel.

Judge Bryan Foster

A self-described Renaissance man of many interests, Judge Bryan Foster had wanted to become a judge for 10 years or more.

He achieved that goal when the governor chose him Oct. 2 and he was sworn in Oct. 10, 2003. He presides at Joshua Tree District over the criminal calendar and civil case overflow.

Judge Foster is an advocate level member (50 trials or more) of the American Board of Trial Advocates and a California certified civil trial advocate.

He grew up in the San Francisco area, and played football in both high school and college. He earned his bachelor's degree at the University of San Francisco, majoring in history, and also earned his law degree there.

After general practice in the Bay Area, he moved to Southern California in 1983 and worked in insurance defense for about five years. For the next 15 years he operated a Riverside-based civil litigation practice representing plaintiffs in mostly personal injury cases. Sixty percent of his caseload was in the Inland Empire and the rest throughout Southern California. He has been licensed to practice in Nevada.

Judge Foster says he viewed judging as a role "I felt very comfortable in." He says a judge has to "get to the heart of the problem," deciding based upon what is before him rather than advocating. He says he enjoys people and seeing how they interact. "You get to view the human condition at some of the most important times of people's lives."

As for adapting to the role of judge, he finds there's a temptation at times to inject himself into matters more than the bench officer should. "It's a new perspective on it," he finds.

A sports fan who enjoys family and computers, Judge Foster has three sons and a daughter-in-law.

Successor to Judge Sylvia Husing, who retired, Judge Foster will be moving his home from Riverside to Redlands.

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Ed Butler is Manager of the Rancho Cucamonga Branch of the San Bernardino County Law Library.