



Judge Kenneth Marra

By: Thomas Hoadley

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Ken Marra grew up in Queens near the deserted 60's World's Fair. His father was an accountant, one of the auditors for New York City for many years. His mother a homemaker; there were brothers and sisters in this typical Italian family. He graduated from high school in 1969, and then enrolled in the State University at Stony Brook. He graduated in 1973 in psychology and secondary education. Ken had wanted to be a teacher. After graduation, he taught at three Long Island high schools as a teacher's aide, substitute teacher, and social studies teacher. Deciding that this was not cut out for him, he decided to go to law school. He chose Stetson. Ken states that his year and a half teaching experience helped him in law school. When asked how he became first in his law school class, he ascribed it to: "a logical mind, deductive reasoning, hard work, and intense studying." He also found time to clerk in a St. Pete law firm, and work as the Research Editor of the Law Review.

Ken was interested in environmental law, and near graduation applied to the Justice Department. He became one of a select few under the Justice's Honors Graduate Program. He left for Washington in 1977 with a three-year commitment. Jimmy Carter was the President; Griffin Bell was Attorney General. He worked as a trial attorney in the Indian Resources Section. As such, he was one of ten Justice lawyers representing Native Americans under Federal Treaties and Statutes. Mainly, these were trials on infringement of Indian treaties: water rights, land rights, rights of way. Ken did a lot of traveling in that three-year period visiting Reservations. He spends a lot of time in Federal Courts in San Diego, Reno, and other western cities. The cases were worked up by the Department of Interior, reviewed by the Justice Department, then sent to the trial attorney section. Ken describes this part of his life as fascinating. It was dealing with history and treaty disputes related to the late 1800's.

Ken had met Louise in law school through a friend. Louise was in the law school class ahead of Ken. After she graduated, she became the Director of Legal Aid in Fort Myers. After Ken graduated, they married and went to Washington. Louise worked part time for the Public Defender's Office. She soon became involved in starting the Marra family. This now consists of eight children, roughly two years apart. The oldest being 17, and the youngest being 8 months.

At the end of three years, Ken left the Justice Department and started working for a D.C. law firm. This law firm represented Indian tribes, and in addition, Ken became heavily involved in commercial law cases. After three years with the firm, Ken and Louise decided to move back to Florida. Ken interviewed in several towns and cities in Florida. He was hired by the Nason Gildan law firm in West Palm Beach, and started working with them in 1984. At the time, there were 7 members of the firm; now there are 17. When he left in 1995 to become a Circuit Judge, he had been a partner specializing in trial work. He stated that he did not have an office practice, but was a trial attorney, including commercial cases involving antitrust, construction, product defects, condominiums, housing, civil rights, mechanics liens, trade secrets, securities, torts, real

estate, and zoning. He was very active in our State and local Bar Associations in Civil Rules and Judicial and Client Relations Committees. Ken has decided to become a Judge, and applied for a Circuit Court appointment. He applied again in 1991, 1992, and 1993, and on each occasion, he was selected as one of three candidates to be sent to the Governor. November, 1995, he submitted another application and this time Governor Chiles called him and said "Are you ready to be a Circuit Judge? You have a fine record."

He took over Judge Stewart's division on February 12, 1996. He mentioned that Judge Stewart called to congratulate him. He did not say whether or not Judge Stewart had warned him against granting continuances. He picked up Judge Stewart's calendar, and is working on the cases in this division. I asked him any first impressions he might have regarding the position. He stated that "time management" was a problem, and he was trying to find time to do legal research on very complicated problems, and reflect on them before making a decision. He finds it necessary to take complicated files home to work on after the children are put to bed or before he comes to work. He said that about fifty percent of his time is spent sitting as a Judge in the Courtroom. Although there are presently two law clerks for all of the Civil Court Judges, each Judge must do a lot of his or her own research. Each judge can now decide whether to have CD-ROM, or the traditional bookshelf with printed copies of all the Florida cases. He stated that he preferred the computer.

With eight children, Judge Marra does not neglect the raising of his eight children with Louise. Louise does the cooking and the family eats dinner at a long table. They have a six-bedroom home in Palm Beach Gardens. He describes his roll as a father of eight as enjoyable, but a challenge. Each of the children have their own activities: sports, sports events, Boy Scouts, dancing, various practice sessions, music, ballet, rehearsals; the list is endless. The family goes to church in shifts.

Judge Marra is now ready to apply his own descriptive formula for success to the Circuit Judgeship..." a logical mind, deductive reasoning, hard work, and intensive studying." He will be a great Judge.

Judicial Profile: Judge Kenneth Marra
By: Yvette M. Trelles
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When Judge Ken Marra is not addressing attorneys and the public on the bench, he can be seen yelling from the sidelines of soccer games. Why, you ask? Well, he still has four children playing soccer that keeps his weekends and night times fully booked. With eight children, varying from ages 22 through 6, Judge Marra is very active in his role as a father to them.

Judge Marra grew up in Queens and was raised with his four younger siblings in a very strong Italian, Catholic family where his father was an accountant and mother was a homemaker. In 1969, when Judge Marra graduated from high school, he enrolled in the State University at Stony Brook where he graduated in 1973 with a psychology major and minor in education.

Following graduation, Judge Marra was a substitute teacher in social studies and ultimately decided to pursue a law degree. He then attended Stetson College of Law from 1975 through

1977 where he was first in his law school class and worked as the research editor of the Law Review.

After he graduated from law school, Judge Marra applied to the Justice Department and became one of the select few hired under the Justice Department's Honors Graduate Program. He worked as a trial attorney in the Indian Resources Section and was one of ten Justice Department lawyers representing Native Americans under federal treaties and statutes. Judge Marra recalls this part of his life as fascinating, dealing with history and treaty disputes relating to the 1800's.

While in law school, Judge Marra met his sweetheart, Louise who after graduating from law school became Director of Legal Aid in Fort Myers. Once Judge Marra graduated, he married Louise and together they went to Washington, DC. Louise volunteered part time for the District of Columbia's Public Defender's Office and soon after had a full time job raising the Marra family!

Following a three-year commitment with the Justice Department, Judge Marra started working for a law firm in Washington, DC representing Indian tribes as well as working on commercial law cases. The Marra family missed the Florida weather and therefore, moved back to Florida where Judge Marra began practicing with the Nason Gildan Law Firm in West Palm Beach in 1984. Before becoming a Judge, he was very active in our state and local Bar Associations and participated on several committees including The Civil Rules Committee of The Florida Bar and the Judicial Relations Committee and Client Relations Committees of the Palm Beach County Bar Association. He is currently on the Standard Jury Instructions Committee for civil cases. He stayed with the same law firm until 1996 when he became a Circuit Court Judge in Palm Beach County.

In February 1996, Judge Marra took over Judge Stewart's civil division. Since that time, he has sat on the bench in the family division and has been in the criminal division since January 2000. Judge Marra will tell you that the human factor considerations are more challenging in the criminal arena because one needs to be so sensitive to the human element and the repercussions of the decisions made.

With six boys, two girls and a lovely wife, Judge Marra has his hands full at the end of the day. In court, his words of wisdom to young attorneys would be, "Be professional with other lawyers and always be candid with the Court."