



by Vickie L. Guidas, Susan Q. Stuart, and Douglas J. McDonald

Hon. Lawrence O. Anderson U.S. Magistrate Judge, District of Arizona

When he went to college on an athletic scholarship, Judge Anderson dreamed of becoming a professional athlete or pursuing a career in the military. A life-changing accident, however, altered those dreams, and he set his sights on becoming a lawyer and a judge. He even told a college professor that he would like to become a federal judge in his home state of Arizona; 28 years later, he achieved that dream. Narratives like this of perseverance and discipline in the face of considerable obstacles are the hallmarks of Judge Anderson's life. As his retirement from the federal bench draws near, we profile this extraordinary jurist's life and career. As John W. Sedwick, Senior U.S. District Judge for the District of Alaska, states, "It is easy to say good things about a good person."

An Arizona native, Judge Anderson is the oldest of five children born to the late Jack M. Anderson, a prominent Phoenix trial lawyer and co-founder of the law firm now known as The Cavanagh Law Firm, and Viola Ohaco Anderson, a Flagstaff native. After graduating from Brophy College Preparatory in 1966, Judge Anderson attended the University of San Francisco (USF) on a baseball scholarship and became the team's starting catcher. He was also an ROTC cadet. In 1969, while on his way to a college football game, the vehicle in which he was a passenger was involved in an accident that left him paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair. Judge Anderson did not let his disability, which he considers a mere inconvenience, stand in his way.

He graduated from USF in 1971 and went on to attend Arizona State University (ASU) College of Law. After graduating in 1974, he was admitted to the State Bar of Arizona. From 1975 to 1990, Judge Anderson was in private practice representing plaintiffs and defendants, specializing in personal injury, wrongful death, and casualty litigation.

Judge Anderson was involved in several significant cases while in private practice. For example, in *Macaluso*



v. Tire World, he represented the parents of a 16-year-old boy who was killed on Interstate 17 when a wheel that came loose from a utility trailer crushed the car the boy was driving. The \$1.6 million jury verdict was thought to be the largest at that time (1985) in Maricopa County Superior Court history for the wrongful death of a teenager. In another case, Judge Anderson represented a woman whose car was struck from behind by a trucker who had fallen asleep while driving on Interstate 40 near Winslow, Ariz. Judge Anderson secured a multimillion dollar settlement for his client, who was paralyzed from the chest down as a result of the collision. Judge Anderson also handled a case that resulted in the Phoenix Fire Department's adoption of a regulation requiring emergency vehicles responding to high-level calls to stop at red traffic lights to protect motorists.

Additionally, Judge Anderson was himself a plaintiff in a case that ended Little League Baseball's policy of banning wheelchairs from the coach's box on the playing field, a policy that limited his ability to participate fully as coach for the Arcadia All-Star Little League team.¹ In an opinion interpreting the newly enacted Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the court found the Little League policy fell

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“markedly short of the requirements enunciated in the [ADA].”²² The court noted that Judge Anderson’s “significant contributions of time, energy, enthusiasm, and personal example benefit the numerous children who participate in Little League activities as well as the community at large.”²³

Judge Anderson’s judicial career began in 1990, when Arizona Gov. Rose Mofford appointed him to the Arizona Superior Court bench. During his eight years as a Superior Court Judge, he presided over civil, criminal, family law, and juvenile matters. Drawing on his baseball background, Judge Anderson viewed his role as a judge as akin to a baseball umpire because both resolve conflicts and make close calls based on facts and rules.

Judge Anderson received several notable awards and served on several committees during his career. In 1990, he received the Governor’s Victory Achievement Award for the State of Arizona in recognition of his “exceptional depth of inner strength, tenacity of purpose, integrity of effort, and courage in the face of adversity.” He represented Arizona at the Victory Achievement Awards Ceremony at the Kennedy Center and the White House. From 1992 to 1998, he was the chairman of the ADA Court Committee for the Maricopa County Superior Court, which helped the superior court implement the ADA.

Judge Anderson also served as chairman of the board of directors for the Arizona Easter Seals Society from 1992 to 1999. In January 1993, he received the Outstanding Citizen’s Award from the National Council on Disability for his significant contributions to the improvement of life for persons with disabilities. Judge Anderson currently serves on the Arizona Bar Committee on Persons with Disabilities in the Legal Profession, which focuses on courthouse accessibility and assisting disabled lawyers.

On Sept. 23, 1998, Judge Anderson was selected to be a U.S. Magistrate Judge for the District of Arizona. One of Judge Anderson’s colleagues, Senior U.S. District Judge Roslyn O. Silver, describes him as an excellent judge who works tirelessly and is devoted to his work. She says he “strives to do what is right and has the fortitude to do it,” even when others disagree. Most importantly, according to Judge Silver, “his dominant characteristic is humility.” Judge Sedwick describes Judge Anderson as “someone who sees *both* the forest and the trees. A diligent follower of precedent, he also is a creative thinker who finds clever solutions to complex problems.”

Fellow U.S. Magistrate Judge Michelle H. Burns says Judge Anderson “treats every day on the job like it is his first day. He takes his responsibilities as a judge very seriously, and gives every matter before him, large or small, his utmost attention.” This quality has served him well as a long-term member of the district court’s Local Rules Committee. Another colleague, U.S. Magistrate Judge David K. Duncan calls Judge Anderson a “widely respected trial lawyer” and state trial judge who “brought a great deal of experience to our bench.” Judge Duncan also said Judge Anderson has been a personal inspiration and “has set the bar high with his thorough and conscientious commitment to the cases before him.” Judge Duncan further notes that

Judge Anderson helped facilitate efficient case management by promoting consent to Magistrate Judge jurisdiction. An article Judge Anderson wrote that appeared in the January 2007 issue of *Arizona Attorney* magazine, “United States Magistrate Judge—The Utility Fielder of the Federal Courts,” explained the various roles of U.S. Magistrate Judges.

Lawyers who appear before Judge Anderson also recognize his contributions to the legal community. Assistant Federal Public Defender Gregory A. Bartolomei has appeared before Judge Anderson in both state and federal court. He recalls that “tough guy” defendants appearing before Judge Anderson had an immediate “attitude adjustment” due to the personal manner in which Judge Anderson addressed them. Bartolomei explained, “Judge Anderson made the defendants feel that he saw them, that he was listening and he engaged them in conversation. This was exactly what was needed to enable the proceedings to go forward and to ensure that justice was done.” Mr. Bartolomei cannot recall “even one occasion” when Judge Anderson did not commence a proceeding without greeting everyone in his courtroom with a sincere “hello” or “buenos dias.”

When Judge Anderson was asked what aspects of his 15 years as a U.S. Magistrate Judge have been most rewarding, he responded, “My first appointment as a State [J]udge in the county and city where I was born and raised was very meaningful and rewarding, but in a different way than my appointment as a U. S. [M]agistrate [J]udge. The broad scale of legal opportunities and challenges I’ve been assigned to make as a federal judge, even as a non-Article III Judge,

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Judge Anderson with his staff: (l to r) Doug McDonald; Susan Stuart; Judge Anderson; Sherise Hargrove; Vickie Guidas

entrusting me with significant responsibilities on criminal and civil cases, some of which were high-profile in nature, impacted not only people in every part of my native State but our entire country as a whole. While lawyers may seek justice one client at a time, the volume and variety of justice that federal judges seek to achieve every day of the week has been the most rewarding to me.”

Judge Anderson also finds presiding over naturalization ceremonies particularly rewarding. He is moved by the new citizens’ stories and enjoys sharing the story about his immigrant grandfather, a sheep rancher from the Basque region in France, who arrived in the United States in 1899 at age 17 with \$20 to his name and who tended stables that once stood a mere two blocks from the federal courthouse. A framed pair of his grandfather’s sheep shears hangs in Judge Anderson’s chambers and serves as a constant reminder of his family’s humble beginnings and hard work.

Judge Anderson’s former career law clerk, Susan Stuart, states that his “passion for the law is evident by his tireless work schedule and continuing interest in legal developments.” She also stated that although Judge Anderson works hard, he laughs easily and keeps things in perspective. His current career law clerk, Doug McDonald, agrees and adds that he enjoys the collaborative work environment Judge Anderson promotes. “We routinely discuss legal issues that come up in his cases in an effort to ensure nothing gets overlooked. Judge Anderson is committed to providing litigants with comprehensive decisions that clearly explain the basis for his rulings.”

Judge Anderson’s work ethic is balanced by the value he places on family, friends, and sports, as evidenced by his full life outside the courthouse. He is married to Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Aimee Anderson. They have two school-aged children, a son and a daughter. As anyone who has seen the sports memorabilia—including ASU’s mascot Sparky nestled among the United States Code—in Judge Anderson’s chambers can attest, he is an avid sports fan and passionate about *his* ASU Sun Devils. He is a for-

mer national wheelchair weightlifting champion, having bench-pressed 425 pounds. He has been scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and skiing in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. His disability has not been a barrier to new adventures.

Judge Anderson recently announced that he will retire from the federal bench in 2014. The inspiration he unknowingly provides to so many every day, simply by his presence, will leave a deep void. Reflecting on his upcoming retirement, Judge Anderson’s long-time courtroom clerk, Sherise Hargrove, summed it up best by saying, “It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with such an intelligent, hard-working, caring, and fair judge.”

As in the immediate aftermath of his car accident in 1969, Judge Anderson’s future endeavors are uncertain. However, as he did in the past, it is certain that Judge Anderson will view his retirement as another opportunity to recast his future and will find inspiration in the following words of his favorite American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson:

*To laugh often and much
To win the respect of intelligent people and the
affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and
endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a
healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed
social condition;
To know even one life has breathed easier because
you have lived.
This is to have succeeded ☺*

Endnotes

¹See *Anderson v. Little League Baseball, Inc.*, 794 F. Supp. 342 (D. Ariz. 1992).

²*Id.* at 345.

³*Id.*