



Judicial Profile

by Edward D. Tolley and Devin Hartness Smith

Hon. William T. Moore Jr. U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Georgia

William Theodore Moore Jr., known to his friends and family as “Willie,” won athletic fame and peer recognition both as a varsity baseball player and, later, as chief judge of the Southern District of Georgia. Appointed to the court by President William J. Clinton in 1994, Judge Moore served in the capacity of chief judge from 2004 to 2010. He remains an active judge in the district.

Judge Moore was born in Bainbridge, Ga., in 1940. His father, William T. Moore Sr., and mother, Mary, moved “Willie” and his brother Lee to Savannah in 1945, after his pharmacist father took a job with the Eli Lilly Company.

Of course, many lawyers have enjoyed athletic careers prior to entering law school. Judge Moore’s athletic journey was quite unique, however, in that he played varsity baseball for the University of Georgia while attending his first year of law school, the first and last person to ever accomplish this feat. Judge Moore explains that he graduated from Savannah High School in 1958, winning honors in both baseball and football. Upon graduation, he attended Georgia Military College on a football scholarship, but also continued his baseball career, leading Georgia Military College to the state junior college baseball championship. Offered both a baseball and football scholarship to the University of Georgia in 1960, Judge Moore elected to compete only in baseball so that he could enter law school his senior year of college and still continue to play his beloved sport. He jokingly reminisces: “Baseball paid for my first year of law school, but it was of little help to my first year law school grades.”

Despite his rocky academic beginning, Judge Moore later distinguished himself in law school, serving all three



years on the Honor Court and developing a true appreciation for the law and the privilege of practicing it. Ever the competitor, he continued to play semi-pro baseball each summer, and upon expiration of his college eligibility, he was offered more than one professional contract. He chose the law in 1964, and married his wife of 48 years, Jane Hodges, the same summer.

With law school behind him, Moore returned to

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Savannah to start his legal career. Initially, he “ran” titles for the Pierce Ranitz & Lee law firm. He moved on to Richardson & Deremus as a civil litigator, followed by a partnership with Corish, Smith & Remler, and eventually serving as the attorney for the Chatham County Board of Education. In 1977, Judge Moore was appointed the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia by President Jimmy Carter, a post he held until 1981. Judge Moore personally prosecuted many cases, including the high-profile corruption trial of Georgia state senator and gubernatorial candidate, Roscoe Dean. Upon his retirement from office, Judge Moore was informed by Washington that he had personally tried more cases than any other U.S. attorney in the nation—a surprise to no one that knew him.

In 1981, Judge Moore returned to private practice and formed the partnership Sparkman Harris & Moore. Practicing both civil and criminal law, his practice flourished and his reputation as a litigator grew. Eventually, the firm merged with the larger firm of Oliver Maner & Gray, where Moore remained until his appointment to the federal bench.

Judge Moore has now served the people of the United States for 18 years, seven of which were served as the district’s chief judge. While eligible for senior status, he has chosen instead to remain an active member of the bench. He has been honored as a distinguished graduate of Georgia Military College, inducted into the Greater Savannah Athletic Hall of Fame, and received the University of Georgia Distinguished Letterman’s Award in 2001. He served as president of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit District Judges Association from 2002 to 2003, served on the Judicial Council of the Eleventh Circuit, and also served on the Criminal Law Committee for the U.S. Judicial Conference. In 2001, he earned his master of laws in judicial process from the University of Virginia, but fortunately had no remaining athletic eligibility to distract him from his studies.

No biographical sketch of Judge Moore would be complete if one failed to note his strong commitment to his wife Jane; their children Sarah, Mary, and Ted; and his six grandchildren. It is interesting to note that his office is replete with photographs of family and friends, and yet contains little recognition of his amazing athletic career. Ever the professional in court, he is a fun-loving father and grandfather who always has time for his grandchildren. To his brethren and fellow lawyers, he is Judge Moore, but in the hearts of the citizens of Savannah, he is “Willie,” who amazingly played varsity baseball at his beloved University of Georgia while in law school. ☉

