

Judicial Profile

KYAN WARE

Magistrate Judge William Wagner Northern District of Florida

EVEN THOUGH HE serves as the magistrate judge for the Northern District of Florida, William Wagner is best described as a man of faith after God's own heart. If God is love, Judge Wagner uses his life to reveal that love to everyone he encounters.

Walking into his private library at his home is like walking into a museum. Awards and letters of appreciation from various U.S. attorneys general and senators serve as mementos of his career in public service. A letter from a former U.S. senator describes then Senate Counsel Wagner's dedication to success. The flag that flew over the U.S. embassy in Liberia now sits as a reminder of efforts he led as an American diplomat to help rebuild a government in a war-torn nation.

During his service in Liberia, he wanted to accomplish more than just helping to rebuild democracy in a war-torn nation. He served as the head of the U.S. Justice Department in Liberia and his major responsibility was to aid the government in rebuilding its democratic foundation. As a diplomat, he led efforts to rebuild the infrastructure of the Liberian courts, Ministry of Justice, and national law school.

While fulfilling his duties, he witnessed the extreme poverty that follows ongoing war in a poor country. When not serving as a diplomat, Judge Wagner served as a missionary to those who had nothing more than a desire to be free — spiritually and politically. He pursued an aggressive effort to aid orphaned children and families in need.

With help from his wife and various churches, Judge Wagner raised more than \$4,000 and donated clothing and health supplies to improve living conditions. He helped rebuild dilapidated orphanage homes and provided beds for those who had none. He repaired rotting roofs and patched broken walls. His efforts allowed many orphans to experience living without fearing disease-carrying mosquitoes and flooded floors. Judge Wagner hopes to return to Liberia someday and expand on his prior missionary efforts.

Judge Wagner's efforts of good will do not end in Liberia. He spends some of his weekends helping the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity build homes in Gainesville, Fla. Working with Habitat and spending time at church and with friends and family are his primary interests outside the courtroom.

Judge Wagner says the greatest of all his blessings is his family. He considers his wife and children to be the most "wonderful gifts God could give." Judge Wagner and his wife Marilyn have been married for more than 15 years, and together they have two children, Nicole and Luke. Also forever a part of their family is their former foster child Joseph. He is an infant born addicted to crack cocaine whom the Wagners cared for during the first year of his life.

Those who practice before Judge Wagner agree that he is a man whose integrity and caring permeate even his responsibilities as a judge. Assistant U.S. Attorney Frank Williams commented that, "Bill is a very caring, sincere man. He is a man full of integrity, who can be taken at his word. When he says he will do something you can take it to the bank." He went on to comment that Judge Wagner is a very patient man and is even-tempered, not one who is quick to become angry.

Judge Wagner has never held anyone in con-



Judge Wagner with his wife Marilyn and their children Nicole and Luke.



Judge Wagner with his son Luke.

tempt of court. He says that when he was first appointed, a very experienced judge told him that the “power of the recess” is often more effective than the power of contempt when tempers flare.

Judge Wagner also serves on the adjunct faculty at the University of Florida. He sees teaching as an opportunity to impart the virtues of integrity and responsibility to future lawyers. He wants future attorneys to understand that practicing law, like practicing medicine, is a great calling that affects everyone. Laws, good or bad, are our prescriptions for social order and remedies for wrongs. He believes that the courts will lose their legitimacy with the people if the courts ever lose respect for the rule of law. That, he worries, is a recipe for chaos and anarchy.

Judge Wagner would be the first to say that he deserves the admiration of no one. Where his accomplishments reveal a talented jurist with a gift for the bench, he would rather that his life reveal that those blessed with much should give back just as much to the world around them. Judge Wagner does his best to leave those around him in a better position than when he met them. While he does, he will continue to enjoy the life he believes reveals the evidence of a good and gracious God. TFL



Judge Wagner as a diplomat and missionary in Liberia.

Kyan Ware is a law student at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He plans to practice law as an assistant state attorney, eventually becoming a circuit judge.