



Judge Hayes received his B.A. in 1970 from the University of Georgia and his J.D. in 1972 from the University of Florida. In 1988, he became the first judge in Florida to be awarded the Master of Judicial Studies degree from the University of Nevada-Reno; he has received his Diploma of Judicial Skills from the American Academy of Judicial Education; former Secretary and President of Naples North Rotary; former Secretary and President Elect of the Collier County Bar Association; past member, Board of Directors United Way of Collier County; past member, Florida Bar Code & Rules of Evidence Committee; he has served as a member and teacher on the Education Committee for the Florida Conference of Circuit Court Judges, writing papers for presentation on "Evidence, Medical & Other Experts"; "The Deposition, a Discovery Device"; "Judicial Disqualification"; and "Civil Lawsuits Involving Prisoners." Author of "A View From the Probate Bench: Attorney's Fees and More," presented at the Florida Bar Probate Law 2016 Seminar; he currently serves as a judicial liaison to the Executive Council of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar (2004-present); 2015 Jurist of the Year, American Board of Trial Advocates, SW Fla. Chapter.

Judge Hayes is a member of the Michael R. N. McDonnell American Inns of Court (Collier County Chapter); past member, Supreme Court Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, (2004-2008); chairman, 20th Judicial Circuit Indigent Services Committee, (2004 to 2008); past member, Supreme Court Committee on District Court of Appeal Workload and Jurisdiction; past member, Supreme Court Committee on Standard Jury Instructions in Criminal (Misdemeanor) Cases; he has served as an Associate Judge on the Second District Court of

Appeals. Judge Hayes authored the Introduction of the Florida Bar's CLE manual, Evidence in Florida, 5th & 6th Editions, and Chapter 13 "Florida Trial Objections"; he is the author of "Capital Jury Selection in Florida and Texas", 12 Nova Law Review 743 (1988); appointed Judicial Mentor for the 20th Circuit in 1998 to 2020; Fellow of the Florida Bar Foundation; he is a retired Captain, United States Army-Military Intelligence; appointed by Gov. Rubin Askew to the County Court bench in 1978, and by Gov. Bob Graham in 1982 to the Circuit Court bench. Judge Hayes is serving his 44th year in the Collier County Judiciary.

Judge Hayes served for two terms as Chief Judge of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit (2003-2007), and has served as the Administrative Judge for Collier County on multiple occasions. Judge Hayes is married and has two terrific children.

In November 2020, Judge Hayes was re-elected without opposition to another 6-year term office, and he was honored to receive his commission and Executive Order from the honorable Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Florida Trend

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Hugh D. Hayes

Retired 20th Judicial Circuit of Florida judge and Collier County administrative judge, longest-serving judge (44 years) in Florida history, Naples; age 75

The goal of a judge should be to do both justice and law. If you are successful, they should be one and the same.

My family was working class. They were hardworking people. I worked in a lumber yard for a time in Athens, Georgia. That was interesting in that I learned as much from working class people as I did in school.

I had just barely turned 30, and I had become president of the Collier County Bar Association. There was a vacancy on the judiciary. You had to be a member of the Bar for five years before you could go into the judiciary, and I had not quite been a member for five years, so it was possible that when I applied for the judicial appointment from Gov. (Reubin) Askew, if I had gotten it that day, it might not have been valid. But we anticipated that by the time he got around to it, my five years would be in, and that's pretty much exactly what happened, and I got the appointment from Gov. Askew to a county court position.

Florida has done a phenomenal job of trying to be a state of assimilation.

When I was chief judge, I served on a committee with the Florida Department of Transportation as to whether we could take the middle lanes of the interstate highways and convert them into high-speed rail lines. The answer is you can, but the question became

do you want to pay for it? And that's where it fell apart.

I would recommend a book if you're ever curious about Florida history. It's called *Finding Florida* by T.D. Allman. It's one of the better books I've ever read on Florida history.

After gaining a certain amount of seniority as a judge, I was able to put up pictures in my courtroom, and one of the pictures I chose was of George Washington. I put it right behind the witness stand, so when a witness came in to be sworn in, they had to look right at George before they sat down.

I like spicy food. The only time it gets too hot for me is if you see tears coming out of my eyes.

Cheerful and polite, that's what I am. I guess I might blame my mother, who just turned 99. But as far as I can remember, I always looked for the brighter side.

After retiring from the bench, I went to work for Gunster in Naples, doing mediation and arbitration work. I don't know what my end is going to be, but it's never going to be retirement.

This was during Bob Graham's time as governor. The FDLE told me that there was a contract out on my life after a ruling I made on a drug case. The governor's office called me and said they wanted me to know that they were working on this, and that if the

For our system of government to work, you've got to have an educated public. People need to be aware.

case went south, they wanted me to know that the governor said he would go the Legislature and get whatever money it would take to find my killer. I remember just laughing and saying that I hoped the case didn't go south.

The mediation rule — Rule 1.700 — was created to give us a methodology to help reduce the caseload, to help cases settle. Allegedly, only 3.5% of cases that are filed actually go to trial. That's from some of the studies that have been done. If every case went to trial, the system





would come to a halt. We'd just crash. Mediation and arbitration are more important now than they've ever been.

One of the things that I had a reputation for was I would read all of the material. I would take it home, read it on the weekends, at night, whatever. Being a judge is educational. You learn something every day of the week.


My wife is a retired schoolteacher whose name is Nancy, but her name now has become Nana. We have five beautiful granddaughters all in Naples

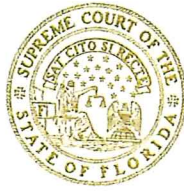
and they take up a lot of our time.

As a judge, you're not representing the plaintiff. You're not representing the defendant. The decision I made was to say that my client was the Florida Constitution. Once you make that decision, the rest of it is pretty simple.

I've had a great career. I've had a great life. When you've survived two open heart surgeries, two thyroid cancer surgeries, and you're still a happy camper — and you're happy with your wife and your children and your grand-

children — then I don't understand why you wouldn't think of yourself as the happiest guy in the world.

You want to make the correct ruling. You want to be upheld on appeal. You don't want to go flying off the handle and have the appellate court saying you had no idea what you were doing. During my career, there were only two cases that I can remember where I was firmly convinced that I was correct and the appellate court said I was not. Up until this day, I'm still convinced I was correct. 



Supreme Court of Florida

500 South Duval Street
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SILVESTER DAWSON
MARSHAL

December 30, 2022

The Honorable Hugh D. Hayes
c/o Thomas R. Grady, Esq.
720 Fifth Avenue S., Ste. 200
Naples, Florida 34102

Dear Judge Hayes,

It is my great honor, personally and on behalf of the Florida Supreme Court, to congratulate you on your retirement and to thank you for your distinguished service to the judicial branch and to the people of our state. You have had a remarkable judicial career—not just because your forty-four-year tenure made you Florida’s longest-serving judge at the time of your retirement, though that is quite something. Far more important is your well-earned reputation for integrity, for fairness and wisdom, and for accessibility to the people you served.

I must confess that it was humbling to read about you and your many accomplishments. For decades you excelled at the most demanding job in the judicial branch—one that, as Chief Justice Roberts has written, requires “firm and decisive judgment,” “objectivity, insight, and compassion,” “special knowledge,” and “active and acute” problem solving skills. As a trial judge, you were at once the face of the judicial branch *to* your community, and the voice *of* the community in the sobering task of sentencing. Of

The Honorable Hugh D. Hayes

December 30, 2022

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course, you know all this—but it needs saying to explain how profoundly meaningful it is, at the conclusion of a long career, to be so widely recognized as a model judge.

Your biography led me to the introductory chapter you wrote for The Florida Bar's handbook on Evidence. What I read confirmed many of the things I'd been told about you—your dedication to improving the legal profession in our state, your erudition, and your love of storytelling and history. Honestly, it was unexpected and fun to read about Blackstone, Bentham, and Cardozo in such a setting. But I most appreciated your repeated reminders that our entire judicial system is oriented toward justice and the search for truth. I particularly loved where, quoting Cardozo, you wrote that lawyers and judges are “sharers in a process that is greater than the greatest of its ministers.” You have been a great minister of justice, for a great many years, and your career has been a great blessing to the people of Florida.

With warm regards,



Carlos G. Muñiz

CGM/jo



THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LAW

Charles W. Ehrhardt
Ladd Professor of Evidence

January 1, 2023

Hon. Hugh D. Hayes
Collier County Courthouse
Naples, Florida

Dear Hugh:

The celebration of your forty-four year tenure of service a on the bench is well earned Your wisdom and judicial temperament have served the litigants and lawyers, as well as the State of Florida. The wisdom of Governors Askew and Graham in appointing you has been demonstrated to the people of the Twentieth Circuit.

Now that you have reached the age of "constitutional senility" you can look back on a judicial career well done.

Your involvement in the early days of the Evidence Code was important . I am pleased we have been friends over those years and join with everyone in attendance tonight to say thank you and wish you a long and happy retirement.

Your friend,

Charles W. Ehrhardt
Professor Emeritus
Florida State University
College of Law



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

January 5, 2023

Dear Judge Hayes:

Congratulations on your retirement after honorably serving as Circuit Court Judge. I know I speak for many Floridians when I say we are thankful for your more than four decades of dedicated work to the Collier County Judiciary. Your diverse accomplishments reflect your proficiency and earnestness that you put into your job every day to make Florida better.

As a veteran of the U.S. Navy, I appreciate the invaluable service of our military members and veterans. Our state and nation appreciate your honorable service in the United States Army. Your hard work, knowledge, and leadership has undoubtedly served as an inspiration to many.

The First Lady and I want to thank you for your many years of dedicated service and send best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis
Governor



STATE OF FLORIDA

**ASHLEY MOODY
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

January 4, 2023

Honorable Hugh D. Hayes
Circuit Court Judge
c/o Thomas R. Grady, Esquire
720 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 200
Naples, Florida 34102

Dear Judge Hayes,

Please accept my congratulations on your retirement and my sincere appreciation for your service to Southwest Florida. It is a noble mission to join the judicial ranks and protect our communities and State. As a former judge myself, I know what an important responsibility you assumed to ensure the rule of law in your community. I thank you for dedicating 44 years to this goal and working to build a Stronger, Safer Florida. Best wishes to you and your family, and may you enjoy a long and happy retirement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ashley Moody".

Ashley Moody
Florida Attorney General

Florida's longest-serving judge is leaving the bench

20th Circuit Judge Hugh D. Hayes has served the people of Florida for 44 years

By Jim Ash
Senior Editor

After 44 years on the bench, former 20th Circuit Judge Hugh D. Hayes — Florida's longest-serving judge — is stepping down as he nears the constitutionally mandated retirement age of 75.

Cheerful, erudite, and unfailingly polite, the Raleigh, N.C., native and former Army intelligence officer doesn't resent the mantle. After all, he says, he learned to embrace his role as a neutral by viewing the Constitution as his only "client."

"That's the best client that you have as a judge, but that's just my theory," he said. Hayes prefers to focus on "the next chapter" of his career, and the gratitude he feels for being able to serve since former Gov. Rubin Askew first appointed him to the county bench in 1978, and former Gov. Bob Graham appointed him to the circuit bench in 1982.

"You're just closing one chapter in your life, and if you're fortunate, and God is providing you, then you get to start another chapter," said Hayes, who recently joined Junster in Naples as of counsel.

The community is grateful too, says Collier County Bar Association President Edward Larsen, who considers Hayes "one of the finest judges to ever sit on the bench in the state of Florida."

"So, for 44 years, Judge Hayes has honored and protected the rights of the citizens of State of Florida, not only as a member of our judiciary in the 20th Judicial Circuit, but also as a member of the community, being involved in the United Way and Rotary and several other organizations," Larsen said. To spend your entire life in service to the state of Florida, especially as he has done it for over four decades — he will be dearly missed."

Veteran Naples attorney Edward K. Chetty, a shareholder with Chetty Passidonio, P.A., says Hayes' example benefited the entire legal community.

→ "We are blessed with a very professional civil litigation bar, and I think it is largely attributable to the tone he has set," Chetty said. "Just by his demeanor, by his example, every day, he has led the way."

Hayes said he was honored by the retirement ceremony his Collier County Bar colleagues recently sponsored, and deeply moved by letters of tribute he received from Gov. Ron DeSantis, Florida Bar President Gary Lesser, House and Senate leaders, and Chief Justice Carlos Muñoz.

After noting that Hayes is widely recognized as a "model judge," Muñoz said he felt compelled to read the introductory chapter Hayes wrote to The Florida Bar Evidence

Handbook

"I particularly loved where, quoting Cardozo, you wrote that lawyers and judges are 'sharers in a process that is greater than the greatest of its ministers,'" Muñoz wrote. "You have been a great minister of justice, for a great many years, and your career has been a great blessing to the people of Florida."

Hayes worked in a lumberyard to support himself while earning his undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia. He was lured to Florida to study law by an Army roommate who hailed from Naples. Hayes earned his J.D. from the University of Florida in 1970.

Hayes says the legal landscape has changed a great deal since he became a judge. He recalls being assigned to hear cases just three days after he was appointed to the bench.

"I think the State of Florida has really worked very hard to improve the judicial system, and one of the things that they did is pretty much require what we call the 'New Judges College,'" he said. "When I first started, they did have it available, if you

could go to the University of Nevada/Reno. The timing didn't work out for me."

Hayes later received permission to attend the University of Nevada/Reno, where in 1988, he became the first judge in Florida to be awarded a Master of Judicial Studies. The distinction is fitting, colleagues say, for a jurist who is widely known for his voracious appetite for books and his love of history. It's not unusual for Hayes to sprinkle even a casual conversation with quotes from French philosopher René Descartes, President Theodore Roosevelt, Judge Learned Hand, and Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo.

Judicial service has been intellectually stimulating, but it has also had darker moments, Hayes said.

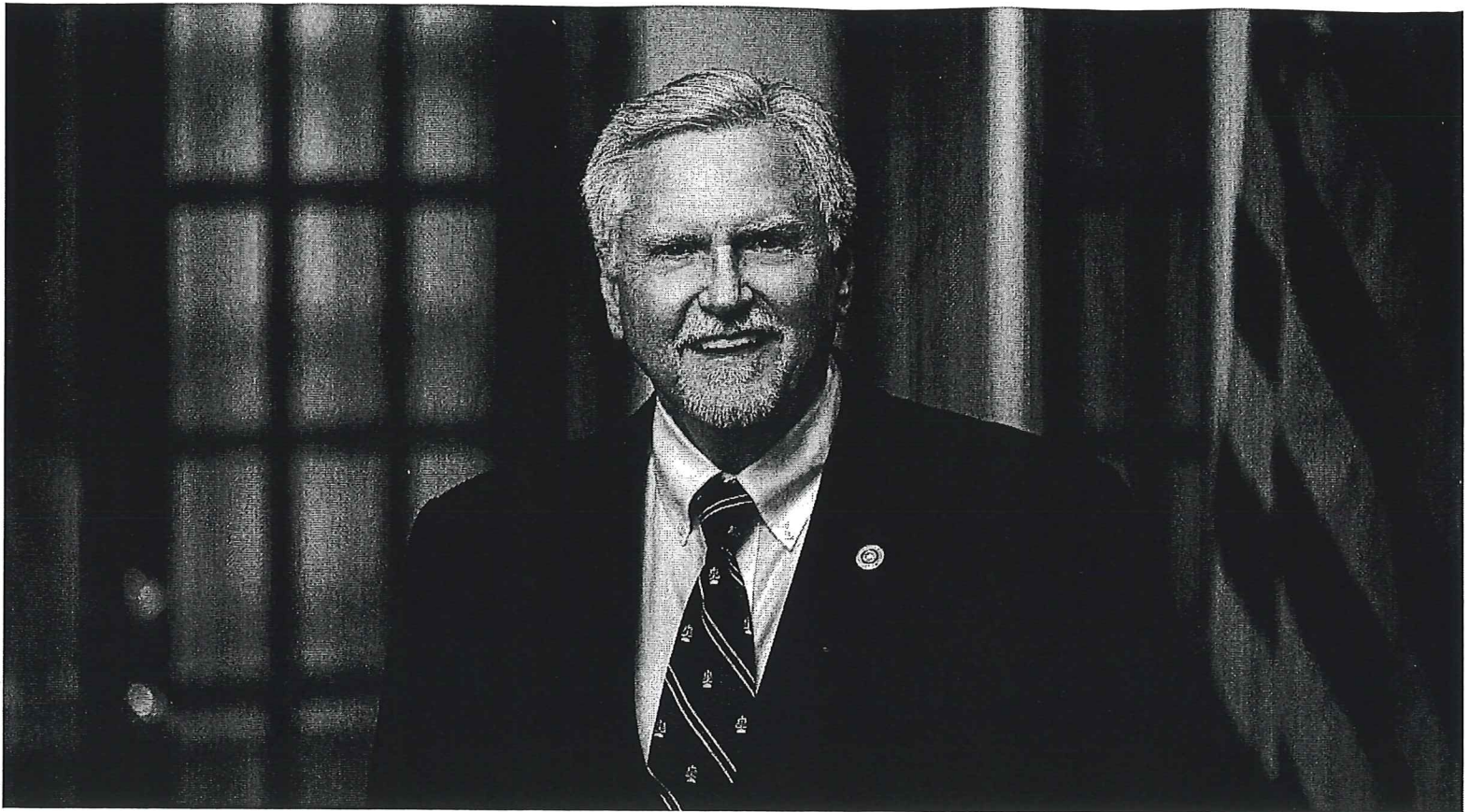
Hayes was forced into hiding early in his career after the Florida Department of Law Enforcement intercepted a death threat from a drug kingpin.

Hayes remembers a gubernatorial spokesman assuring him that the state would spare no expense to hunt down the killer, if the death threat was successful.

"I laughed, and said I kind of hoped it would go the other way," Hayes said.



JUDGE HAYES



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