

OHIO LAWYERS WEEKLY

Ohio's only source for local and national legal news

Vol. 6, No. 19

June 10, 2002

www.ohiolawyersweekly.com

EX PARTE by Aaron Jacobson

Marlon Primes will lean back from his desk at the U.S. Attorney's office in downtown Cleveland and tell you that way back in Milledgeville, Georgia, (the state's capital from 1807 to 1868), his family name was Primus but when his grandfather came north to find work in Akron's tire industry, the name somehow became Primes.

That name echoes in the employment rolls of Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. There's Marlon's grandfather, George, his father, Marvin, and several paternal uncles.

The Primes' consistency doesn't end there. Marlon and his three brothers and four sisters all attended their mother's (Minnie) choice of schools in Akron – St. Anthony's Elementary and Archbishop-Hoban High School. So did the 30 or so foster children from troubled homes his mother took in and raised over the years. And after her own children were grown, Minnie adopted the last seven and they are still under her wing.

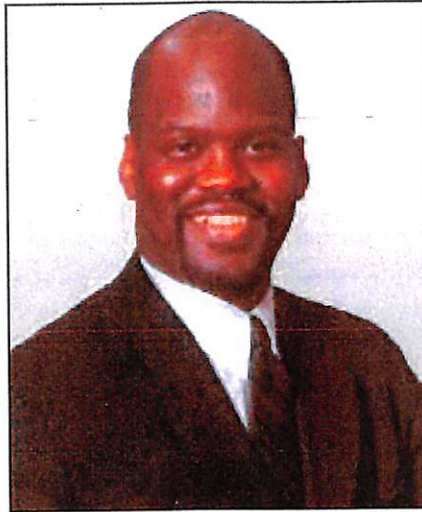
"My parents were wonderful role models," Marlon will tell you. As you listen to this graduate of Ohio University and Georgetown Law School recount his early years as a busboy and dishwasher at Akron's Carnaby Street Inn, it becomes clear that work in the Primes family was more of a virtue than a chore.

"I always enjoyed working there," Primes says. They treated me and my brothers and sisters fairly. All of us put that money to good use."

If after sizing him up—and he's sizable—you think Marlon got through college on a football scholarship, you'd be wrong. But not entirely. He did play peewee football in elementary school and was a varsity defensive and tight end at Archbishop Hoban in his junior and senior years.

He also made the wrestling and track teams. One of his track teammates, Marlon likes to point out, as Harry (Butch) Reynolds, who went on to win a gold medal at the 1992 Olympics in Seoul, Korea, breaking the world record in the 400 meter race.

Marlon did take a stab at football before the start of his freshman year at Ohio University. Told that was a walk-on there'd be no subsidies to cover his living expenses over that pre-college summer, he decided not to gamble on



getting a football scholarship, returned home to Akron and by working that summer clearing tables and washing dishes saved enough to enroll in the Athens, Ohio school the fall of 1982.

There were some exciting times in store for Marlon as he worked to fulfill his major in broadcast journalism. He had his own radio program, conducted interviews on Ohio University's TV station, WOUB, took turns news casting, and wrote copy for "The Post," OUS's newspaper. (As a freshman, he tried out for the track team, but a torn hamstring ended that activity.)

If all this were not enough, in his junior year Marlon completed an internship for his minor, political science, by working in the Athens city prosecutor's office – his first taste of the law in action.

The following summer, as an intern for Cleveland's TV Channel 5, he covered stories for its news broadcasts – his first exposure to commercial broadcasting journalism.

"A career in that field," Marlon recollected, "meant spending my time in some small town with limited prospects, so I decided to spend that time getting a law degree."

Marlon left his imprint on Ohio University's registry. He graduated *cum laude*, was one of three honored leaders in his class and was singled out for his work in broadcast news journalism – credentials good enough to get him into Georgetown's law school.

He graduated in 1989 and secured an associate position with the Columbus firm of Vorys, Sater, Seymour & Pease

With the security of full-time employment, Marlon married his college sweetheart, Kathi Howard, in 1991. They had met in their senior year at OU, both resident assistants in their respective dormitories.

Now they're raising Markus (10) and Kayla (6). And if Kathi is not presiding over meetings and conferences as PTA president of her children's elementary school, she's helping high school kids get into college through the Cleveland Scholarship program.

Marlon has accumulated a curriculum vita of many parts. He left Vorys, Sater to become general counsel for a Columbus life insurance company. When that position washed out through a merger in 1992, Marlon was appointed as assistant U.S. Attorney by Joyce George, head of the Justice Department's Cleveland office under the elder Bush's administration.

Today, one of Marlon's principal preoccupations in his service to the National Bar Association, formed by African Americans lawyers in 1925 because they were excluded from membership in existing lawyer groups. Marlon is one of four elected vice presidents of the National Bar Association; he coordinates the various legal sections of the 20,000-member association – judicial, civil, criminal, and governmental.

He also serves as president of the local Norman S. Minor Bar Association, name for the All-American from the University of Michigan who was rated one of the best criminal defense lawyers practicing in Cleveland courts half a century ago.

What's more, Marlon lectures to students at Akron University and Notre Dame college as an adjunct professor, leads the troops in his son's Boy Scout den, serves the parishioners as a Trustee of the Antioch Baptist Church and its credit union (Rev. Marvin McMickle is his pastor), works out regularly at the Cleveland Athletic Club.

When Marlon's father died last November, a columnist in the Akron Beacon Journal used this quote: "If ever a person symbolized honesty, humility, kindness, courtesy and love, it was Marvin Primes."

That legacy, it would seem, lives on.