

### JUDGE ROBERT E. WILLIAMS



Robert Edward Williams passed from this earth on Thursday, September 14 at the Warner Center for Caring. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts on August 1, 1943, and moved to Jacksonville at the age of 12. He attended Duval County Schools and graduated from Terry Parker High School. He received his undergraduate degree in political science from Emory University and his law degree from the University of Florida. Judge Williams moved to Nassau County in 1968 and taught Algebra, French, Civics and Reading at Hilliard Middle/High School for four years while also managing a private law practice. He was Hilliard Teacher of the Year in 1971 and 1972, Nassau County Teacher of the Year in 1971 and First Runner-Up Florida Teacher of the Year in 1971. In 1972, he became the first prosecutor based in Nassau County and served until 1984; he was elected County Judge of Nassau County and served as County and Juvenile Judge for 22 years until his retirement in 2007. Over the years he presided at the Historic Courthouse in downtown Fernandina Beach, a temporary courthouse in Yulee and the Robert M. Foster Justice Center. Upon his retirement, a Courtroom in the Justice Center was named in his honor.

Judge Williams became a pillar of the community and served in a wide variety of community activities. In 1998 he founded Nassau County's Teen Court, a diversionary program to help troubled teenagers and continued to preside over that court until his passing. He served as president of the Nassau County Bar Association, the Nassau County Teachers Association, the Nassau County Legal Aid Society, Nassau County United Way and Nassau County Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Judge Williams was Chairman of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council and served on the Boards of the Nassau County Association for Retarded Citizens, Micah's Place, Florida Community College, the Florida Conference of County Judges and Governor's HRS Advisory Committee. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Hilliard, the Nassau County Domestic Violence Task Force, the Neighborhood Youth Crime Prevention Program, the Northeast Florida Fair Association, the Amelia Musical Playhouse and was a Charter Member of the Optimist Club of Fernandina Beach. In addition to his Teacher of the Year Awards, he received community service awards from the Guardian ad Litem, Rotary Club Citizenship, Department of Juvenile Justice, 4-H Club of Nassau County and the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. In 2007, he was awarded the Nassau County "Volunteer of the Year" award for his then 38 years of service to the community by the Nassau County Volunteer Center. His retirement years have been filled with the love of family and good friends, travel and literature.

Judge Williams is survived by his wife of 34 years, Mary Speece Williams, who served as Director of the Nassau County Cooperative Extension Service for 22 years; and loving sons Zachary and Casey; a sister Mary LeVasseur; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held September 22 at the Amelia Island Plantation Chapel.

Those desiring may make contributions in his memory to the "Robert E. Williams Nassau County Teen Court Scholarship Fund," 76347 Veterans Way, Yulee, Florida 32097.

Oxley Heard Funeral Directors were in charge of arrangements.