

## **Judicial Profile**

### **Honorable Kenneth A. Abraham Law Division**

By Augusta Clarke and June Acton

It was no surprise to Ken Abraham when the Strong Interests test he took while at Morton West High School showed he would like practicing law. From the time he was twelve years old and watching television series like "The Defenders" and "Judd for the Defense", he had known that he wanted to be a lawyer. After high school, he went on to the University of Illinois at Champaign where he majored in Political Science.

Ken Abraham attended DePaul University for law school. Immediately after his graduation, he joined the Illinois Attorney General's Office. He spent the first two years working in the Consumer Fraud and Protection Division. During the next four years, he advised the District 15 Illinois State Police. In 1976 he was named Assistant Executive Director for the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority. He remained in that position until going into private practice in 1978. His sixteen (16) years of private practice were concentrated heavily in civil litigation, including representation of local governments. He was a prosecutor for the City of Darien and Township Attorney for Homer Township.

In 1994, he was appointed as an Associate Judge. He served four months in Traffic Court and until December 31, 1998 was assigned to a Domestic Relations Courtroom. While in the Domestic Relations Division he presided over three trials of more than four weeks each. The longest trial was fifty-six days.

In addition to his training for the Bench, he has over one hundred forty hours of training in Alternative Dispute Resolution. He is often called on to speak on that topic as well as on matters of Family Law.

Those mediation skills may be seen in his performance on the Bench. Judge Abraham stated, "As long as you explain why [you made the decision] they may not like it – but they accept it." That is Judge Ken Abraham's premise for the high volume and fast paced call in Small Claims. Currently sitting in courtroom 1000, the Small Claims call is sandwiched between morning and afternoon Bond Court. Thus, regardless of his willingness to work more hours he only has the Bench from 8:45 A.M, as soon as Bond Court hearings are finished, until 5:00 P.M., when Bond Court is reconvened. Necessity has mandated efficiency and preparation. The 8:45 A.M. call may contain 120-150 cases. He looks up all of

the cases on the computer the day before they are to be called. Using a newly installed computer hook-up with the Circuit Court Clerk's office, (during the Small Claims court call), the disposition of a case is recorded at the time he makes his ruling. After the order has been entered into the computer, it can only be changed by motion on a subsequent date. Participants are well advised to

come early because cases are called only once.

Judge Abraham tries to minimize the number of trips anyone must make to the Court. He actively works toward that goal. Since the actual paper filing of summons return may be weeks behind, his computer linkage smoothes the way with current information. In those cases where all parties have been served, a trial date will be given on the return date. The return date is the first time a case will appear on the call. Many cases are concluded in just two (2) Court appearances. There is seldom a delay in hearing the trials despite the large number which may be scheduled for any given day. Thanks to what he terms "great cooperation" from the judges in the Law Division, who have volunteered to hear Small Claims trials, he rarely has had to continue a case for the lack of a judge.

On a personal note, Judge Abraham has been married for almost twenty (20) years. He and his wife have three children. He enjoys jogging, hiking, and camping with them. His basic philosophy is the same at home as it is in the courtroom. "Life is too long to be short with people."

He requires civility in his courtroom and reminds those who would be contentious that "what goes around comes around." One would be wise to come early, speak (courteously, of course) to opposing counsel or party before stepping up to the bench; know the status of your case and seek a prompt and just determination. Attorneys and *pro se* litigants should be sure to read the applicable Supreme Court Rules for small claims cases.

Judge Abraham so enjoys his job that he says he would have to list absolute minutiae to find a negative. As a judge, he loves the opportunity to be a problem solver and to use his mediation skills to help parties to resolve cases. He has found that people are more satisfied and content with those resolutions in which they had a voice.

