

Roeliff “Rollie” Harper

Age: 61

Hometown: Mansfield, Ohio

Educational attainment: Went through Mansfield City Schools and graduated from Senior High. Went to Ohio University and Toledo College of Law.

Prior experience as an elected official: Never been an elected official; served approximately 9 years as Juvenile Magistrate, practicing attorney for 29 years with hundreds of juvenile cases

Any other details you believe are relevant: Initiated the Court Appointed Special Advocate/ Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GaL) community-based program in Richland County, making sure every child’s voice is heard

Please describe your judicial philosophy, and how it has shaped your rulings in the past.

My judicial philosophy is based upon strengthening and empowering, because that’s what happened in my home. I was blessed and fortunate to be born unto Lawrence and Mary Harper. They were amazing, they faced insurmountable odds but knew there was no issue. They taught my brother and I that there’s no such thing as a negative experience, these are definable, teachable moments, opportunities to learn a positive lesson, if you will. In order for metal to become useful, it has to be first forged in the fire. And once you realize that there’s nothing out there that can hurt you, you’re free. You’re free to walk toward whatever it is you want. Because I’m not reactive to people, and I used to feel surrounded in a crowded room. Now I know that I’m not. So it’s just keeping a focus and an eye on what you want to do, and going within and figuring it out.

Tell me about a career-defining case that you're particularly proud of, and why.

Mom described me as a giver. It makes you feel good to give. She asked me, why can’t you allow your friends to give to you to get that same good feeling that you get? My head went to the side like a German Shepherd, I never thought of that. She said, that’s a classic giver. You don’t do it because you’re looking for accolades, you do it because it makes you feel good, it’s what you want to do, you can do it and you want to help. That’s who I am. So there’s no defining anything. It almost embarrasses me because so many kids have throughout the years come up to me asking if I remember them, saying if it wasn’t for you, I don’t know what I’d be doing with my life now. It almost makes me feel like I shrank from 6’7” down to about six inches tall, because it makes me feel really uncomfortable. Because I don’t do it for that, at all.

Why are you the best candidate for Richland County Juvenile Court judge?

I’ve had the privilege and the opportunity to be all over Richland County in lots of different areas and lots of different ways. As a musician, music and law are cousins in that they’re both forms of communication. Music is a pure form of communication, you can walk behind anybody’s walls and touch them emotionally whether they want to be touched or not. Law is a precise form; a specific sentence in this kind of set-up must mean exactly this for every lawyer in the state. No

fudge, no garbage, it's this and we all know it. There have been a number of people who have helped me and guided me through; Percy Hall was one of them, he inspired me because I was shy.

How do you balance protecting the community while also taking care of kids?

I was raised by a Marine. I'm aware that there are consequences - there's not much gray area for a Marine. I think kids only learn by having consequences for what they are. But here's the beauty about a kid: Kids won't care about what you say, until they know that you care about them. And then, because they're mostly led by their hearts because their heads aren't full enough yet, except from what they know from whence they came. And if they're in a situation that's horrible, they won't see it as horrible. It'll be normal to them. So we have to get a connection with them, and then show them something different, and give them positive motivation when they do something right. You have an opportunity, a teachable moment, in that. There will be consequences of course, and then there will be an opportunity to try to get them to see because they've already been here, they'll be in a position down the road to help somebody because they'll recognize the signs from whence they have already been.

Steve McKinley

Age: 54

Hometown: Ada, Ohio

Educational attainment: Earned a Juris Doctor and Master's degree in government from Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Received a Bachelor of Science degree in finance in 1990 from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Prior experience as an elected official: Never been an elected official; served as a Richland County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court Magistrate for more than 20 years

Any other details you believe are relevant: Serves on the Media Team at Storyside Church, where he has been attending since 2013; serves on the board of the Clear Fork Valley Foundation

Please describe your judicial philosophy, and how it has shaped your rulings in the past.

I have a conservative judicial philosophy. I believe that I'm to apply the law as it's been written by the legislature, and the Constitution as it applies to judgments. It's a simple way of understanding my responsibility because I'm not to extend myself beyond what a judge is supposed to do. I'm not to legislate the work, that's the responsibility of the legislature. The way that that's affected my work is, I carefully read the law and then apply it the way it's been written. I think my decisions, I've written probably well over 1,000 decisions in almost 22 years of judicial work, and I believe that my decisions reflect a scrupulous attention to what the law says. And I think that's why I've remained; I was a magistrate for a very long time because my work reflected a close adherence to the law.

Tell me about a career-defining case that you're particularly proud of, and why.

A career-defining case was probably my first trial as judge in juvenile court. I carefully heard the facts, I applied the law to the facts of the case, and the result was the community was protected and the youth's rights were protected at the same time. I was careful to make sure that the youth had witnesses available; there was a particular circumstance where it was difficult to get a witness there who was really crucial to understanding the facts of the case, and I took extra efforts to make sure that witness was present because I wanted that youth to have the best possible trial, all the protections that we should be entitled to under the Constitution. I'm proud of the fact that I took extra efforts to make sure that youth had the witness there so that I could carefully discern what the facts were, and then apply the law to the facts. I'm proud of that one because the community was protected and the youth's rights were protected, and those are significant responsibilities.

Why are you the best candidate for Richland County Juvenile Court judge?

I'm the only one who has devoted his entire legal career to being a judicial officer, and in fact being a judicial officer in a family court.

How do you balance protecting the community while also taking care of kids?

The balance is achieved by the exercise of judgment, which not surprisingly that's what a judge is supposed to do. I consider the gravity of the offense, and I consider the presence or absence of remorse with the youth. I know the community is in greater need of protection if there's an absence of remorse. And I know that the child is less likely to commit an offense in the future if the child is remorseful about what they've done - not just remorseful about being caught, but remorseful about their action. I hope to develop a youth's conscience, because I understand law enforcement will not always be around or a parent may not always be around to prevent a youth from doing what's wrong, but if the youth is encouraged to develop a sense of right and wrong, then I believe they're more likely to be law-abiding and restrain themselves from doing the wrong thing.