

U.S. Trustee Spotlight
Diane Jensen, Chapter 7 Trustee, Fort Myers Division - 36 Years and Still Counting



Soon after graduating from the University of Michigan Law School, Diane and her husband, Sid moved to Fort Myers, Florida in 1973, when she joined the Pavese Law firm. Her venture into bankruptcy law happened by accident. When assisting one of her partners on a bankruptcy matter, they were required to commute to Tampa to appear before Judge Alexander Paskay for all matters, including 341 meetings that were conducted by the Judge. This was not an easy drive down I-75 because it didn't exist at the time. Judge Paskay said find me a local trustee and I will hold court in Fort Myers. Sonia Uransky, a retired CIA agent, first served as the chapter 7 trustee, and Diane represented her in many of her cases. When the Bankruptcy Act was replaced by the Bankruptcy Code in 1979, Sonia decided it was time to resign, so Diane applied for the position and became the Fort Myers trustee. It has been 36 years since that eventful time, and Diane continues as the longest serving panel member in the Middle District of Florida.

Diane has witnessed many changes in the bankruptcy arena. The downside has been the increase in paperwork and the ever changing legal process. However, she considers her most fortunate experience is to have practiced before Judge Alexander Paskay, where she learned the law from the many hours spent in his courtroom and through his many orders and opinions. She says that she has also been blessed with outstanding Judges that have served and continue to serve the Fort Myers Division since Judge Paskay's retirement.

As you can imagine, after practicing bankruptcy law for more than 36 years, Diane has had some memorable experiences. She has administered almost every type of asset imaginable, a radio station, a marina, Porsches, a Ferrari, resorts, jewelry, art work, and in one case she sold over 100 cows out in the fields of LaBelle, Florida, employing the services of Mooving Assistants (cowboys). By the time of her sale, she had more cows than originally noticed, due to the birth rate of new calves. She also has heard the most amazing stories from debtors, like the lady who claimed (though did not report) that the \$10,000 cash she netted from the sale of some real estate was stolen from her purse at the Winn Dixie store. This story emerged after she first testified that she had repaid the money to her brother, who then denied ever making a loan or being repaid! Another debtor testified that she lost \$30,000 in jewelry, which she took with her to play golf and it was stolen from her golf bag. This did not end well for this debtor who also had to explain this story to the US Attorney in her criminal case.

After administering 1000's of cases, Diane looks forward to continuing to serve as a trustee for several more years, although retirement does enter her mind on occasion. She has an outstanding staff of 5, most of which have been with her for many years. Diane's enjoyment from the job comes from the fact that she views each case as a new mystery to investigate, with new issues emerging, and still learning even after 36 years as a trustee. She gets great pleasure from the attorneys she works with despite the adversarial relationship which naturally develops between debtor's attorneys and the trustees. Professionalism is a very important aspect of her practice, and she appreciates when that professionalism is returned.

Diane Jensen's name will be remembered long after she has decided to close shop, as her outstanding career as a bankruptcy trustee and practitioner has left a lasting imprint on the Fort Myers Division.