

Judge Biography

Honorable James C. Edmonds Marion County Circuit

“Hello, this is the White House calling.” Words heard by seldom few, let alone when you had been on the receiving end of probing questions by the FBI about your boss only weeks prior. As the Honorable James C. Edmonds reminisced, those words are etched in his memory, bringing him back to his time as a second-year associate at Clark, Marsh, Lindauer & McClinton. Judge Edmonds—“Jim” to his friends and colleagues—was in the room when then-President Ronald Reagan called Malcom Marsh to inform him of the President’s intent to nominate Marsh for a judgeship on the United States District Court for the State of Oregon.

Born and raised in Salem, Oregon, Judge Edmonds did not enter the University of Oregon with judicial aspirations. Rather, it was a course on civil rights and civil liberties taught by Professor Jim Klonoski that prompted his interest in the law. After graduating with a BA in political science, Judge Edmonds worked as the senate campaign manager for Steve Starkovich and pursued a JD at George Washington University School of Law in Washington, D.C.

While in D.C., Judge Edmonds reunited with a former high school classmate, Sally, who was also in D.C., working for Senator Mark Hatfield. The two married and moved back to Salem in 1986, where they would go on to raise four children. That same year, Judge Edmonds began working in private practice as an associate at Clark, Marsh, Lindauer & McClinton. The firm went through a series of iterations before becoming Fetherston Edmonds in 2005, with Judge Edmonds serving as managing partner from 2008 to 2021. For almost 35 years, Judge Edmonds practiced civil litigation, trying cases in the areas of personal and commercial insurance and professional negligence. Today, his docket continues to include civil, criminal, and family law matters. He also presides over settlement conferences for Marion County and for other circuit courts with approval from the originating court.

In addition to his work with Marion County Circuit Court, Judge



Edmonds serves as an adjunct professor at Willamette University College of Law, where he teaches Pretrial Civil Litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Reflecting on the developments in the legal practice over the course of his career, Judge Edmonds has witnessed the transition from suits and in-person appearances to the post-pandemic convenience of athleisure apparel and a computer monitor, and has observed how these modern conveniences have hindered the resolution of cases and affected credibility.

If there is one piece of advice Judge Edmonds gives his students and to those in his courtroom, it is to take advantage of every opportunity you can to appear in person, as such physical interactions demand a heightened respect for both colleague and profession and also teach unspoken lessons in practice. Status conferences, Judge Edmonds recalls, were commonly

held in person, and forced opposing parties to come face-to-face and have discussions that they otherwise would not have had. Discovery disputes resolved over a handshake as opposed to curt emails spread over a week. For new lawyers entering their practice, getting in front of a judge builds rapport and credibility, especially if it’s a county where the attorney will regularly be appearing. Though it has given way to modern considerations, Judge Edmonds impresses upon those entering the profession to focus on the lessons gleaned from personal interactions with colleagues and the bench. It is these personal interactions that lay the foundation of an attorney’s reputation. Regardless of how strong one’s advocacy is, the court remembers the person who took the time to show up over the person who logged on.

It is these guiding principles that led Judge Edmonds, 34 years later, to receive his own call from Governor Kate Brown, the voice on the other end saying: “Hello Jim, this is Kate.”

Submitted by Ashley L. Brown

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