

HIGHLANDS BAR HONORS FEDERAL JUDGE BARKER

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Federal Judge William J. Barker, accompanied by his wife, Pauline, returned to Sebring Monday to receive honors from the Highlands County Bar Association and the County Commission.

Judge Barker was the county's first resident circuit judge. After practicing here a short time in 1925 – he came from Jacksonville – he was appointed to the circuit bench by then Governor John W. Martin. About 12 years later he was transferred to Bartow, and in 1939 he was elevated to the federal bench by the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After hearing himself described by several speakers as "Florida's greatest jurist," and seeing his portrait placed on the wall behind the bench where he presided over hundreds of trials, the eminent judge told the group, with his eyes twinkling: "I can't take all you say seriously, but I like to hear you say it."



The portrait is the gift of the bar association.

To Tampa soon will be sent the chair that he occupied during his many years here. It will be reupholstered and a suitably inscribed bronze plaque placed on it.

Mrs. Barker said she would be happy to find a place for the chair in their home.

The tribute to Judge Barker was paid during a special session of Circuit Court. On the bench were Judges Gunter Stephenson and Joe D. Kinsey and Appellate Court Judge William P. Allen, former resident judge here. Judges Don Register and D. O. Rogers were unable to attend the session.



Judge Stephenson presided after Sheriff Broward Coker called the court to order. Judge Kinsey then presented Attorney Harry Lee, chairman of the ceremony committee.

Brief talks, in which they expressed their pleasure in serving under Judge Barker, were given by ex-state prosecutors L. Grady Burton, Wauchula, and M. R. McDonald, Sebring.

McDonald, president of the county bar association, moved that an order be entered to place Judge Barker's portrait in the designated place. The Court, en banc, entered the order and Sheriff Coker and Doyle Schumacher, former sheriff during the federal judge's tenure here, were instructed to hang the portrait.

The ceremony was concluded with the benediction by The Rev. George C. Stulting of First Presbyterian Church, after which refreshments were served.

Judge and Mrs. Barker renewed acquaintances during the refreshment hours. He posed for a picture with Schumacher, Luther T. Farmer and W. Z. Carson, former Circuit Court Clerks, and Hayden Williams, newspaperman who "covered" Judge Barker's court.