

Football Great Admires Judge Spouse



George Taliaferro (IN) is admired as the first African American drafted by the NFL, and one who overcame obstacles of racism, the military draft during his college career, and the death of his father. College Football Hall of Fame star Jim Baumgartner attributes Taliaferro's victories to "athletic prowess and inner strength." A three time All-American, George led Indiana University's football team to its only undefeated Big Ten Conference season and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. Though drafted by the NFL Chicago Bears in 1949, because he had given his word, he first played for the

All-America Football Conference Los Angeles Dons before moving on to the NFL.

Brief clips from the documentary movie "George Taliaferro- Hoosier Legend" by WTIU are available online featuring his running, passing, and kicking. He was the first African American to play quarterback in the NFL, and the only man to play 7 positions. He played starting in 1950 with the New York Yanks (an NFL team during 1950-51), then the Dallas Texans, the Baltimore Colts, and the Philadelphia Eagles. George went on to be a special assistant to Indiana University's President Ryan and then a professor in the School of Social Work and advisor to the Dean. His biographer Dawn Knight wrote *Taliaferro, Breaking the Barriers from the NFL Draft to the Ivory Tower* with a forward by former Indianapolis Colts Coach Tony Dungy.

A less well-known fact is that George has given much inspirational and practical support to his spouse, Judge Viola "Vi" Taliaferro, now retired. Vi's background had been in academia, social work with the Maryland Department of Welfare, directing a senior citizen's center, and teaching and administration in Baltimore public schools. After moving to Indiana, she decided to go to law school as an adult student. George got behind her as she had gotten behind him during his professional football career attending games and related social events and moving with job changes. George often played "Mr. Mom" to their four daughters while Vi attended law school graduating in 1977. George encouraged her every inch of the way and much admires what she has accomplished.

Like their parents before them, George and Vi loved, valued, and invested much time in encouraging their children. Many kitchen table talks with their daughters centered on changes coming with becoming a teenager with certain new responsibilities and privileges. First they asked each child to help them understand their teenage world. Then they asked: "Where do you see yourself going from here?" Together George and Vi devised contracts with their daughters asking them to set their own goals as 16 year olds. They were to look to their

parents to help them stay on target. Then they all came to an agreement on rules of conduct and consequences in such areas as dating, drugs and alcohol, dress, and education. The Taliaferros let each child know higher education was a high priority. The only question was where they wanted to go. Vi and George continually sought to help each daughter envision a custom-tailored future and then they "let go." George says: "You've got to let them go."

After Vi Taliaferro practiced law for 12 years, she became the first African American to serve as magistrate (1989) and then judge in the Circuit Court of Monroe County, IN, (1995). She handled all county juvenile, paternity, probate, and mental health commitment cases. George said she was the best friend the children coming into the court could have. She aimed always to help put children on a better track. One college graduate who had come into her court as a child spoke for many when he came back to Judge Vi to say: "Thank you, you changed my life." She does not believe there are bad children, but children who do bad things. People can help them change when the child is willing and purposeful. The Golden Rule is a solid guideline. Interviews of Judge Viola Taliaferro are available online for understanding more about her background and perspective.

Vi served as a consultant to U. S. Attorney General Janet Reno, and was on the National Research Council on Juvenile Crime. She has championed the Monroe County Youth Shelter and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates Association) programs for children which named her national "Judge of the Year." She was elected to the prestigious American Law Institute and has participated in various professional organizations. As a retired judge she continues to do special projects for the Indiana Supreme Court. Vi says: "I do believe that if you are in the position to make a difference in someone's life, then you should take it."

Since his retirement from university teaching, George Taliaferro has sometimes chauffeured Vi to "special judge" and other assignments. He has sat in many courtrooms as she presided. It has been a real eye opener to what judges can experience that has gone wrong in our culture. He greatly admires her work and her willingness to do it. George has also been known to challenge Vi, and she him. They stay on their toes and love to debate issues with each other. Both of them have seen and faced very difficult situations in their lives and believe in valuing all people.

George Taliaferro could not be more proud of Judge Viola Taliaferro's work and her heart for helping others. Their alma mater is also proud of Vi and in her honor has established the Vi Taliaferro Family and Children Mediation Clinic at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law. The Indiana State Bar Association's Viola J. Taliaferro Award is given each year to an individual or group for extraordinary efforts on behalf of children. George is Chair Emeritus of the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) and continues to volunteer for COTA and other worthy causes. Thanks to George and Vi for being, through mutual support, a judicial family that makes a difference.