

MARQUIS/Pinellas County's administrator abides by unwritten rules

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1970, reads: "let's think of reasons why IT CAN BE DONE!" "Fred is a type who tries to find a way to say yes," said Rainey, who retired in November after 29 years. "You can hire anybody to say no. You say no, you don't have to do anything."

When asked what he considers his biggest achievement, Marquis speaks of stability and professionalism in government. But he is most proud of the Pinellas Trail, a recreation path that runs the length of the county along an abandoned railroad bed.

"IT'S ONE of the few things we've ever done where all walks of life enjoy it," he said. "Every single day, everybody — from blue collars to 90-year-old people in their walkers to CEOs of major corporations to the guy who just picked up his welfare check — all enjoy the trail. It's a great equalizer for the entire county."

As administrator, Marquis practices a hands-off management style that is a sharp contrast to the autocratic, command-and-control techniques of the military.

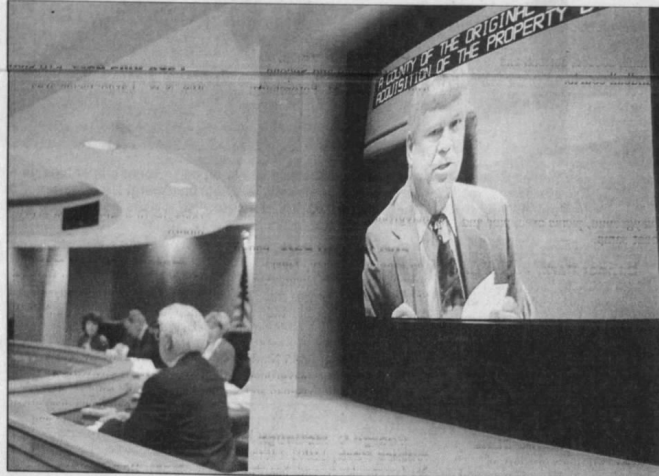
"I've always tried to surround myself with good people and let them do their jobs," he said. "I think that's one of the strengths I've always brought to county government. And my role is to be the coach, mentor, facilitator, and not sit there and tell them. On every little thing, you've got to run to me before you can do that."

But De Blaker, the county's treasurer and auditor who has clashed with Marquis and the commission over investments and expenditures, said Marquis at times is too far removed from departments under his control.

She pointed to the case of James Ashman, the county's former purchasing director whom Marquis fired last year after an investigation found he had sexually harassed workers in his office for nearly four years.

"FRED HAS always supported his people real well," De Blaker said. "Sometimes he doesn't appreciate you telling him something's going on that's wrong."

Marquis attributes his longevity to several factors. For one thing, he sticks to administration and stays out of politics. He has an ability to get along with commissioners of all persuasions. And he tries to avoid the public limelight and let his bosses take credit where credit is due, such as on the highly successful March referendum to extend the "Penny for Pinellas" 1-cent sales tax for another decade, to 2010.



BRUCE HOSKING/Tribune photo

Marquis is in focus as he answers questions in the county commission chambers in Clearwater. When he assumed the top staff post in the

Marquis also credits his military education, which he said has enabled him to sharpen his management skills and apply them to county government.

"I was real fortunate the two careers balanced each other and had very transferable knowledge," he said.

When he retires next year from the Army Reserves after 35 years, he will have capped a second career that began before he mapped out his first.

"It'll be sad," he said. "I'm a very patriotic slob. I cry at parades. I can get choked up saying the pledge of allegiance."

BORN IN Jacksonville, Fred Emanuel Marquis began his military affiliation in 1958, when he joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps while attending the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Marquis, who is of British and German descent, said he's always had an interest in the military and its history. As a child growing up in Neptune Beach, he played war games in the sand dunes. His older brother, Joseph Alan, an All-American high school quarterback, served in the Air Force. His father, Emanuel Joseph Jr., fought in World War II and later in Korea.

But his decision to join the ROTC had more to do with necessity than any militaristic pride in country. He needed the \$19 a month to help pay for school.

When he graduated in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, Marquis was commissioned a second lieutenant and spent the next four years on active duty, including 14 months in Vietnam.

"It was probably the most exciting time of my life," he said. "I was there when they had their first democratic election ever in the whole country. I was just amazed that here's a people willing to exercise their right to vote while they're being bombed and murdered and machine-gunned at the polling places."

WHILE IN VIETNAM from 1966 to 1967, Marquis was an adviser for a Vietnamese airborne unit. He also worked in a leper colony sponsored by his unit. That experience, he said, piqued his interest in city planning issues, such as how to get sewer and water to the colony.

Upon his return home, Marquis enrolled at Florida State University in Tallahassee and received a master's degree in urban and regional planning in 1969. He also continued with the military, switching to the Army Reserve.

Marquis' first job after graduate school was as an assistant planning director for the city of St. Petersburg. He worked there for about a year before Pinellas County hired him for a similar position in 1970.

Marquis worked in the county planning department, which he later headed, until 1975. That's when then-County Administrator Merrett Stierheim made him one of his assistants — a job Marquis initially did not want.

"I wouldn't do it," he said. "Because at that point the county wasn't structured like it is now. And Stierheim had just a gaggle of assistants. They really didn't have that direct-line responsibility or authority."

Marquis said he took the job after Stierheim agreed to allow him to reorganize the office, giving assistants direct responsibility over certain county functions.

"As chief assistant, I was literally running the county," Marquis said. "And the county manager was dealing with the board. I was content. I could have stayed in that job forever."

BUT IT WAS NOT to be. In 1978, when County Administrator Duane Zussy quit after a falling out with commissioners over his proposed \$192 million budget, Marquis was tapped for yet another job he shunned: interim county administrator.

"They made me acting county administrator, and a year later I was still grumbling with them. 'You need to get a new administrator,'" Marquis said. "They were all smiles and said, 'We have one.' I said, 'No, you have an act-

ing one.'"

Commissioners conducted a national search for a permanent administrator after Marquis agreed to throw his name in the hat.

From the 100 or so candidates who applied, Marquis was appointed by a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Jeanne Malchon dissenting. Malchon recalled last week her vote was no reflection on Marquis' ability to manage the county.

"I considered it more a vote for him as a person," she said. "I just felt that it was very difficult for anyone who was principled to survive the Rainey leadership."

Malchon also recalled something Marquis said to her.

"He told me at the time, 'I'll outlast you,'" she said. "Which he did."

As the lone male survivor in his family, Marquis also has outlasted his brother and father, both of whom died of heart attack or stroke before they were 50. Marquis himself underwent heart surgery two years ago for blockage of arteries.

HE REGULARLY exercises and undergoes physicals. He and his wife, Suzanne, spend time walking along the beach at nearby Honeymoon Island State Park, skating on the Pinellas Trail to Dunedin or Tarpon Springs from their Palm Harbor home, or working out at a neighborhood fitness center.

Both also enjoy snow skiing, even though Suzanne injured her knee last year and he broke his collarbone in March.

The couple wed in 1992 aboard an 80-foot yacht during a sunset ceremony on the Gulf of Mexico.

"We were ready to get married when the [Persian] Gulf War came up," Marquis recalled. "I had to start sending all my units, and going back and forth. We decided to wait until that settled down."

It is Marquis' third marriage; his wife's second. Each has an adult daughter from a previous marriage.

Suzanne works in the county's computer department. Marquis hired her in 1975 while he was planning director.

The pair began dating after they ran into each other some 15 years later, in 1990.

"I didn't remember I hired her," he conceded. "She had to tell me that."

Suzanne said she feels "very comfortable" with her husband, despite his status.

"He's just down to earth," she said. "He doesn't make you feel any less important than he. We're like equals, even though I know

Fred Marquis

A brief chronology of Fred E. Marquis' life and his civilian and military careers:

- May 2, 1939 — Born in Jacksonville
- 1963 — Graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture
- 1963 — Earned his commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Florida
- 1966, 1967 — Served in Vietnam
- 1969 — Graduated from Florida State University with a master's degree in urban and regional planning
- 1969 — Hired by the city of St. Petersburg as a planner
- 1970 — Hired by Pinellas County as assistant planning director
- 1972 — Promoted to planning director
- 1975 — Promoted to assistant county administrator
- 1978 — Named interim county administrator
- 1979 — Appointed county administrator
- 1982 — Assigned to the 143rd Transportation Brigade in Orlando as assistant chief of staff, security, plans and operations
- 1991 — Named commanding general of the 143rd Transportation Command in Orlando
- 1995 — Assigned to the Pentagon as assistant deputy chief of staff for logistics

he's county administrator and a two-star general."

Marquis currently is assigned to the Pentagon as the Army's assistant deputy chief of staff for logistics and travels to Washington at least twice a month. He got the assignment in 1995, after turning over his command of the 143rd Transportation Command, an Army Reserve unit headquartered in Orlando with more than 16,000 soldiers.

"IT WAS a very difficult thing for me," Marquis recalled of the change in command. "I'd been associated with those guys for literally 20 years."

In recent years, the Army repeatedly has asked Marquis to return to active duty. Marquis said the quandary of whether to leave Pinellas, which he seriously considered, has been emotionally draining.

"I had to put it all in perspective," he said. "It's hard to describe. But I love what I do here. I feel I do make a difference in people's lives."

"I know everybody doesn't always agree with everything the county does," he added. "But I hope I've helped more than I've hurt."