



## Lawyers ask for review of ex-judge Camp's rulings, sentences

By [Bill Rankin](#)  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

4:51 a.m. Wednesday, March 23, 2011

Before he was sentenced for crimes he committed with a stripper, Jack Camp made a striking disclosure: The former federal judge revealed he has long suffered from a misdiagnosed bipolar disorder and brain damage from an accident more than a decade earlier.

The revelations have lawyers wondering whether justice was meted out by an impaired jurist.

“Every case he handled from the time he was misdiagnosed, or before, depending on when he was affected by these conditions, should be re-evaluated,” said Marcia Shein, a Decatur appellate lawyer. “The question is: Did these conditions affect his ability to be an objective judge making fair decisions?”

U.S. Attorney Sally Yates told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that her office will consider requests from defendants concerning Camp’s judgment “to ensure that justice is served.”

Over the past decade, Camp handled more than 3,000 cases, but only a small fraction of those is expected to be challenged.

Bill Morrison, one of Camp’s lawyers, said the sentencing memos about Camp’s mental health sought to explain his reckless conduct in that the brain damage compromised his impulse control.

But, he said, “Nothing impaired his ability to fairly and impartially act as a judge; I’m fully prepared to defend any judicial decision he made.”

Five request new hearings

This month, Camp was sentenced to 30 days in prison for crimes he committed during a four-month affair with a stripper. He used drugs with her, gave her money to buy drugs, brought guns to drug deals and gave his government-issued laptop computer to her.

Yates had said she would not oppose requests for new hearings from defendants sentenced by Camp during the time he consumed marijuana, cocaine, Xanax and roxicontin. Of the 16 people sentenced by Camp during that period, five have asked for new hearings.

At least one has received less time.

There is also a question as to whether racial bias may have affected Camp's judicial decision-making — an allegation Camp denied.

Camp told the stripper that he struggled in deciding criminal cases involving African-American men because she had previously had a relationship with a black man, said Yates, citing interviews.

Stephanie Kearns, the chief of the Federal Defender Office, said her office plans to seek a new trial for one client based on racial bias claims and new sentences for others.

Expert: Judge not impaired

But the thorny question remains: Should a review be conducted of Camp's decisions dating to 2000, when a bicycling accident damaged the frontal lobe of his brain?

At about the same time, Camp was diagnosed with depression, although doctors now say he had a bipolar disorder.

Miles Quaytman, a psychiatrist who examined Camp, said the ex-judge's medical problems did not impact his cognitive functioning.

"The part of his brain that would determine professional judgment in the courtroom was not damaged," Quaytman said. "His ability to analyze and interpret the law was not impaired."

In a letter to Camp's sentencing judge, Elizabeth Camp disclosed that her husband's condition worsened when he was prescribed Lexapro for depression in late 2009 when he should have been treated for bipolar disorder.

And in a March 9 court filing, Camp's lawyers wrote: "The untreated mood cycling disorder and the trauma to the temporal lobe of his brain ... are serious and unambiguous factors affecting judgment."

Shawn Agharkar, a psychiatrist who teaches at Morehouse and Emory medical schools, said the symptoms of people with these conditions wax and wane.

When asked whether they could significantly impair a person's judgment, Agharkar said, "Certainly that's possible."

Agharkar reviewed Camp's court filings but noted he had not seen Camp's medical records or evaluated his decision-making process.

"Just because a person has a bipolar disorder and brain damage, it doesn't automatically call into question every decision they've made," Agharkar said. "It has to be considered on a case-by-case basis."

Federal defender Millie Dunn said she began having concerns about Camp's mental health during a 2007 trial she defended with colleague Colin Garrett.

In that case, a Kennesaw pastor was convicted of an amnesty fraud scheme that targeted illegal immigrants and sentenced to nine years in prison.

At one point during the trial, Camp interrupted Garrett as he questioned his client. "The judge's face was red, his tone angry and his displeasure with the defense amply evident," the lawyers said in court filings.

In an unsuccessful appeal, Gerald asked for her convictions to be reversed because Camp improperly chastised her lawyers in front of the jury.

Dunn said she may request that the case be reviewed.

Defense attorney Steve Sadow said disclosures that Camp's judgment may have been impaired could serve as a foundation to court challenges.

"If someone is sitting in prison with a long sentence imposed by Camp, they might as well give it a shot," he said. "What have they got to lose?"

---

Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/news/lawyers-ask-for-review-882550.html>

 [Print this page](#)  [Close](#)