

Newest Lawyer Makes Impact - Bush Attorney Hammers Gore Election Experts

The Miami Herald

December 2003

In the high-stakes legal battle to decide the presidential election, a new lawyer seems to take center stage every day.

It was Philip Beck's turn Saturday.

Beck was the solidly built lawyer for Gov. George W. Bush who, with a flat, Midwestern voice, relentlessly questioned witnesses for Vice President Al Gore as CNN broadcast the proceedings nationwide from a Leon County Circuit Court.

For six hours, Beck probed, prodded and jabbed two Gore witnesses - elections expert Kimball Brace and statistician Nicholas Hengartner.

"That's what lawyers do," Brace said afterward, with a shrug of his shoulders.

A shaken-looking Hengartner rushed out of the courthouse.

"He's a bulldog," Benedict Kuehne, a Miami-based Gore attorney, said of Beck.

Beck, 49, works for a Chicago-based firm, Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott LLP.

"We searched the country for the best litigators," Bush attorney Ben Ginsburg said, in explaining why Beck and his law partner, Fred Bartlit, were added to the Bush legal team last week.

Bartlit and Beck formed their firm in 1993, when they and several other lawyers abandoned the security and prestige of a large Chicago firm, Kirkland & Ellis.

It took several years for them to build their own roster of big corporate clients. Among Beck's clients today are DuPont, Arthur Andersen and the Canadian government in a lawsuit that alleges R.J. Reynolds illegally smuggled cigarettes into Canada to avoid sin taxes.

Throughout his career, Beck has handled complex lawsuits that forced him to master a variety of arcane subjects. In questioning Brace, president of Election Data Service, and Hengartner, a Yale University professor, Beck showed that he had become well versed in the intricacies of punch-card voting machines and the complexities of statistics.

www.bartlit-beck.com

As he questioned Brace and Hengartner, Beck frequently stood casually to the left of a lectern. With his left hand thrust in his pants pocket, he looked as if he should have a drink in the other hand and be engaged in cocktail-party chatter.

Except that he methodically sought to poke holes in the Gore witnesses' testimony.

"I'm extremely impressed," Miguel De Grandy, a Miami-based member of Bush's legal team, said during one of the breaks Saturday. "He obviously has command of the facts and is well prepared to show that the Gore campaign case is a lot of smoke and mirrors."