

Murdaugh to resign early from circuit

BY JUSTIN PAPROCKI
THE ISLAND PACKET

The lead prosecutor of the judicial circuit that includes Beaufort and Jasper counties is resigning early, and his second in command has said he is willing to take the helm.

Randolph "Randy" Murdaugh III said he plans to resign Dec. 31 as solicitor of the 14th Judicial Circuit, meaning his family's legacy of leading the office for the past 85 years will come to an end.

Beaufort County Deputy Solicitor and Bluffton-area resident Duffie Stone said Monday he plans to run for the position when it comes up for election next year.

"I would love to follow in his footsteps," he said, "and I'll do everything to see that I can."

Said Murdaugh of Stone: "He'd be an excellent candidate."

Murdaugh, 65, plans to "go into private practice to make some money" in Hampton with his two sons, Richard Alexander Murdaugh and Randolph Murdaugh IV.

Murdaugh's term expires in 2008, but he said he's resigning now because "in three years I'd be too damn old."

For the past 18 years, Murdaugh has overseen the prosecution for criminal cases in the circuit that also includes Hampton, Colleton and Allendale counties.

"It's going to be a tremendous loss," said Deputy Solicitor Steve Knight, who's



MURDAUGH:
The lead prosecutor of the judicial circuit plans to go into private business.

worked with Murdaugh since 1992. "The best way to describe (Murdaugh) is one word — outstanding."

After Murdaugh steps down, Gov. Mark Sanford will appoint an interim solicitor who will serve until the next gubernatorial election in November 2006, Stone said.

Randy Murdaugh became solicitor after his father, Randolph "Buster" Murdaugh, led the office for 48 years, making him the longest-running solicitor in the United States at the time.

Randy Murdaugh's grandfather, Randolph Murdaugh Sr., held the position from 1920 until his death in 1940.

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