

**BEFORE THE INVESTIGATIVE PANEL OF THE
FLORIDA JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION
STATE OF FLORIDA**

INQUIRY CONCERNING A JUDGE, NO. 08-110,
THOMAS E. STRINGER, SR.

SC08-____

NOTICE OF FORMAL CHARGES

TO: Honorable Thomas E. Stringer, Sr.
1700 N. Tampa Street
Suite 300
Tampa, FL 33602

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Investigative Panel of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, by a vote of the majority of its members, pursuant to Rule 6(f) of the Rules of the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission and Article V, Section 12(b) of the Constitution of the State of Florida, finds that probable cause exists for formal proceedings to be instituted against you. Probable cause exists on the following formal charges:

1. In 1995, you began an acquaintance with an exotic dancer whom you knew as Christy Yamanaka.
2. That acquaintance ripened into a personal and financial relationship. During that relationship, you became aware that Ms. Yamanaka was financially distressed. She confided in you that she had filed for bankruptcy in Las Vegas, Nevada, but that her bankruptcy petition had been rejected by the Court and, as a result, she was obligated to pay judgments to two creditors in the amount of approximately \$315,000, plus interest.

3. In an effort to assist Ms. Yamanaka with her financial troubles, you referred her to your son, Daryl Stringer, who is an attorney.
4. Despite the foregoing, beginning in or about 2004, and continuing until approximately October 2007, you entered into a continuing series of financial transactions with Ms. Yamanaka. To facilitate your financial relationship with Ms. Yamanaka, you opened banks accounts in your name and the name of a friend of Ms. Yamanaka's, to which Ms. Yamanaka had access. The purpose and effect of these accounts and transactions was effectively to assist Ms. Yamanaka in hiding her assets and income from others, including her judgment creditors.
5. As a part of this business relationship, you allowed yourself to be listed as the sole title holder in a residence in the State of Hawaii in which Ms. Yamanaka had financial interest. The funds that were used to purchase the house came from a combination of deposits made by Ms. Yamanaka, including large cash deposits, a check, and loans which were made in your name but which had been arranged by Ms. Yamanaka and/or her associates. Again, the purpose and effect of these transactions was to conceal Ms. Yamanaka's interest in the residence from others, including her judgment creditors. When the house was purchased, the title to the property omitted Ms. Yamanaka's financial interest for the same reason.
6. Throughout your involvement with the Hawaiian residence, from the time it was transferred to your name in 2004 through its sale in 2007, your actions were designed to hide Ms. Yamanaka's interest in the property from others, including her judgment creditors.

7. During the period that you were assisting Ms. Yamanaka hide her income and assets you accepted an all all-expense paid vacation in Las Vegas from Ms. Yamanaka, except for plane fare, and failed to disclose the trip as a gift as required by the judicial canons.
8. During your relationship with Ms. Yamanaka you allowed her to use bank accounts in your name, including making large cash deposits into the accounts, and transferring sums to other accounts, for the purpose of hiding her assets and income from others including her judgment creditors.
9. When Ms. Yamanaka obtained employment in New York, again due to her financial difficulties, you obtained a rent-controlled apartment in New York in your name on her behalf. Due to her inability to openly maintain a bank account, it was arranged that she would make the monthly rental payments in cash. As a part of your procurement of the New York apartment, you traveled to New York. During this trip, you allowed Ms. Yamanaka to pay substantial expenses incurred by you including, but not limited to, your lodging at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and catering expenses incurred during your stay at the hotel.
10. You again failed to report these gifts as required by the judicial canons.
11. At your request, Ms. Yamanaka purchased two (2) Rolex watches for you and your wife. These gifts were not reported as required by the judicial canons.
12. Ms. Yamanaka gave you a 2001 four-door black Mercedes automobile that had been customized for you at Ms. Yamanaka's expense. Neither the auto nor the improvements thereto were reported as required on your 2004 financial disclosure report.

13. When registering said Mercedes automobile in Florida in 2004, you falsely claimed the transfer of the vehicle was a zero dollar (\$0.00) transaction, thereby evading the required Florida sales tax. Further, when registering the vehicle, you intentionally hid from the State of Florida the name of the true owner who had transferred the vehicle to you.
14. You also obtained a no interest loan for at least \$50,000 from Ms. Yamanaka. Not only have you failed to pay back the loan as promised, you failed to make the necessary financial disclosure of the activity as required by the judicial canons.

These acts, if they occurred as alleged, violated the Code of Judicial Conduct as follows: Canon 1 (a judge shall not act so as to impair the confidence of the citizens of the state in the integrity of the judicial system); Canon 2A (a judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary); 5A(2) (a judge shall limit extra judicial conduct that demeans the judicial office); 5D(1)(a) (a judge shall not engage in financial or business dealings that may reasonably be perceived to exploit the judge's judicial position); 5D(5) (the acceptance of inappropriate gifts); 5E(1) (a judge shall not act as an attorney in fact or as a fiduciary); 6A (a judge shall not conduct fiscal matters in a manner that gives the appearance of impropriety); and 6B (a judge shall file a public financial disclosure form that fully discloses required financial conduct and gifts).

The foregoing conduct, if proven as alleged, would constitute conduct unbecoming a member of the judiciary; would demonstrate your unfitness to hold the office of judge; and would warrant discipline, including but not limited to reprimand, fine, suspension

with or without pay, lawyer discipline or your removal from your judicial office.

You are hereby notified of your right to file a written answer to these charges within twenty (20) days of service of this notice upon you. The original of your response and all subsequent pleadings must be filed with the Clerk of the Florida Supreme Court, in accordance with the Court's requirements. Copies of your response should be served on the undersigned General Counsel for the Judicial Qualifications Commission, 1110 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, FL 32303, David L. McGee, Beggs and Lane, P.O. Box 12950, Pensacola, Florida 32591, Gregory R. Miller, Beggs and Lane, 215 S. Monroe Street, Suite 710, Tallahassee, Florida 32301, Special Counsel to the Commission, and John R. Beranek, Counsel for the Hearing Panel, Post Office Box 391, Tallahassee, FL 32302.

JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION

By: Michael L. Schneider
General Counsel
Florida Bar No. 525049
(850) 488-1581
1110 Thomasville Road
Tallahassee, FL 32303-6224

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Notice of Formal Charges has been furnished by U.S. Mail to J. David Bogenschutz attorney for the Honorable Thomas E. Stringer, Sr., 600 South Andrews Avenue, Suite 500, Fort Lauderdale Florida 33301, this 13th day of January, 2009.

Michael L. Schneider
General Counsel