



Town Creek View/Jimmy Craig Womble II

North Carolina State Bar
2023 Fifty-Year Lawyers Luncheon
October 26, 2023 ■ Raleigh, NC



Welcome

This year we are pleased to honor the members of the class of 1973, who are marking the 50th anniversary of their admission to the North Carolina State Bar. These remarkable lawyers entered the legal profession during a time of political, cultural, and technological events that would transform their world and the practice of law: as they filed their applications with the Board of Law Examiners, the US Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling overturning state bans on abortion; while taking their final exams, Federal Express officially began operations, delivering 186 packages to 25 US cities on the night of April 17; as they proudly walked down the aisle in cap, gown, and the coveted doctoral student's hood, Bobby Riggs defeated the world's number one women's tennis player, Margaret Court, set-

ting the stage for the Battle of the Sexes match that fall; while studying for the bar exam, they listened to the revelations of White House Counsel John Dean and others, many of them lawyers, during the televised Watergate hearings in the US Senate; they foolishly stayed in North Carolina to take the bar exam instead of attending the Summer Jam at Watkins Glen, NY, to listen to iconic (and still young) rock bands including the Grateful Dead, The Allman Brothers, and The Band, together with 600,000 other music fans; and, as they waited for the results of that exam, they watched Billie Jean King win the Battle of the Sexes—a harbinger of the increasing participation of women in all professions, especially the law.

Since their admission to the Bar, there has been incredible change in American society

and in the legal profession. In 1973, the number of women attending law school was on the rise; today, more than 40% of the Bar is female and the number grows each year. On April 3, 1973, the first handheld cellular phone call was made by an executive at Motorola; a lawyer in 2023 could not imagine practicing without her smart phone and the ability to FedEx documents in 24 hours to anywhere on the globe. But, through the years, the lawyers we honor today have remained true to the values of our profession: honesty, confidentiality, fidelity, and service. They have employed their legal training to make life better for their fellow citizens and to advance the administration of justice. Please join us in celebrating their many contributions to our profession, our state, and our world.

Agenda

Welcome and Introduction of Special Guests
Marcia H. Armstrong, President

Recognition of Fifty-Year Lawyers
Marcia H. Armstrong, President

Remarks
Ryland Lee Farmer, Honoree

Invocation
Matthew W. Smith, Vice-President

Introduction of Speaker
Marcia H. Armstrong, President

Closing Remarks
Marcia H. Armstrong, President

Lunch

John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award Recipients

C. Ricky Bowman (posthumously), Dobson
Shirley L. Fulton, Charlotte
Cheryl D. Howell, Durham

William David Lee (posthumously), Monroe
J. Anderson Little, Chapel Hill
Douglas Carmichael McIntyre, Raleigh

Paul A. Meggett, Boone
Robin J. Stinson, Winston-Salem
Henry P. Van Hoy II, Mocksville

Fifty-Year Lawyers

Alfred G. Adams
Stuart A. Albright
Paul H. Albritton Jr.
Charles E. Alexander II
Dwight W. Allen
Noel L. Allen
F. Mickey Andrews
C. Bruce Armstrong
S. L. Atkins
Carl Wilburn Atkinson Jr.
Steve A. Austin
Kyle D. Austin
Edmund D. Aycock
Roy C. Bain
John H. Banks
George R. Barrett
Vance Barron Jr.
Michael P. Baumberger
Donald C. Beam
Robert A. Beason
H. Gerald Beaver
Ruth G. Bell
Roger B. Bernholz
Marvin A. Bethune
William T. Biggers
John F. Blair
Daniel T. Blue Jr.
Anthony J. Bocchino
John T. Bode

John M. Bowen
Terrence Boyle
Jean W. Boyles
J. Steven Brackett
Ellis M. Bragg Jr.
Charles R. Britt
Norman Deane Brunson
Roger Henry Bruny
James H. Burnley IV
Byron Bernard Burns Jr.
Steven E. Byerly
Wade E. Byrd
Jesse B. Caldwell III
William Donald Carroll Jr.
Robert K. Catherwood
Joseph B. Cheshire V
Harry T. Church
Niccolo A. Ciompi
John B. Cline
Larry L. Coats
Robert C. Cogswell Jr.
Vincent P. Collura
Richard D. Conner
Joseph A. Connolly
James C. Cook
Jimmy D. Cooley
Robert H. Corbett
James Michael Correll
Theodore Edward Corvette Jr.

Sidney L. Cottingham
Janet L. Covey
Charles H. Cranford
Francis W. Crawley
James E. Cross Jr.
William T. Culpepper III
Nathaniel Currie
Barbara G. Danos
Jerry P. Davenport
Kenneth Neal Davis
R. B. Deal
Barbara J. Dean
Rodney A. Dean
Robert J. Deutsch
Donald R. Dickerson
Luther Randolph Doffermyre III
Walter Joseph Dozier Jr.
Deno G. Economou
Russell A. Eliason
James Carl Eubanks III
Charles Douglas Evans
DeLyle M. Evans
Robert Louis Farb
Ryland Lee Farmer
Woodard E. Farmer Jr.
Jeffrey P. Farran
William N. Farrell Jr.
Willa A. Fearrington
Stanley Feldsott

John C. Fennebresque
Thomas Eric Fields
Theodore O. Fillette III
Daniel F. Finch
Thomas H. Finch Jr.
Louis F. Foy Jr.
Herbert M. Foy III
Donald R. Fuller Jr.
Edwin R. Gatton
Dean Gibson
Thomas S. Gibson
Robert S. Gillam
H. G. Goode Jr.
Willie P. Goodwin Jr.
Harry G. Gordon
Thomas D. Graham
R. Frank Gray
Richard L. Gray
Jesse F. Green
John C. Greenhaugh
Randy S. Gregory
Gene B. Gurganus
Keith D. Hackney
L. Allen Hahn
Carl Wells Hall III
Eric Paul Handler
Benjamin H. Harding Jr.
Mary B. Harding
Joseph J. Harper Jr.
Cecil W. Harrison Jr.
Dan M. Hartzog
John B. Hatfield Jr.
Timothy M. Hawkins
R. A. Haynes
William H. Heafner
T. Paul Hendrick
Alan S. Hicks
Edward B. Higgins Jr.
James E. Hill Jr.

Lawrence Hill Jr.
A. Lynn Himes
Walter L. Hinson Jr.
Charles L. Hinton III
Robert E. Hodges
George R. Hodges
Mary Catherine Holcomb
Frederick N. Holscher
Charles R. Holton
James B. Hoof
Virgil V. Horney III
Sara S. House
James J. Hugenschmidt
Robert N. Hunter Jr.
I. Manning Huske
Humphrey Gray Hutchison Jr.
George B. Hylar Jr.
Harford W. Igleheart
William T. Jeffries
Fredrick Gray Johnson
Robert F. Johnson
Judith H. Johnson
W. Glenn Johnson
Bruce O. Jolly Jr.
Mary O. Jones
Dennis R. Joyce
Richard F. Kane
Marshall H. Karro
John Thomas Keever Jr.
Gerald C. Kell
Patrick W. Kelley
William Dudley Kenerly
Horace M. Kimel Jr.
Sammy R. Kirby
John H. Koach
Neil W. Koonce
Robert D. Kornegay Jr.
Edward B. Krause
Charles R. Krueger

Graham G. Lacy Jr.
William H. Lambe Jr.
Richard F. Landis II
Ralph Bruce Laney
Moses Dow Lasitter
Keith D. Lembo
T. Bentley Leonard
Stephen D. Ling
Arnold Locklear
Arthur S. Long III
John Wesley Lunsford
Stevenson Lupton Jr.
Jeffrey T. Mackie
John E. Markham Jr.
Ronald M. Marquette
W. D. Martin III
John W. Mason
William James Mason
T. Patrick Matus
Donald O. Mayer
Robert Eric McCarter
Keith T. McClelland
Thomas A. McCormick Jr.
Harold P. McCoy Jr.
R. Scott McCutcheon
Linda M. McGee
William G. McNairy
Danny D. McNally
Louis Hunter Meacham Jr.
Roy Martin Melvin
Paul Joseph Michaels
James W. Miles Jr.
John R. Molm
John Robert Morgan
W. Phillip Moseley
John M. Murchison Jr.
George R. Murphy
Danny R. Murray
Dennis P. Myers

Albert Malone Neal Jr.
Davis Whitman Nelson
Ernest H. Newman
George J. Oliver
Richmond H. Page
John P. Paisley Jr.
Alan A. Palisoul
Edward Fitzgerald Parnell III
William T. Parrott III
Lawrence McDowell Patton Jr.
Hugo A. Pearce III
Garry T. Pegram
Bruce L. Perkins
John L. Pinnix
Bryan W. Pittman
Robert M. Pitts
Franklin R. Plummer
Roger A. Pond
Marvin P. Pope Jr.
Elizabeth Pope
Peter E. Powell
Thomas W. Prince
James Norfleet Pruden III
William A. Raney Jr.
Francis P. Raspberry Jr.
William C. Ray
Michael C. Reeves
Joseph Reichbind
Thomas J. Rhodes
Robert T. Rice
Gary F. Roberson

Terence S. Roche
James F. Rogerson
Robert D. Rouse III
Jan H. Samet
Michael A. Schlosser
Joseph E. Setzer Jr.
Kenneth A. Shanklin
Nancy Russell Shaw
Richard I. Shope
Thomas M. Shuford Jr.
William Frank Slawter
David B. Smith
Stephen T. Smith
C. Vandiver Smith
James Dale Smith
Albert L. Sneed Jr.
James B. Spears Jr.
Robert G. Spratt III
Clyde Franklin Stanley Jr.
Kenneth G. Starling
E. Gregory Stott
Robert H. Swennes II
James W. Swindell
John E. Tantum
William L. Taylor
D. Keith Teague
Brian H. Tenney
Cressie H. Thigpen Jr.
C. Everett Thompson II
Fred C. Thompson Jr.
Hurley E. Thompson Jr.

James W. Thompson III
Ashley Ormand Thrift
Elton G. Tucker
Curtis Andrew Twiddy
John P. Van Zandt III
Richard L. Vanore
Jerry F. Waddell
Alvin W. Wadford Jr.
James J. Wall
John Gregory Wallace
John A. J. Ward
James Kent Washburn
David R. Waters
William Y. Webb
Michael E. Weddington
Wilson O. Weldon Jr.
Cecil L. Whitley
Raboteau Wilder Jr.
JoAnn Kelly Williams
Robert Pate Williams
Clara A. Williamson
John Turner Williamson
T. Douglas Wilson Jr.
Harry E. Wilson
Robert J. Wishart
William E. Wood
Janet Moorefield Wornall
Melvin F. Wright Jr.
Joe C. Young

Speaker and Fifty-Year Lawyer R. Lee Farmer

After graduating with a BA degree from

Elon University and a JD degree from Wake Forest University, I returned to Caswell County in 1973, entering the general practice of law with Robert R. Blackwell (later Judge

Robert R. Blackwell). Initially my practice was a typical small town practice of civil, criminal, domestic, probate, and real estate law.

Since the beginning of my practice, I have

been actively involved in the practice of local government law, having served as county attorney, town attorney, social services attorney, and special litigation counsel for multiple units of government. I have been fortunate to serve as president of both the North Carolina County Attorneys' Association and North Carolina Association of Municipal Attorneys. In 1988 I was honored as Outstanding County Attorney for the State of North Carolina.

Since the early 1980s, I have been deeply involved in civil and criminal litigation at the state, federal, and out-of-state levels. I have served as counsel in matters involving wrongful death, catastrophic injuries, fiduciary fraud, wrongful discharge, medical malpractice, and white collar crime. I have also appeared before the North Carolina Court of Appeals, North Carolina Supreme Court, District of Columbia Court of Appeals, and the US Courts of Appeal (4th, 7th, and Federal Circuits).

Thanks to Governors Hunt, Martin, and Perdue, Attorney Generals Edmisten and Thornburg, and Lt. Governor Wicker, I was afforded the opportunity to serve on numerous boards and commissions. My service has involved the North Carolina Criminal Code Commission, North Carolina Business Advisory Council, North Carolina Judicial Nominating Council, and North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission. I have been a fortunate recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine (Hunt) and the Old North State Award (Perdue).

Upon my admission to the Bar, I have been an active member of the NC State Bar, North

Carolina Bar Association, District of Columbia Bar, Federal Bar Association, International Municipal Lawyers Association, NC County Attorneys and Municipal Attorneys Associations, and American Board of Trial Advocates. My State Bar activities have included service as a councilor and member and vice-chair of the Disciplinary Hearing Commission and numerous Bar committees. In 2015 I was honored by the NC State Bar with the John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award, and in 2013 with the Citizen Lawyer Award by the NC Bar Association.

Any success that I may have achieved in the practice of law I give full credit to my wife, Libby, for her support, love, and devotion; the loyalty, dedication, and professionalism of my paralegal, Anita Smith Snyder; and the value of work and commitment to community instilled by the example of my late father.

My greatest achievement in life was winning the heart of Elizabeth (Libby) Mundy Farmer. We were married on September 4, 1976, and have three sons, Joshua P. Farmer, Cameron L. Farmer, and Samuel M. Farmer, who have blessed us with three amazing grandchildren.

After these many years, I still believe that the practice of law is a noble profession and a vehicle for justice and good. I am hopeful that our profession in the future will maintain its nobility.

Alfred G. Adams

My years as an attorney and pursuing the law as a profession have opened opportunities which I believe would not have been otherwise possible for me. I submit that service to my community and profession are the paramount

benefits. I became a lawyer so that I could make a significant difference in the lives of others. There are many outlets through which to serve others. Those avenues include service to the Bar itself, being an educator, engaging in community service, and leading by example. Without being part of the legal profession, those necessary and personally fulfilling options would never have materialized. I am proud to say that, during my legal career, I was able to touch all bases, so in my mind my life as an attorney has been a personal home run.

Dwight W. Allen

My father died before I started school, and it seemed to me that my mother encountered many obstacles trying to rear three sons in the 1950s. My conclusion was that, if I became a lawyer, perhaps I could avoid similar obstacles as an adult. I grew up in Goldsboro, and a lady in my church was a secretary in a local law firm. It seemed like she ran the place to me, but that was her title. She took me to the office for visits. Two of the members took an interest in me, and over the years became quasi-mentors and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

Unlike many lawyers, I changed jobs several times. I started with a medium-sized firm, which did a general practice. Next, I took a government job as consumer advocate in the utilities area, and next became general counsel at a large utility. I moved into a management job where I became a client rather than a lawyer. I grew weary of corporate America and chose early retirement, which lasted nine months. At the urging of friends, I returned to law practice with a large firm. It was a great experience. However, I had always wanted to have my own practice and had the chance to

do it with my son. A second son joined the practice later. We practice business law, but primarily regulatory cases involving communications, energy, water, and wastewater.

So, what have I learned from 50 years of law practice? First, while the legal profession has been rewarding for me and my family, it is sometimes not an easy gig. It has provided a good living, allowed me to travel extensively, and be involved in the evolution of the telephone business into the Internet protocols that we have today. It allowed me to participate in the early licensing of nuclear plants, the environmental concerns of fossil fuels and the introduction to renewable energy. However, there are clouds on the horizon. Access to the judicial system is becoming extremely costly, not just for individuals, but large businesses as well. Reports indicate that many businesses are not satisfied with their legal representation. In many instances, litigation is not a very efficient way to resolve problems. I also had the opportunity to teach a law school class as an adjunct professor. My class was primarily third year students, many of whom had incurred large amounts of student debt. As third year students, they came to the realization that job opportunities were somewhat limited. Rather than being transparent, some law schools advertise for students, which may not be a positive thing for the profession. Politics has always been a part of the judicial system, but it seems like the influence of politics continues to increase. Nonetheless, the importance of the judicial system remains critical to our system of government. History teaches that many of the nation's problems have been resolved by lawyers and the judicial system rather than the legislative and executive



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branches.

While there are clouds on the horizon, there is also reason for optimism. The men and women entering the profession today are engaged. They are smart, and I believe the future of the profession is in good hands. They will probably not save the world individually, as many of my generation thought we would, but they have the opportunity and capability to improve it.

C. Bruce Armstrong

I was born in 1948 in Denver, North

Carolina, a small community in Lincoln County. My family lived on my grandfather's farm. My father died at age 35 when I was 12 years old. My mother was part owner and office manager of a lumber brokerage firm in Charlotte. She encouraged me to become a lawyer.

I attended UNC-Chapel Hill and majored in political science. I graduated in 1970 and was admitted to the law school at UNC in the fall semester of 1970. In November 1970 I received a US Army draft notice advising that I was to report for duty in December 1970. I

sought help from UNC Law School Dean Dickson Phillips. Dean Phillips personally called each member of the Lincoln County Draft Board and convinced them to defer my draft until the summer of 1971 so that I could complete my first year of law school and be guaranteed readmission after I completed my military service. I am forever grateful to Dean Phillips. During the law school spring semester of 1971, I joined the Army ROTC unit at NC State University in order to avoid the draft and complete law school before beginning active duty as an army JAG officer. After graduating from law school and passing the North Carolina bar exam, I attended the US Army Judge Advocate General School at the University of Virginia Law School. Upon completion of JAG school, I served three years as an army JAG Officer at Ft. Riley, Kansas, and defended over 100 court martials. My military experience helped me have a successful practice in Fayetteville, North Carolina, from 1977 to present.

One of the proudest moments of my legal career was when I won an appeal to the Anny Court of Military Appeals on behalf of the prisoners in the Fort Riley confinement facility who were being confined illegally without formal criminal charges pending against them. The army was allowing any commander to incarcerate any soldier for up to 30 days without formal charges pending. My legal action resulted in the termination of this illegal policy army wide.

I have been senior partner in my law firm in Fayetteville since 1988. Our firm does criminal and civil litigation practice.

I have enjoyed being active in the Cumberland County community since 1977.

I especially enjoyed coaching my two sons, my grandson, my granddaughter, and other young athletes in the town of Hope Mills, North Carolina, in youth sports in baseball, basketball, and soccer over a 25-year period. I also served as president of the Hope Mills Youth Association for ten years and helped that organization raise funds to support youth sports in Hope Mills.

My wife Loretta and I met while serving in the US Army. She was an army court reporter at Fort Riley, Kansas. We married in 1977. After our move to Fayetteville, Loretta became a North Carolina court reporter for the Cumberland County Superior Court for 34 years prior to her retirement. We have enjoyed 49 years of love and marriage.

Lee Atkins

Law students must understand that their life as a lawyer is solving hard problems. Your whole life is filled with problem-solving. Make sure this is the life you want to pursue.

I have served four years as an assistant state solicitor (the term “solicitor” now changed to the yankee term “district attorney” by our “monkey see-monkey do” legislature). I also served four years as assistant US attorney for the Western District of North Carolina under the ill-fated Carter administration. For the past 40 years I have represented the citizens of Polk County in the criminal courts.

J. Henry Banks

I was born and educated in the public schools of New Bern, North Carolina. I attended North Carolina Central University and received a BA degree, and attended North Carolina Central University School of Law

and received a JD in 1973 after serving three years as an intelligence officer in the US Army.

I decided early in life that I was interested in some form of public service, thus law school and the legal profession. I was in the general private practice of law, primarily in the Henderson, NC, area, for 23 years and handled 56 homicide cases, including 18 capital cases. I am proud of the growth of the legal profession; however, I would love to see more growth of lawyers in the rural areas of the state, especially growth of African-American lawyers. I became a district court judge in 1996 and retired in 2017 as the chief district court judge for the 9th Judicial District. Since that time to present, I have served as a retired emergency judge.

Throughout my professional career, I have served in many and various civic boards in the community, including 12 years as a city councilman and mayor *pro tempore* in Henderson, NC. I have received many awards. I am a trustee and chair of the finance committee with my church.

I am married to Mamie Bullock Hawley and have four children. It has been a wonderful and rewarding career!

H. Gerald Beaver

I was born in Albemarle, North Carolina, in July 1947, and had two sisters, Dr. Sally B. Buckner and Georgia B. Austin.

I think I always wanted to be a lawyer. My family always told me I could argue with a fence post and win. Both my father and mother were kind-hearted and always pulled for the underdog. I think that is how I decided to concentrate on criminal defense work.

Albemarle was a football town. That is

where I first saw Wade M. Smith, the star tailback under legendary coach Toby Webb. When I was eight, my youngest sister introduced me to him, and he autographed a football for me. A few years later, after my father died, Wade invited me to come to a UNC game, sit on the bench, and go into the locker room at halftime. It was a dream come true.

After graduation I attended East Carolina University where I majored in political science and history with a minor in speech. After graduation, I was admitted to UNC School of Law in the fall of 1969.

I joined the army reserves and did my basic training at Fort Jackson from October 1969 to February 1970.

When I returned from basic training, I called Wade and told him I needed help getting an internship until the following fall. He in turn put me up with three of the finest men I have ever known, William Joslin, John Culbertson, and Charlie Sedberry. I worked with them doing title work for all of Wake County for a summer and a half. On the way, I met and became friends with many great Raleigh lawyers, and those friendships have served me well until this day.

I've had some very interesting cases. I sued Actor Jean-Claude Van Damme and won a sizeable damage verdict in our favor for a young Fort Bragg soldier who lost an eye in a movie fight scene. I represented Robert Fulton Kelly of "The Little Rascals" case from the time of his initial conviction being reversed until his cases were dismissed by the state. In 1989, along with my partner Richard Glazier, I appeared before the US Supreme Court in *Graham v. Connor* and received a 9-0 opinion, which established the standard of proof neces-

sary to hold law enforcement officers liable for excessive force civil rights violations. I represented former State Senator Anthony Rand in a defamation action against the Republican Party which resulted in a public apology from the then lieutenant governor to Senator Rand, candidate for lieutenant governor, arising from libelous political advertising during the 1988 election. My trial team and I received a significant monetary award against an individual police officer and the City of Fayetteville for injuries sustained by a pre-trial detainee while he was arrested and handcuffed in the "holding room" of the Cumberland County Law Enforcement Center, which has been lauded as the textbook case on how to establish a pattern and practice of abuse sufficient to hold a municipality liable for the acts of its officers.

My favorite time in practicing law were the nine years I spent as councilor to the North Carolina State Bar from 1992-2000. My proudest moment happened in 2022 when the NC Bar Association awarded me the annual Wade Smith Award as a criminal defense attorney "who exemplified the highest ideals and professionalism throughout their career."

I still love the law and the company of lawyers. Recently my assistant buzzed me to remind me of the time. I replied, "But I'm having so much fun writing this brief."

Daniel T. Blue Jr.

I have traversed a lot of territory since my birth and upbringing at my parents' four-room farmhouse near Lumberton, North Carolina, through my past 50 years as a lawyer. After attending and graduating from the Robeson County public schools, my hori-

zons and possibilities exploded as I enrolled at North Carolina Central University, where I pursued the dream embedded in me as a sputnik-era kid to follow the sciences in order to keep our country at a competitive advantage, and acquired a degree in mathematics with concentrations in physics and chemistry. Although I knew no lawyers growing up, I knew of and admired Terry Sanford and Thurgood Marshall. They appeared to be among the figures most relevant to the issues informing my life in the early to mid-1960s.

I occasionally thought of them as I grew acclimated to NCCU and a new and more engaged environment. Lawyers' names were often bandied about in our late night dormitory discussions; law students were integrated into the student body; former NCCU student leaders who had become lawyers and were becoming high profile—Julius Chambers, Floyd McKissick, and James Ferguson—were names familiar to activist undergraduate students. So, by the end of my junior year, my interests had begun shifting from graduate studies and a career in math and science to one in law. The 1968 assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy reinforced my emerging beliefs that law could be the most impactful way to make meaningful contributions to our state and country, whether through leadership or the active engagement in the practice of law. My years at Duke Law School reinforced that belief.

Fortunately, 50 years ago the lawyers at then Sanford Cannon Adams and McCullough sensed that drive in me and enabled me to practice law with Terry Sanford, who exuded leadership as governor of North Carolina during my crucial develop-



ment years and as president at Duke during my years at NCCU and Duke. The sense of service Terry Sanford displayed was obvious in the expectation that all the lawyers in the firm would embrace a sense of service in the community in addition to practicing high quality law. That expectation continued with my partners at Thigpen Blue Stephens & Fellers, and at Blue LLP. My proudest moments in my practice came when I have rendered service to clients and constituents who commented that the service far exceeded any expectation of success they ever dreamed possible.

Parallel with my practice of law over the past 50 years has been 40 years of service in the

North Carolina General Assembly, where I have been fortunate to rise to the highest positions of leadership—Speaker of the House of Representatives and democratic leader of the Senate. Additionally, I served on the Duke University Board of Trustees for 16 years, including serving as chair. Those roles have consumed a great deal of my life outside of the law. But most importantly, involvement and engagement with my family has been the most fulfilling.

Perhaps the capstone is the inspiration I helped provide to our three children to become lawyers as well as a brother-in-law, four nieces, and a nephew. Indeed, I have

experienced a journey that has taken me a long way from farming the land in the shadow of that four room farmhouse.

J. Melvin Bowen

I am a native of Williamston, a small rural town in Eastern NC. My career in law was not a childhood dream of mine, but I had a desire to return to my hometown to work and live. The job opportunities in Martin County were and are now limited. I grew up admiring the lawyers in Martin County and the contributions they made to the community. My father felt that education was important, and after much thought I considered law school.

The war in Vietnam in the 1960s was a force to be reckoned with and was something every young man had to consider. I spent four years in the US Air Force with a tour of duty in Southeast Asia. There was a period of reflection, and after my tour of duty I finished law school at UNC Chapel Hill and returned to Williamston.

My first job was with the late Edgar J. Gurganus, a lawyer who had practiced for many years. Mr. Gurganus was a godsend because he took time to help me and was a great mentor. In Martin County at that time, there was not a public defender's office. Each lawyer was on a rotating list, and when your number came up you were assigned that criminal case. Mr. Gurganus always took time to help as needed.

The practice of law in a small town gave me the opportunity to be involved in many facets of the law. I tried cases in district and superior courts. I represented the child support enforcement agency for many years. At various times I was the attorney for the Town of

Robersonville, Town of Everetts, Martin General Hospital when it was owned by the county, and also the county attorney for 23 years. The most important part of those jobs was the people I met and the relationships I developed.

One of my fondest memories was being part of the Senior Lawyers Division. I served as chair from June 2016-June 2017. I was fortunate to have met the late Allan Head, executive director at that time, Jane Weathers, and some of the staff of the NC Bar Association. The staff at the Bar Association are there to provide support to NC lawyers, and they do a great job.

There were and are now many opportunities in Williamston to participate in community activities. Some of my happiest moments were coaching whatever sport was in season in the youth leagues. Civic organizations and church activities provided many opportunities to be involved outside the practice of law.

I want to thank my wife, Myra, for being there and providing support over the years. She carried more than her share of the load in raising our three children.

I would advise new lawyers to serve their clients to the best of their ability, and helping people should be foremost on your mind. Fifty years will go by fast, so take time to enjoy each moment.

J. Steven Brackett

I am a native of Lincoln County and a proud graduate of Lincolnton High School and The Citadel class of 1970. I attended The Citadel on a football scholarship. I then attended Wake Forest School of Law where I received the Horace Carnegie Scholarship and

was an officer in Phi Alpha Delta law fraternity. Upon graduation from Wake Forest, I began practicing in Catawba County. I was blessed to practice with many excellent lawyers and staff. J. Richardson Rudisill and I were partners for more than 25 years. I deeply regret that he will not be able to celebrate this event with me.

My career was filled with many interesting clients. My first capital murder defendant was in 1974, *State vs. Kim Allan Manuel*. You may recall that the death penalty was mandatory and there was no penalty trial phase in capital murder cases. The case went to the Supreme Court and subsequently Federal Court. Eventually, Kim's death penalty was set aside, and he was released on parole. This was the first of 12 capital cases I defended without a decision of the death penalty. I was appointed to represent Arthur Martin Boyd as counsel for post-conviction relief. Mr. Boyd was unfortunate in that capital punishment was not stayed prior to his execution. I will never forget Mr. Boyd sitting with me in the Surry County jail on a beautiful fall afternoon and saying, "You know Mr. Brackett, heaven can't be any prettier than Surry County in the fall."

I believe that I am the last living attorney from Catawba County to have made oral argument before the US Supreme Court. The case was before the Supreme Court to resolve a conflict between circuits regarding bankruptcy issues (*William E. Butner vs United States et. al.* 1977).

In 1979 I had the privilege of representing Bessie Leatherman in *Leatherman v Leatherman*, which many credit with the passage of the Equitable Distribution Act.

I was blessed to practice law in the 25th

Judicial District. The judges, clerks of court, court staff, sheriffs, and deputies of the district during my tenure have epitomized ethical and professional excellence and it has been my honor to have worked with them.

Wade E. Byrd

On 9/11/2001 the World Trade Center twin towers were destroyed, and thousands of American lives lost. I banded together with hundreds of lawyers around the country with one mission: to represent the families of the victims without any compensation. Over 1,745 claimants recovered \$22 billion due to these free services.

Providing free legal services in special circumstances has been one hallmark of my law practice. With over 45 years of experience, handling and trying cases involving catastrophic injuries and wrongful death due to negligence by others has been my calling since leaving the Cumberland County DA's Office in 1977. I am admitted to practice in all state and federal courts in NC, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

I have received numerous honors over the years, most recently the War Horse Award from the Southern Trial Lawyers, one of only three North Carolina attorneys to receive the award. I am a past-president of the NC Advocates for Justice, and received the Walter Clark Award, their highest recognition.

I am a fellow of the International Society of Barristers; Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers (one of three lawyers from Fayetteville invited along with Hal Broadfoot Sr. (deceased) and Walker Y. Worth Jr.) These awards and invitations to become a fellow are given in recognition of extraordinary contri-

butions to the cause of justice, including the teaching of trial advocacy in NC and around the country.

I have been the president of the Fayetteville Kiwanis Club (recognized as an “Outstanding President” by Kiwanis International), A past-president of the Fayetteville Academy Board of Trustees, and have served as president of the Wake Forest Law School Alumnae Association. Additionally, I am an elder at First Presbyterian Church, where I sing in the choir along with my wife, Daina.

Jesse B. Caldwell III

In basking in the memories of my 50 years in the law, I can’t help but think of the book *Oh, The Places You’ll Go!* by Dr. Suess, a popular high school graduation gift for young people ready to leave home embarking on their great adventure. As I reflect on five decades in our grand profession, I marvel with the most profound gratitude and almost disbelief at “the places I went” as a lawyer in private practice, chief public defender, senior resident superior court judge, adjunct law professor, and certified mediator.

Places like crime scenes; state and federal courtrooms from the mountains to the coast; jail cells; lavish receptions; voting precincts; presidency of my local bar; and the office coffee pot at 2 am.

Places like classrooms; television stations; hospital rooms; the governor’s mansion; death row; and my son’s ceremonies on being sworn in as an attorney and later as a judge.

Places like counsel tables from magistrate’s court to our state Supreme Court; courthouse canteens, cornbread cafes, and hotel dining rooms.

Places like the presence of broken people entrusting me as a lawyer or a judge with their futures; the stories of the sweetest of saints and the most insidious of sinners; and the trial battlefields that have yielded the most exhilarating of victories and the most devastating of defeats.

Places like the gardens of the most wonderful nostalgia and the most sacred of sentimental memories; the altar of the most profound gratitude that I even gained admission to law school, managed to graduate, and the pass the bar exam; was never without work; and found myself in a career that has given me places, positions of power of leadership and offices to which I never dreamed of attaining.

Places like the landscape of virtually every emotion known to humankind; and places that are so private and personal they will dwell within the inner recesses of my soul forever.

My mind is flooded with the heartfelt remembrances of all the unbelievable people I met on the highways, byways, twists, and turns of my journey. My heart is overwhelmed with overflowing gratitude to my God, family, loved ones, friends, and even strangers who through love, trust, and grace have given me a half century in the law. How I thank you all! I am so very grateful.

Oh, the places I went.

May the journey continue...

Joseph B. Cheshire V

I come from a legal tradition. All five Joseph Blount Cheshires held law licenses continually since 1836. I graduated from Wake Forest University School of Law in 1973 and then headed for the army, where I was a lieutenant in military intel. I think I

learned as much in the army about life and people as I did in the entirety of my life.

Returning from the army to North Carolina, I had several opportunities but settled on practicing with George Ragsdale and Frank Liggett. During my time with Ragsdale Liggett, I tried over 20 jury trials as an insurance defense lawyer. I had great success in beating the plaintiff’s demand and learned a great deal about the courtroom and how it really operated, but I took little pleasure or satisfaction in the work. I learned a great deal from Frank about life, the law, and clients. He always believed in me and was a great teacher. My first three jury trials were first degree murder cases. I won my first two. Hearing the hypnotizing words “not guilty” changed my life, and I kept the third off death row in the saddest case I ever had—a mother killing her child. I was appointed by the governor at the age of 31 to prosecute a number of deputies and the sheriff in a jail scandal. I convicted the deputies but lost the sheriff’s case to Raleigh’s best two criminal lawyers at the time. The publicity I received was invaluable. Shortly thereafter, I left Ragsdale Liggett and went out on my own. Tommy Manning joined me, and we were almost an unbeatable team, and good golly did we have fun trying cases all over the state. My days with Tommy were the best days of my life. Each of our strengths matched the other’s weakness. Shortly thereafter, John Parker joined us. Three entirely different personalities determined to be as good as they could be and have fun doing it. We had lawyers come and go. Brad Bannon, who was like a son to me, gave me 20 years of fabulous work. We were a great team.

The most traumatic case of the early days

was that of James Hutchins, who had many years earlier killed three law enforcement officers. When the death penalty raised its ugly head, the powers that be decided to execute James. My office and Roger Smith Sr. worked like cornered bears to save him, but in the end, we failed, and I watched him die. As my career went on, I was part of teams that freed two different men from death row because they were innocent, but I have never forgotten James. He was not innocent, but he was reformed. Guards wept at his execution, and so did I.

Drugs became the criminal law emphasis. I had a part in the largest drug conspiracy trial in Miami—at the time, the largest in the country. By pure luck, my clients had a role in bringing that case crashing down around the prosecution. Florida lawyers began to refer large drug cases to me, and for years I traveled around the state and more than occasionally the country handling major drug cases, leading me to the case of Doc McGee, the creator and manager of Mötley Crüe, Bon Jovi, and others. Doc was arrested in the Eastern District of NC and then in federal court in Louisiana for being in a group that was smuggling marijuana into NC, and then later up the Mississippi River in fuel barges. They laundered their money through General Noriega, the dictator of Panama. I helped create a non-profit, anti-drug foundation and convinced both judges that we could raise millions of dollars for anti-drug foundations using Doc's bands and connections. We did just that, traveling around the country and Europe ending with the largest stadium concert in history in Moscow, playing to over 400,000 Russian kids over two days. The lead German paper called it the "last blow in the Berlin

wall" and Showtime did a lengthy documentary on the concerts and our foundation.

And of course, there was the Duke Lacrosse case, which, along with the Little Rascals Daycare case, were just amazing on so many levels. There were so many other incredible experiences. I was blessed, but must admit that I occasionally had a love/hate relationship with my work. I saw a lot of sadness.

During my career, I was privileged to appear in 86 of North Carolina's 100 counties, 22 states, five foreign countries, and several territories. I helped start Wake County's first drug rehab center, was successful in suing North Carolina to get equal treatment for female prisoners, served on the executive committee of the NC Bar, was president of North Carolina Advocates for Justice, was tasked with writing the first specialization exam for criminal lawyers, and was lead lobbyist on open file discovery in criminal law cases. I helped get the Indigent Services Commission passed by the legislature and chaired it for eight of its first ten years, and sat on early boards that built the Capital Area Soccer League, among other things.

It has been a hell of a ride, and I loved and hated it. I owe so much to so many. I had the best paralegals ever, and wonderful partners. We were a family. Without each of them—and my wife's support—I could never have been the best I could be.

Robert C. Cogswell Jr.

I graduated from the Florida State University College of Law in March 1970, was admitted to practice in the state of Florida in 1970, and served not quite four years as an air force judge advocate at Pope AFB. I was

admitted to the NC Bar in 1973. After my active duty tour, I went into the private practice in Fayetteville with Lester Carter. On January 1, 1978, I was appointed the Fayetteville city attorney, and retired from that position on May 31, 2001. During my tenure as city attorney I served a term as president of the NC Association of Municipal Attorneys. On June 1, 2001, I joined the Office of the General Counsel at Campbell University, where I am currently still working as associate general counsel.

Richard D. Conner

I was born in Richmond on February 8, 1945. My wife Vicki and I reside in Greensboro. We have two grown children and four grandchildren. Vicki is a much-loved stepmother and grandmother. Together, we greatly enjoy family time. We both continue working, Vicki in her practice as a licensed mental health therapist, and I with my law firm Conner Gwyn Schenck PLLC (CGS). Outside of our careers, Vicki and I enjoy travelling, hiking, and cooking together. I still like catching a fish and occasionally trying to hit a golf ball straight.

Through high school I lived in the Sedgefield community near Greensboro. It was a great time and place to be a teen. After a stint on active duty aboard the USS Okinawa during the Vietnam War, I completed my undergraduate degree at Guilford College. I recall that my interest in becoming a lawyer piqued during a constitutional law class while at Guilford. I liked the subject and imagined law practice as a good job with an opportunity to both help others and succeed personally. I went to law school at UNC-Chapel Hill on

the GI Bill graduating in 1973. My career began at a small law firm in Greensboro right after graduation.

After a few years in general practice, I focused on representing clients engaged in commercial and public construction. That practice area is now referred to as construction law. The scope of my practice horizons expanded from local and regional to a national level in 1988 when our then senior partner, C. Allen Foster, led Allen “Holt” Gwyn (now sadly deceased), Jim Schenck, myself, and others in becoming partners in the Patton Boggs law firm based in Washington DC. After ten years with Patton Boggs, Holt and I joined Jim Schenck in 1999 as he formed CGS in Raleigh and Greensboro. Since its formation, CGS’s practice continues to be devoted to construction law, representing owners, designers, contractors, and sureties in litigation, arbitration, and mediation, and advising them in working through legal matters at the project level. CGS currently authors the *NC Construction Law Treatise* for West Publishing. I am fortunate and proud to be associated with great professional colleagues at CGS.

These days my working hours are substantially spent serving as a mediator and arbitrator in business disputes, including disputes arising out of building projects as well as industrial and heavy highway projects. I serve as a mediator in eminent domain lawsuits and disputes arising out of environmental enforcement actions. I have an eye on collaborative law and the new Uniform Collaborative Law Act in NC as another ADR option in civil disputes.

In my view, the civil side of the legal profession will continue to grow in NC and the

nation, particularly in view of fast-paced technology. Careers in construction law will be no exception.

Over the years I have tried to give back to the profession and the community. Among other things, I served on the North Carolina Wildlife Federation Board, the inaugural Greensboro Transit Authority, the Friends Board of the new NC Museum of Natural Sciences, and eight years as chair of the Guilford County Board of Elections. I remain an active member of NC and national professional associations. I am pleased to be a fellow in the American College of Construction Lawyers, and a fellow in the Construction Management Association of America, a national association that I helped found as its first general counsel. Perhaps my proudest professional association moment was unexpectedly being recognized in 2018 at an annual meeting of the Construction Law Section of the NC Bar Association and presented with the Evelyn M. Coman Award for distinguished service in the field of construction law.

I love being in this profession...the older I get, the more I appreciate it.

Joseph A. Connolly

I grew up on a small dairy farm in Iredell County, the youngest of five children. When I finished the sixth grade, my brother, who was closest in age to me, graduated high school and it became my job to milk our ten cows every morning and every evening until I graduated high school. Sometimes in the mornings, when I was running late, my mom would come down to the two stall milk barn to help me. We had one electric milker. We would place it on one cow—my mom would get at

the front of the second cow and I would get at the back. During this six-year period I was kicked in the head seven or eight times. I’ve often thought how that experience influenced the rest of my life.

I attended Appalachian State Teacher’s College, where I met this wonderful young lady my freshman year, Kirby Burton. We married in December 1968 during our junior year. We stayed in Boone during the summer of 1969, and Kirby worked at the Daniel Boone Inn and I worked at Tweetsie Railroad. One of my coworkers at Tweetsie also wanted to go to law school and suggested that I apply to Wake Forest because he understood that the dean conducted a personal interview with each applicant. My friend knew I liked to talk, and he thought I might be able to talk my way into Wake Forest School of Law. During the fall of my senior year, I obtained an application to Wake Forest and sent it in. Approximately two weeks later, I received a large envelope. At this point, I had achieved a wonderful academic record—I had been in the top 50% of my high school class, which had 52 members and I was ranked 25. When I started my junior year at Appalachian, I had a 1.98 GPA. So when I opened the large envelope from Wake Forest, I found my original application, my original check for \$75, and a hand-written note from the dean stating, “Why don’t you think about something else.” Somehow, I was later admitted to UNC School of Law for fall of 1970.

I have thoroughly enjoyed practicing law for 50 years and have made some wonderful friends along the way. I never made a lot of money, but we always seemed to live comfortably. Most of my practice was a small-time

criminal practice. My one “Perry Mason” moment came in a DWI jury trial when I asked the charging officer to come down off the stand and demonstrate for the jury the one-legged stand and count to 30 for the jury. When the officer got to 14, he lost balance and had to grab the court reporter’s desk.

I always enjoyed having a good time in court, and on two occasions, in front of friendly judges, I was able to sing Elvis’s “Why Can’t Everyday Be Like Christmas” during sentencing, which got a nice response from the audience.

My wife passed approximately 12 years ago and she only got to meet two of our seven grandkids. Besides our two sons and our grandkids, the accomplishments I take the most pride in are as follows:

1. I do not believe in my 50 years I ever cheated anyone.
2. I tried to be nice to everybody with whom I came in contact.
3. I donated more than 130 pints of blood.

Jim D. Cooley

My first client was schizophrenic. She lived alone in public housing, and she often forgot to take her medications. Finally, the Housing Authority decided that after numerous episodes, she had to go. I had just arrived from a clerkship with Judge Craven on the Fourth Circuit, having been selected as a Reginald Heber Smith community lawyer fellow at Legal Aid. I was supposed to become an expert in housing law, but I knew nothing about dealing with clients. Before the eviction hearing, my client asked if the hearing was open because, if it was, some of her friends wanted to attend. “Why not,” I thought to myself,

“since we don’t have much of a legal defense.” At the hearing, lots of ladies in white dresses appeared. They took a seat on the first row, and during the hearing they appeared to be praying, softly, for my client, who on this day had taken her medications. While I thought my argument to the commissioners was decent enough, I’m pretty sure that it was the ladies in white dresses who determined the favorable outcome.

My most challenging client was a member of the KKK—the trigger man in the Klan-

Nazi shootout case in Greensboro involving the so-called “Communist Workers Party.” At the time of my court appointment to a case that would consume the next year of my life, I had to explain to my client that I had been a plaintiffs-side civil rights/civil liberties lawyer for almost ten years, and that, among other things, I was a cooperating attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union. He listened quietly and said, “I think you’ll do just fine.” As the DOJ came to the end of its case, after almost three months of trial testimony, it was



Wagner Farm/Richard Pennell

my judgment—as risky as it was—that an acquittal based on self defense required that he testify. The night before his testimony, I was able to get him released so that he could have dinner with me and my family. My oldest son, then age seven, saw the tattoos from his days in the army and exclaimed, “What are those?” The interaction that followed had a calming effect on a man who would soon be testifying for his life. Was it my skillful witness preparation that led to acquittal, or the simple act of having a meal together?

Through 38 years as a business litigator and firm leader at Womble, I carried with me the lessons learned from these and many other client experiences as a Legal Aid, civil rights, and criminal defense lawyer: listen carefully, and then set the stage for a successful outcome. I am still actively practicing, primarily as a mediator of complex business disputes, and I am still following those lessons learned long ago.

Robert H. Corbett

My lawyer-father got his wish for a lawyer-son when my older brother became a lawyer. From my birth, my mother wanted me to be a doctor like her father. But not to be. As a college junior, I concluded that I did not want to go to medical school. A year later, with my father nearing retirement, I thought I should go to law school. Fifty-plus years later, here I am. I have not regretted that turn of events.

My proudest moments have been when I helped people solve problems that seemed overwhelming to them. My best example was helping a Social Security disability applicant. The SSA had turned him down because its

expert said, since he had a sixth-grade education, he could be a store clerk, despite his crippling injuries. I saw that at the appeal hearing and knew it was untrue because my illiterate client had been socially promoted from the first grade on. I reached in my pocket and handed him some coins to count. With genuine tears in his eyes, he replied that he could not count. An employment evaluation was ordered and subsequently disability. When I was discouraged, I tried to think of this client coming to my office to thank me. He thought I walked on water, and maybe in that one instance I did.

My predictions for the professions are, like the medical field, we will become ever more specialized and have ever more paraprofessionals. I am ambivalent about the future of small-town solos who serve the wide-ranging needs of a wide range of clients. I hope that there will continue to be a niche for us because it can be highly rewarding and well worthwhile.

Outside the practice, I have been extremely fortunate. A supportive wife, two loving and successful children (one continues the professional line), delightful grandchildren, close friends, and relatively good health. These have enabled me to enjoy whatever my passions have been—tennis, golf, cooking barbecue, and others. And, I have been blessed to teach Sunday school at my church for 40 years. Life has been good; I pray it continues.

James E. Cross Jr.

From the day I was born, there were expectations I would both attend Wake Forest University and be a lawyer. These

became my objectives and goals as well, and I was fortunate to achieve my ambition.

Furthering the process, there were two very outstanding Bulington and Wake Forest lawyers who were great friends of Dad’s—John Vernon and Clay Hemric. (Between Sunday School and church, the three would each smoke a cigar amidst a lively discussion of Deacon athletics.) With parental support, the examples of Dad’s legal friends, and an excellent education at Williams High School and Wake Forest, I was on my way to becoming a lawyer.

After law school (also at Wake Forest), Deb and I moved to Oxford, where I just retired after 50 years of practice. Influenced by my partners Steve Royster and his cousin, Sam Royster (third generation of Royster lawyers), I was encouraged to get involved with local community affairs and both the North Carolina State Bar and North Carolina Bar Association. I had the honor of serving as chair of the State Bar Legal Specialization Committee and on the North Carolina Bar Association Board of Governors.

Our firm has participated in many local educational and community endeavors over the years, and was named as the Small Business of the Year in 2006.

I have enjoyed serving as the attorney for the Granville County Board of Education (19 years), the Town of Stem (my annual fee was \$100 for 30 years), and Oxford Preparatory School. I have also had the honor of serving on a multitude of boards and committees of my alma mater.

Deb and I recently moved to and are enjoying living in Wake Forest. The move is

highlighted by having our three- and five-year-old grandchildren living right up the street. Not surprisingly, they are already big Demon Deacon fans.

K. Neal Davis

Born in Goldsboro, I was raised on a farm in northern Mecklenburg County. I graduated from Western Carolina University with a bachelors degree in business administration in 1970. In 1973 I graduated from Cumberland School of Law and began my legal career as an assistant district attorney for Mecklenburg County. Of note, I tried my first case the day I was sworn in, on August 24, 1973. After prosecuting for five years, I began a civil trial practice which later afforded me the blessing to practice with my son, Justin. My last appearance before the superior court this year was on a motion requesting the court to administer the oath of office of superior court judge to my son. That was my proudest moment in court. I have been blessed in my practice, in my 53-year marriage to my beautiful wife, Wanda, and blessed with two great sons, their wives, and six grandchildren. In reflecting on these past 50 years of trial practice, I am mindful of my contracts professor, Frank Donaldson, who prepared me most for the challenges of my career. Using the socratic method, Professor Donaldson called on me three days in a row. The fourth day I was already standing when he finished calling the roll. He smiled and we tackled another case. I have thought about those four days many times, and I am thankful for Professor Donaldson and for so many of my friends at the Bar from whom I have learned much. What we do is an art, requiring knowledge,

skill, and hours of hard work. What a blessing to have had that privilege and opportunity.

R. Brandt Deal

My family moved to Winston-Salem from Virginia during the construction of Wake Forest in the mid-50s and we had friends that lived near the new campus. Little did I know that when we rode our bicycles down the stairs of the balcony of Wait Chapel while it was being built, that I would sit in that chapel during my graduation from law school in 1973.

I have been in private practice in my hometown for my entire career, first as an associate in two small law firms, then in solo practice for a decade before partnering up with Jack Van Zandt, one of my classmates at Wake, with whom I still practice. We had the privilege of being partners with Weston Hatfield, our senior partner, who instilled in us a love for the law and providing good and able counsel to our clients.

Some of you knew from early on in which area of the law you had an interest. I had no clue. I believe we all, at some point, had visions of being an F. Lee Bailey being involved in the high profile cases that we see on TV, or lawyers like Rufus Edmisten who were on the national scene during the Watergate Hearings during the time we were supposed to be studying for the bar exam. During the summers between my first and second years of law school I was a summer policeman hired by the City of Virginia Beach, VA, to patrol the waterfront and give the public the appearance that we knew what we were doing. Seeing law enforcement from that side of the fence convinced me that criminal law defense was not for me, so by process

of elimination, I became a dirt lawyer.

Back then, when lawyers actually went to the register of deeds and the courthouse to do their job, I was very fortunate to have had the best real estate lawyers in the county teach me how to be a good, competent attorney.

With all of the technology and remote access we have to everything these days, I know the new attorneys in this area of practice miss the opportunity to be mentored and tutored by the best. I believe the profession suffers as a result, and more attorneys coming into the profession now look at practicing law as a means to make money rather than an avocation to help clients and their community. I feel we all have been fortunate to have been in practice during these past 50 years.

L. Randolph Doffermyre III

In 1980 I represented Debbie, a Campbell College student. She had been charged with embezzlement from a convenience store where she was working. Debbie was very honest and a beautiful lady. The owners of the store were a “defrocked” Methodist minister and his brother, who was a dentist in Fayetteville. After her last shift before summer break, the general manager did his routine accounting for her shift and found there was a \$6.43 shortage. He reported this to the minister, but told the minister he was going to check his accounting for any errors. The minister told him not to do so as he had just what he needed.

The minister went to the Dunn Police Department to obtain a warrant against Debbie. He was referred to the Detective Unit who informed him that before any felony warrant could be issued, they needed to investi-

gate. The minister refused to follow their instructions and he went directly to the magistrate. The magistrate was an 84-year-old man whose mental abilities were not good. The minister played up the fact he was a Methodist minister, and that the defendant was leaving NC to go to her Ohio home that day for summer break. Thus, time was of the essence. A warrant was issued, and Debbie was arrested. I was then employed by her family.

I met with the minister and suggested that we do a polygraph on Debbie, and the minister agreed. A few days later, the test was given and Debbie passed it. The minister then thought that Debbie must have had at least a soft drink without paying for it and demanded another polygraph test. Debbie took and passed this test as well. Despite these facts, the minister hired my uncle, attorney Jim

Johnson, to privately prosecute this case. An indictment was issued by the grand jury for Debbie to stand trial in our superior court.

For superior court, an African-American judge from Greensboro was assigned to hold court. When the judge pulled into his assigned parking spot, a deputy rushed out to the judge's car and informed him that the parking space was for the superior court judge only, and he needed to move his car. The judge informed the deputy that he was the judge and told the deputy to carry his bags for him to his chamber.

The jury trial lasted two days. When the jury went out to deliberate, the judge told the attorneys to approach the bench. The judge said to them that he allowed the jury to have the case so Debbie could be completely exonerated. Then, the bell in the jury room rang

(about one minute after they went out to deliberate). The jury verdict was NOT GUILTY. As soon as the jury was dismissed, all 12 jurors went straight to Debbie and told her they were so sorry they had spent so much time in the jury room, but the judge had instructed them that their first order of business was to select a foreman. The jury hugged Debbie and her family and told them they were sorry they had to endure this ordeal.

I filed a malicious prosecution complaint in Harnett County, but attorney Jim Johnson had it removed to the federal court on the basis of diversity. When we started the civil trial in US Fed. Dist. Court in Raleigh, the federal judge named Hoffman told the attorneys to meet him in his chambers. Judge Hoffman looked directly at me and said, "Mr. Doffermyre, I have been on this bench nearly 50 years and I have heard many cases. Let me tell you, I have never seen a malicious prosecution case worthy of being in my court. I hope you have something I have never seen before. Do you understand me, Mr. Doffermyre?" Incidentally, Judge Hoffman was the federal judge who handled the former Vice-President Spiro Agnew tax evasion case.

My evidence involved my client, a detective from the Dunn PD about how the minister evaded protocol, the polygraphist, the NC Superior Court Judge, and the store manager who filed his report with the minister. This manager testified that he did in fact do another accounting and found it was his error and no money was missing, and that the minister told him to keep quiet about this. The jury returned their verdict in favor of the plaintiff for \$250,000 against each defendant.

Attorney Johnson confidently stood up



and made a motion to set aside the verdict as being contrary to the law and evidence, and that the verdict was excessive. Judge Hoffman looked at Jim Johnson and said, “Mr. Johnson, your clients are so lucky, because if I had been sitting as both the judge and jury in this case, I can assure you that the verdict would have been substantially, and I mean substantially, higher. Do you understand me?”

DeLyle M. Evans

After obtaining a degree in history at Carolina, I entered Wake Forest School of Law in 1970. On the first day of classes our torts professor, Henry Lauerman, called on Keith Teague. He kept Keith standing for 30 minutes, although we had not been given any homework or assignment. Keith did well answering the questions, but I was thoroughly intimidated and had second thoughts about going through this for three years. A few weeks later in personal property class, Dr. Robert Earl Lee asked me to define a lien. Without looking at my textbook so as to impress him I answered, “Possession of property until a debt is satisfied.” Wrong—the correct answer was, “A hold on property until a debt is satisfied.” I stood for 15 minutes. A few weeks later near the end of criminal law class, I gave a poor answer to Professor Leon Corbett’s question. As we left the classroom my classmate Makey Lassiter said to me, “Dumb ass!” In October my UNC football team lost to Wake Forest 14-13. Our place kicker, Kenny Craven, made all of his point-after-touchdown kicks for the season except for one—the one he missed in this game causing us to lose by one point. Then I received the worst possible news—I learned that Mike Krzyzewski and I share the

same birthday. Same day, same year, and probably the same time. Despite all of these trials and tribulations, I managed to get myself together and managed to get through law school and pass the bar.

I have always practiced as a sole practitioner in Ayden, Pitt County, NC. My practice is the general practice of law so that I might try a burglary case one day, and write someone’s will the following day. I had one secretary who was with me for 46 years. She died of cancer a few years ago.

As we all know, dealing with the public is rewarding and oftentimes stressful. Just a few weeks ago someone telephoned me without identifying himself and asked me what I charged for information. I told him three questions for \$100. He responded, “That’s kind of high, isn’t it?” I said, “No, what is your final question?”

I have been married for 48 years and have one daughter and one granddaughter. Near the end of the 1948 movie, *The Adventures of Don Juan* (Errol Flynn as Don), Don Juan’s sidekick asked, “Don Juan, now that you have accomplished everything that you intended, where do you plan to go?” Don replied, “Into oblivion, I suppose, where most legends go.” That sounds good to me, However, unlike Don Juan, I have one more thing to accomplish which I have so far been unable to accomplish—to somehow get over UNC’s loss to Marquette in the 1977 national championship basketball game.

Woodard E. Farmer Jr.

It is my pleasure to write this short essay on living the life of a North Carolina attorney and seeing the changes in our profession over the

last 50 years. After passing the bar exam, I had a short 90-day tour of duty in the US Army and, with the rest of my officer basic training class, was discharged from active duty due to the winding down of the Vietnam War. I subsequently served several years in the army reserves in Charlotte.

Upon my arrival in Charlotte, I started practice with the firm of Horack, Talley, Pharr and Lowndes, intending to be a real estate lawyer. However, due to the slow real estate market, I soon became a generalist and worked on every type of legal matter imaginable. Among other matters, I handled domestic cases, securities litigation, claim and deliveries, real estate closings, civil litigation, wills and estates, appellate briefs, and sophisticated international nuclear fuel financings. The variety of such a diverse practice was very exciting and challenging and perhaps the most fun I had practicing law.

I found that the other lawyers, clerks, and judges were sympathetic to my inexperience in trying to practice in so many areas and, although they diligently represented their clients, they never failed to assist me whenever possible. My fellow partners were also patient and supportive. My spouse and I benefited from the vibrant social scene of the local and state bar. I truly felt as if I had become a member of a welcoming society.

After a decade passed, my practice had become focused more on commercial and residential real estate and I joined the firm of Parker, Poe, Adams and Bernstein, primarily due to the need to join a firm with greater depth in the practice areas my clients needed help in and which exceed my ability to learn quickly (e.g., corporate and partnership taxa-

tion, sophisticated litigation, estate planning, etc.). The firm was very welcoming and the attorneys were first class. However, the volume of practice greatly expanded more quickly than anyone had expected, and I was buried in work then and for the rest of my career. One memorable low point came when my wife found me hiding behind the Christmas tree reading loan documents!

My practice allowed me to interact with attorneys throughout the state and adjacent states, and this was most rewarding. I also was asked to prepare materials and speak at continuing education seminars at Wake Forest Law School, the North Carolina Bar Association, and other organizations. Once again this enabled me to interact with other attorneys throughout the state. I rarely had instances in which the other attorney acted in a manner that was not professional or ethical; although I, like other members of the bar, had the unfortunate experience of dealing with attorneys who had succumbed to financial, domestic, or substance abuse and had misappropriated client funds, etc. In one such situation in Virginia, I was dismayed to learn that, on the day of closing, my local counsel, named Skip, had “skipped town” with the closing proceeds.

I am concerned about the additional pressures attorneys are subjected to by instant communications, which shorten the time to reflect and provide more measured responses to the issues that they confront. Maybe it was due to the pace and demands of the practice, but I gradually lost contact with the social community of the local bar. Also, I became concerned by the increasing cost of employing attorneys and the pricing of many clients

out of the market for legal services.

I am now retired and living in Asheville with my lovely wife of 52 years and happy to leave my concerns to the current and future generations of attorneys. My 50 years as an attorney certainly were a “wild ride.”

Theodore O. Fillette III

I grew up in a conservative, racially segregated society in Mobile, Alabama. My parents enrolled me in military school to avoid integration in the wake of the national exposure of Little Rock’s violent resistance to integration of the schools in 1957. In military school I observed how authority and power could be exercised unjustly.

In 1964 I escaped Alabama and enrolled in Duke University. Dr. Martin Luther King spoke at the campus on 11/13/64 and enlightened me on the civil rights struggles occurring in my home state. That planted the seed for my career seeking justice for people who were suffering racial and economic injustice. After graduating as a political science major in 1968, I served in the AmeriCorps VISTA program doing community organizing in Boston. I observed that powerless people could not attain justice without skillful attorneys. I went to law school at Boston University and graduated in 1973.

My legal career began in 1973 at the Legal Aid Society of Mecklenburg County. In 1974 I filed (with co-counsel) a state-wide class action against the NC Department of Social Services in the federal district court. We sought to compel all 100 welfare offices to follow the federal law by making prompt decisions (45 days) on applications for finan-

cial assistance and Medicaid for families with dependent children. This was necessary to stop the wholesale neglect of applications by destitute mothers who waited for months to receive their benefits and were being evicted and left without utility services. The state lost and appealed to the 4th Circuit, lost, and petitioned the US Supreme Court for review. We prevailed at every stage. It was grueling but rewarding work. It brought us a series of proud moments that continued for over 15 years.

My other proudest advocacy came in 1977 when I spent almost half of my time as a novice legislative advocate in the General Assembly of NC. I drafted a bill for the Honorable Henry Frye, a house member from Guilford County (and the first Black member to be elected to the General Assembly in the 20th century in 1968). The bill created the implied warranty of habitability for all tenants in NC, which enabled thousands of poor families to have indoor plumbing, furnaces, safe wiring, and roofs that did not leak. Given that most members of the General Assembly at that time owned rental property, it was an extraordinary achievement.

The future of our profession looks fine for the transactional specialists. The litigators, however, face a state court system that is being torn apart by corrosive politics. The General Assembly’s requirement of partisan elections in our appellate courts has invited dark money, fear-mongering campaign ads, and distrust. Litigators and members of the public see court decisions driven by partisan ideology instead of intellectual integrity. Justice and democracy are in peril in NC.

The deleterious conditions of our courts, which are supportive of toxic gerrymandering of our legislative districts and congressional seats, drive me to stress-free hobbies. Gardening, photography, fishing, and reading are my solace. I cannot totally leave behind my work of a 44-year career advocating for justice. I work as a volunteer with a local advocacy group that supports more affordable housing in Mecklenburg County.

Keith D. Hackney

I was born, raised, and attended public school in Washington, North Carolina. I received a BS in industrial engineering at North Carolina State University in 1970, and my Juris Doctor degree at the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1973. I grew up in the Hackney family truck body manufacturing business, working as an assembly welder, an engineer, and in management. I have been happily married for 53 years, and I have a daughter who is a successful manager in an environmental firm.

I was admitted to the practice of law in North Carolina in 1973, and Virginia in 1975. After working with the law firm of Biggs, Meadows, Batts and Winberry in Rocky Mount in 1974, I returned to solo practice in Washington in 1975. Since then I have served the community in the general practice of law, and the Hackney family business as general counsel until the family sold its interest in Hackney Industries in 1990.

I have marlin fished out of Hatteras and Ocracoke with my father, I have windsurfed, and I have bird hunted. I have been involved in many community organizations over the years, in particular Boy Scouting and Sound

Rivers, a river-advocacy organization, where I have been a cook at the annual oyster roast for the past 35 years. I have been a member of the local Salvation Army Advisory Board since 1976. And since childhood I have been a dedicated Tar Heel basketball fan, but especially through direct attendance since the Dean Dome was built.

I have enjoyed the close community connection of a small town, “country lawyer” practice over the decades. I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of major life events of clients I have come to know well. I have especially enjoyed the collegiality of our local bar and our 2nd Judicial District Bar while working through the legal process. Every day is a new challenge and a new adventure, even after 50 years of law practice.

Cecil W. Harrison Jr.

After graduating from the UNC School of Law in 1973, I was a law clerk at the North Carolina Court of Appeals for one year for Judge (later Chief Judge) R.A. Hedrick. Upon completion of this clerkship, I was hired by the Raleigh law firm of Poyner Geraghty Hartsfield & Townsend (PGH&T). At the time I joined the firm in 1974, I made the 19th lawyer, and I occupied this bottom spot for three years. I soon found out what it meant to be the last attorney to be hired! However, the silver lining of this low ranking was that I was afforded the opportunity to see many different areas of the law and to be mentored by several outstanding attorneys. I am forever indebted to these mentors for the wisdom and guidance they so patiently and willingly shared with me.

In the first 25 years of my practice, I

focused on employment law, a relatively new but quickly growing area of the law. In addition, during those years I engaged in an active appellate practice at both the state and federal levels. In the last 25 years, I have continued to devote a considerable amount of my time to the employment law area while also being involved for several years in management responsibilities after PGH&T merged in January 1986 with Spruill & Spruill to form the current firm of Poyner Spruill LLP.

The changes that have taken place during my 50 years of practice have made this an interesting journey, to say the least. When I first started practice, I could never have envisioned a number of the developments in the way we practice that have taken place over the course of my career. Just a few of these many changes include: the significant impact that technological advances have had on the legal profession, the advent and importance of mediation, and remote working as a fact of life (at least for the time being!) It is daunting to ponder the changes that will come to the practice of law in the years ahead—for starters, think of the potential impact of artificial intelligence technology.

As I reflect upon 50 years of practice, one question comes to mind: Would I choose to go down this professional path again knowing what I now know? For me, the answer is, “Yes, at least most of the time!” While certainly filled with its share of stress and anxiety not to mention sleepless nights, the practice of law has been for me a rewarding career. Over the last half century of practice, I have been fortunate to have experienced the best of all worlds: always having challenging legal

work while at the same time being associated with colleagues whose friendship and support have made this journey such a meaningful one.

Dan M. Hartzog

I had wanted to be a surgeon like my older brother, but sleeping through half of a chemistry exam caused me to reconsider. Instead, I went to law school at UNC in 1969. Because of basic training and artillery training for the US Army Reserves, I had to leave law school after one semester, and I returned as a member of the class of 1973. I had great professors at UNC who are still revered at the law school; their pictures are on the walls today. Law school taught us so much more than law. We learned how to understand, appreciate, and argue both sides of an issue. That is a useful skill in and out of law practice.

It is hard for me to believe that I have been a lawyer and litigator for 50 years. I am an introvert, and I was not crazy about public speaking, so it was not like I wanted to be a litigator for my whole life, but that is what happened. I had influences along the way.

After my second year of law school, I went to court several times as a summer clerk with Howard Manning, one of the most intimidating cross-examiners I have ever seen to this day. I was so impressed with him and enjoyed being with him behind the scenes.

Another lawyer I watched and admired was a person I never met, Senator Sam Ervin. The bar review course for the 1973 bar exam coincided with the Watergate hearings, and I spent more time watching those hearings than I did studying for the bar exam. I loved watching the lawyers who were questioning witnesses

and especially Senator Sam.

Partly because of those experiences, I was happy to get a call from Bob Clay, who knew my brother from high school football, asking me to come to work at Teague, Johnson, Patterson, Dilthey & Clay to practice civil defense litigation. I got to work with Bob Clay on several cases, and Bob was also one of the finest trial lawyers I have ever seen in court. And working for Woody Teague was a fascinating experience. In going to work at that firm, I was the third associate, joining Paul Cranfill and Bob Sumner. From then until their retirement, we were always in the same firm, and they remain two of my best friends.

I tried my first jury trial two weeks after I was sworn in, and I was more nervous than the *pro se* plaintiff. I did manage to win that case and it made me realize that I could be a litigator. I tried over 100 jury trials in state and federal courts. The older I got, the more serious my cases got, but at some point, as I have often said, I was more comfortable in a jury trial than I was at a cocktail party. I have tried cases dealing with carbon monoxide, premises security involving murders, a will caveat, the decertification of a counselor, a wedding crasher, police excessive force claims, non-compete clauses, and many others. One of my jury trials lasted 14 weeks, said to be the longest civil trial in the history of Durham County.

I have appreciated the recognition given to me over the years. I am a fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers and I hold the rank of advocate in the American Board of Trial Advocates. I received the Excellence in Advocacy Award from the North Carolina Association of Defense Attorneys. I am a member of the NCBA Legal Practice Hall of

Fame. I certainly would not have predicted any of these accolades when I started out. My favorite recognition, however, has been getting thanked by clients who sat next to me in jury trials.

Being a trial lawyer means working all the time, and I was the managing partner of a law firm for 23 years as well. Looking back on it, I did work a lot. I always managed to find time for our family with help and support from my wife, Tricia. She is the greatest. Both of my children went to UNC law school and are practicing lawyers today. Dan and his wife Katie founded Hartzog Law Group in 2019 focusing on municipal law, employment law, and education law, and I have been with them since then. Anna Hartzog Tison is a partner at Brooks Pierce in Raleigh, where she concentrates in complex commercial real estate transactions. Both of my children are great lawyers and great parents, and I have four amazing grandchildren.

When I started in law practice, I heard a lot about how the practice had changed. It certainly has changed a lot since then. We did not have computers in 1992 when we founded Cranfill Sumner & Hartzog, and now we almost do not have paper at Hartzog Law Group. The practice of law is going to change a lot going forward in ways that I can't imagine. We are just beginning to deal with AI, for one thing.

What has not changed is the way that lawyers question witnesses and give jury arguments. At the end of a trial a jury gets to decide the outcome of a case. I love the adversary system and the role of trial lawyers. I am proud to have been one of them.

In addition to learning from some great

role models along the way, I was also able to work with many talented younger lawyers, and I hope that they got some benefit from working with me. I am grateful to be included in the group of lawyers who have practiced for 50 years.

R. Anderson Haynes

I was born and grew up in Tryon, North Carolina, and graduated from St. Andrew's School in Delaware. I received my BA in history from Trinity College in Connecticut and my JD in 1973 from UNC. Upon returning home, I began my law practice, which concentrates in real estate and estate planning and administration. I have been practicing law in Tryon as a sole practitioner for my entire 50 year career.

Over my years of practice, involvement in the civic, charitable, and cultural life of my community has been one of my top priorities. In recognition of my professional and community service, I was recently inducted into the North Carolina Bar Association's Legal Practice Hall of Fame, which was a highlight in my long career.

My family's association and involvement with Tryon goes back 135 years. As my family's historian and archivist, I have a broad knowledge of the people and institutions that have made my hometown a special place. Linda and I have been married 46 years, have two sons, Robert and Morgan, and have two brilliant grandchildren, Baxter Anderson Haynes (Robert and Emily) and Ola Marie Haynes (Morgan and Renée).

Alan S. Hicks

I grew up in eastern North Carolina in the

small town of Fremont in northern Wayne County. I decided in high school that I wanted to be a lawyer and never wavered from that path. I received a BA in English from UNC-Chapel Hill and earned my JD at UNC law.

My law practice has been exclusively in Roxboro and Person Counties, although I have been privileged to appear at all levels of the trial and appellate courts around the state. I am especially proud of the role that I have been able to play, both as an attorney and an involved citizen, in the life of my adopted community. Cindy and I raised three wonderful children in Roxboro, and I served 12 years on the local school board. I consider the trust and confidence of my clients and friends to be an honor of which I continue to strive to be worthy. I have always tried to remember that my conduct reflects not only on me, but on my chosen profession as well. Perhaps nothing has etched that lesson on my consciousness more indelibly than my time of service on the State Bar Council.

The evolution of the practice of law during my 50 years of practice has been stunning. In 1973 the IBM Selectric typewriter was state-of-the-art, and carbon paper was in regular use. That soon morphed into clunky desktop word processors and floppy disks, then inevitably gave way to networked PCs and the internet. The dedicated library lined with case



Sampson County Field/Micah Mullen

reporter volumes and a set of General Statutes has become little more than another office furnishing, since research is now largely conducted electronically. Adapting to these challenges has perhaps been the hallmark of the past 50 years.

However, as the one constant in life is change, the next 50 years will undoubtedly bring more dramatic developments, most vividly illustrated by the nascent emergence of

artificial intelligence as another legal tool. Nonetheless, I remain confident that there is no replacement for the educated, compassionate, and committed attorney. My service as a mediator continues to convince me of that fundamental truth.

As I ease into semi-retirement, I acknowledge uncertainty as to whether there is such a thing as life outside the law. I prefer to remain within it, grateful for all that it provides and wary of all attempts to subvert it. I reflect with gratitude on the ability that it has provided me to travel and to enjoy and appreciate my wife, children, and grandchildren in ways that escaped me over the past 50 years.

Edward B. Higgins Jr.

I was born and raised in Forsyth County and grew up in Kernersville, NC. My public-school education was in Kernersville, and I graduated from East Forsyth Senior High School. My parents were what would be described as working class—mother a secretary and father ran a bookkeeping operation in Winston-Salem. After high school I attended Catawba College where I majored in accounting. At the time my goal was to work for a CPA firm. During my junior year I began migrating to the field of law, and in 1969 I applied to Wake Forest law school. I can still remember my personal interview with Dean Weathers who spoke of the law as an honorable calling since the days of the Inns of Court in England. When I returned to Catawba for my senior year, I already knew what I would be doing after graduation. I believed I could combine my enjoyment of accounting with law working as a corporate tax attorney.

Following graduation from Wake Forest I

returned to Kernersville to open a general law practice. I was able to rent space from an attorney who had practiced in Kernersville for more than two decades. That experience helped me develop an understanding of the law, but dealing with the court system taught me that the law I thought I had learned in law school was not the way it would occur in real life. My first criminal case was an indigent appointment for a B&E. I researched cases and felt that intent could not be shown given the facts present. I quickly learned that sometimes an element may be presumed, and that I needed to come better prepared. My active practice of law full time only lasted eight years, but doing that time as a general practitioner I was exposed to a variety of cases. My most significant was trying the first capital murder case in Forsyth County after the legislature reinstated the death penalty. The case involved a stabbing death. I attempted a plea agreement, but the district attorney would not allow it before the current sitting judge and required me to wait until another judge was on the bench. My client requested a jury trial. The trial lasted two and a half days. He was convicted of second-degree murder, which had been offered as a plea. I was later told by other attorneys that they believed my summation to the jury was what saved my client's life.

In 1980 I closed my practice in Kernersville and moved to Wilmington, NC, to take a teaching position developing and teaching the Paralegal Program at Cape Fear Community College. I spent 31 years at the college and retired in 2011. I taught a Constitutional law course that all criminal justice students were required to take, and it made me proud when a Wilmington police officer or New Hanover

deputy sheriff would make a point of telling me how much they learned in one of my classes. I am also proud of all the successful legal assistants trained in our program who have served many Wilmington area attorneys over the years.

I was pleased to serve 24 years as a member of the New Hanover County Board of Education. I was honored that the citizens of New Hanover County supported my election. Over the course of my tenure, eight years of which I served as chair, I had the pleasure of witnessing over 30,000 students graduate from our county school system.

J. Bruce Hoof

Although I practiced law in Durham for 50 years, neither my profession nor my hometown was preordained. In fact, I am a first-generation lawyer and a Tar Heel by choice, not birth.

My father was a career naval officer. As a result, my family moved frequently. By the 7th grade I had lived in eight different houses, one as far west as Hawaii and another as far east as Bath, England.

I had the opportunity to attend a succession of four excellent but quite different educational institutions. That experience began in Bath with a three-year cultural immersion as the only American attending Kingswood, an English boys' boarding school founded by John Wesley in 1748. It continued at Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, which I attended during the leadership of legendary and transformative Headmaster Frank Boyden. My next opportunity was also my first exposure to North Carolina when in 1967 I entered THE University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I received my undergraduate education, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. I was then awarded a Patrick Wilson merit scholarship to Vanderbilt Law School.

After spending three years in Nashville, I recognized that I much preferred North Carolina to any of the wide variety of other communities I had experienced growing up. Therefore, I decided to return to North Carolina to practice law and began my legal career in Durham after graduating from Vanderbilt in 1973.

Over these 50 years my practice has been in civil litigation. Although I have always maintained my office in Durham, I have represented parties throughout the state in a variety of different substantive legal fields and in virtually every type of civil proceeding. Those have included many superior court jury trials, an extensive civil motions practice, and arguing numerous reported cases before North Carolina's Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and Business Court and before the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals.

My wife Lloydette, who I met at UNC and married in 1969, and I continue to enjoy living in Durham close to our daughter Mary Lloyd Preble, son-in-law Kurt Preble, and our three fantastic grandchildren Jack, Allison, and Wright Preble who, in contrast to my early life, have lived their entire lives in Durham. However, Jack and Allison are following somewhat in their grandparents' footsteps as they are both undergraduates at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Over the course of my career, I have recognized and come to particularly appreciate how extraordinarily privileged I have been to have had the opportunity of spending my profes-

sional life in the practice of law and to have been a member of the North Carolina Bar. I appreciate the Bar recognizing my 50 years in practice, but feel it is more appropriate to thank the Bar for that opportunity.

Robert N. Hunter Jr.

I grew up in Greensboro, NC. My father was co-owner of a construction company, and during the summers as a teenager I was employed as a laborer on job sites. From this experience I concluded there was a better way to make a living. I attended Chapel Hill and got a history degree and then went to law school. After graduation from law school, I went to work in Raleigh in the Holshouser Administration in Raleigh, and in 1974 I was fortunate to work as deputy attorney general under Attorney General Jim Carson. After he lost the election, I went into solo private practice in Raleigh. My first criminal jury trial was in front of Judge Pou Bailey, an experience I still remember.

Later I left Raleigh, returned to Greensboro, and was in small firms doing general practice work, serving in various county appointed positions, as member of the county election board, public administrator, and in church affairs. In the 1980s and until 2009, I was active in the law of democracy, helping to grow a two-party system in North Carolina in a series of lawsuits enforcing the Voting Rights Act, which took me a journey to the US Supreme Court five times. I became a partner in Patton, Boggs, a DC firm with a Washington office. After leaving the national firm, I continued my Greensboro general practice with Hunter, Higgins and began a neutral practice with FINRA and in superior

court mediations.

I was fortunate to win election to the court of appeals in 2009, and later to serve on the NC Supreme Court, which was the capstone of my career. Since leaving the bench I have continued to practice law and have an active neutral practice as an arbitrator with the AAA.

The underseen hand has sent me great clients who I have enjoyed serving. My colleagues at the bar, my partners, and the judges with whom I have served have enriched my time at the bar and on the bench. I have been blessed over the past 50 years.

I spend a good deal of time now in Morehead City, looking back on my time as a lawyer. In retrospect as a young man, I wanted to stop the tide in the ocean of injustice. Now as an old man, I just want to fish in the ocean and watch the waves.

H. Gray Hutchison Jr.

I grew up in Raleigh and received a BS in business administration and a JD from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Following graduation, I joined my father's regional actuarial consulting firm as its first in-house attorney. Over time I moved into operations and then management. In 1995 the firm was acquired by Aon, which is a multinational risk management and human resources firm. I remained with Aon until 2012 when I retired. I then joined Wyrick Robbins Yates & Ponton LLP as an employee benefits attorney, and remained with the firm until my second retirement in 2021.

I met my wife Gail when I was a senior at Carolina, and she was a 4/5 in pharmacy. We have been married 52 years and have three daughters and nine grandchildren. Gail and I



were active volunteers at our children's schools and are now enjoying the activities of our grandchildren. I have been active in our church and community including volunteering with StepUP Ministries, the 200 Club of Wake County (which provide immediate assistance to the families of public safety officers who die in the line of duty), and the Eshelman School of Pharmacy Foundation. In addition, I was a volunteer with the NC Bar Association including teaching several employee benefits CLE programs, serving as chair of the Health Insurance Committee, and as chair of the Board of Trustees of the first

NCBA Health Benefits Trust, serving on its retirement plan committee and on the North Carolina Bar Foundation Investment Committee. I am currently serving as a trustee of the North Carolina State Bar Money Purchase Pension Plan.

I have enjoyed my time as a member of the State Bar and have appreciated the opportunity to help individuals and organizations through my work and volunteer activities.

Fredrick G. Johnson

My life in the law began in 1957, the year the television show *Perry Mason* debuted on

CBS. From that time forward my occupational goal was to be a lawyer. I did not have any family member who was an attorney, nor did I know any attorneys; so, Perry gets the credit.

I feel fortunate to be the first in my family to have the opportunity to attend college. Between earning my undergraduate degree from Wake Forest University and my law degree from UNC, I taught US history and world history at North Stokes High School. In law school I served as research assistant to Robert Phay, the education law professor at both the UNC law school and the UNC Institute of Government (now the School of Government). These experiences enabled me to develop an education law practice which has included representation of eight public school districts and Surry Community College. In 2013 I was honored to receive the Distinguished Service Award from the Education Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association.

A lawyer is an educator, a counselor, and an advocate. I have tried to educate my clients about the law, to counsel my clients in what I believe to be in their best interest, and to advocate for my clients zealously within the bounds of professional responsibility. I have had the honor and privilege to appear before the trial and appellate courts of North Carolina, all federal districts in North Carolina, and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. My most gratifying experience, however, was presenting my son, Richard, for admission to the North Carolina bar. Richard and I have practiced together now for 17 years, an experience which has strengthened our personal and professional relationships.

My life outside the law consists of treasured

time with my wife, Gale, who just retired following 43 years of solo pediatric practice, and with my son, Richard, my daughter-in-law, Jill, and my three grandchildren, R. D., Julian, and Flash. As a hobby I am an active swimmer, having competed in several open water events.

During my practice for 50 years, I have experienced the initiation and growth of computer technology in all phases of the practice of law. I remember with a sense of nostalgia the many hours of research in the "law library" and the direct contact by telephone or personal conference with fellow attorneys and clients. Email correspondence for me lacks the personal contact that I experienced during the initial phase of my law practice.

My only regret is that I do not have another 50 years to practice law. I truly believe that I learn something new every day that enhances my knowledge of the law and my legal ability. Unlike Police Chief Bill Gillespie (superbly played by Rod Steiger in the 1967 movie *In the Heat of the Night*, who emphatically stated, "I know the laws of the State of Mississippi, thank you!"), I am still learning the laws of the state of North Carolina, thank you.

Robert F. Johnson

My wife Cathy and I both grew up in Burlington, NC, and we are graduates of Wake Forest University. I received my BA in 1970 and my JD in 1973 from WFU School of Law. Cathy graduated with her BS in '73. We married on August 5th, ten days after I completed my bar examination. This summer we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. We are the proud grandparents of two granddaughters and one grandson.

August 19, 1973, I was admitted to the practice of law, then was sworn in on September 14th, 1973, in Forsyth County where I began practicing law, ultimately forming the law firm Johnson, Walker & Villegas in Winston-Salem doing primarily civil law.

I had long desired to live in a rural part of the state, close to water, and to do more trial work. So, in June 1980 I liquidated my interest in the law firm, and Cathy, our two-year old son Bobby, and I relocated to eastern NC in Swan Quarter, Hyde County, where I practiced with John Fletcher. Although many of our friends and family questioned our move, it proved to be an enriching experience leading to my professional development in a totally different way. In March 1981 I was offered the position of assistant district attorney in the five county Second District, thus beginning my nearly 29-year career as a prosecutor. There I spent the next 11 ½ years as an ADA, then in 1992 moved back home to Burlington where I served five years as an ADA. Then on September 5, 1997, Governor Jim Hunt appointed me district attorney. I was elected in 1998, re-elected in 2002, and again in 2006. In September 2009 Governor Beverly Purdue appointed me superior court judge for Judicial District 15A to fill out the unexpired term of Hon. Jack Spencer. In 2010 I was elected to a full term and became senior resident later that year. I'm now retired but remain on the retired/recalled list.

It was a both a challenge and a privilege to serve as both a prosecutor and judge. As DA, I implemented one of the state's earliest criminal administrative courts. I developed a domestic violence court program and established as specialist the role of DV prosecutor.

For several years I was a member of the AOC Forms Committee, served as chair of the Criminal Forms Subcommittee, and became the district attorney representative on the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Committee. In 1994 I was assigned to represent the state in post-conviction proceedings alleging wrongful conviction of Ronald Cotton. This case resulted in the first DNA exoneration of two rape convictions from pre-DNA era trials. Investigation revealed that not only was he innocent of the charges, but a positive identification obtained from the state's newly established DNA database identified the actual rapist. Thereafter I was invited by Chief Justice Beverly Lake to serve on his Actual Innocence Commission with a view toward developing procedures to investigate and review claims of factual innocence. I worked with the American Judicature Society as well as the Center for American and International Law in Plano, Texas, speaking from the perspective of how prosecutors and police agencies can take measures to ensure that factually innocent people are not wrongfully charged in the first instance. In essence, justice is never served if the innocent are convicted and the guilty go free.

As a district attorney I oversaw the prosecution of thousands of cases and personally conducted several hundred jury trials including more than 100 first degree murders. As superior court judge, I presided over both criminal and civil cases. Quite frankly, after nearly 29 years prosecuting, I really enjoyed presiding in civil court more. I must say I found serving on the bench to be intellectually challenging, engaging, and a most satisfying way to end my legal career. I especially enjoyed holding court

outside my home county throughout much of the state. Sometimes I would see old WFU classmates that I had not seen since law school.

My days now revolve around home, family, church, civic, and volunteer activities. Cathy and I have a sailboat that we occasionally find time to enjoy. Grandchildren keep us busy. I do some volunteer work as an assessor for disaster relief teams, and we both are members of the Alamance Chorale. Fun fact: we have performed as part of large chorale concerts in Avery Fisher Hall in New York's Lincoln Center, in Carnegie Hall, and this past summer at Southwark Cathedral in London, England. One never knows what retirement may bring!

Robert D. Kornegay Jr.

I was born January 13, 1948, in Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina, to Dr. Robert D. and Anne Ennis Kornegay. I have an older sister, Judy (by one and one-half years), who is also an attorney, and my younger brother, William (Widgie - four years younger). Those were intensely good times for me, and we shared many, many happy moments together as a family. They were very good and productive years for me, growing up in Rocky Mount.

I attended The University of Louisville School of Law, where I graduated with my JD in 1973.

The progression from small-town Rocky Mount to Winston-Salem, and then on to Louisville, Kentucky, was in one sense an education all by itself. The University of Louisville also had a night school for those people who had to work while they were pursuing a legal education, and watching all those people really

struggle helped me appreciate my upbringing and the value of my education.

While in Louisville I clerked for a medium-sized law firm that included the mayor of Louisville and other practitioners in most major areas of the law. This was a true practical education for me, and I learned how to search titles, was allowed to try certain misdemeanors under the tutelage of one of the members of the firm, and got unbelievable practical experience. That was probably more of an education in law for me than school was. Working with a lot of paralegals, secretaries, and the partners helped me understand the structure and day-to-day intricacies of what a law practice really was, but it also helped me realize that I did not want to be a member of a medium-to-large size firm once I got out of school. That was a big help to me.

Thereafter I clerked for the Honorable I. Beverly Lake for the North Carolina Supreme Court (the original Dr. Lake), and this was a terrific honor and treat. Not only did I establish a wonderful friendship for the rest of Dr. Lake's life, but also got to spend a lot of time with the Honorable Joe Branch, who had been a very close friend of my father.

My entry into law school and exit therefrom was all directly related to the war in Vietnam, and keeping my academic deferment allowed me to do that. I was virtually in the process of attempting to enroll in the Marine Corps because I felt terrific guilt that so many of my friends were serving in the war and several very close friends were either killed or missing in action, when my dad found out about it and persuaded me not to enlist. In hindsight, of course, I am very grateful. My dad also very much discouraged me from

going into the practice of medicine. Having been raised by a surgeon and spending a terrific amount of time in the small private hospital that he owned helped me to understand that I probably could never live up to his reputation and helped point me towards the law. The long and tedious hours he worked were another reason. I lived next door to Herman Merrill, who was a partner with Battle, Winslow, Scott & Wiley in Rocky Mount, and my dad indicated that might be a profession I would want to consider, which was very influential to me and probably the reason why I entered into the practice of law.

Being selected by Judge Lake, when I knew that he was interviewing a lot of other people with glorious curriculum vitae, was wonderful for me. Also, after I started my practice, I was requested by Wake Forest University to be a part of their lecture series on domestic law and I was terrifically flattered by that. It has been my practice throughout my career to have given any person who has called or come to my office for advice a minimum of up to one hour of free time. This has been my form of *pro bono* work. I feel like every person should have the right, privilege, and ability to sit down with someone presumably qualified to listen to their story, deduce whether in fact they have a legal problem, and if so offer them options with the most affordable prices I can to try to help them thereafter if they choose to hire me. Serving so many people in this way and helping many to determine that either they don't have a true legal problem, or being able to recommend to them practical ways to handle that problem without an attorney, makes me very proud. Serving people for 50 years and still having a vital practice also makes

me very proud.

I am worried that the future of law may be compromised by the people who want to change and/or streamline the system that we currently have. I think the pandemic offered a good example of that. I found that it was almost impossible to get justice for my clients during that period of time where court was either cancelled—except for the grossest of urgencies—or the courtrooms were limited as to the number of people who could be in there, the number of the cases that could be tried per session, or the numerous other reductions and changes in the system that took place. I don't say this as a criticism for trying to keep the pandemic from spreading, but my real worry was that I have read by certain other people since then that they liked the changes, liked doing things by Zoom and avoiding personal contact, and basically think that methodology was better than the old and cumbersome methods that we have for trying cases in court. I felt very strapped by not being able to see and experience people's body language, interpreting things that you can get by facial expressions, and things that you simply cannot do unless you are live and integrated in a full courtroom. Yes, I think that there are certainly changes we can make that might help, but I think we need to be extremely careful to protect all the basic rights and freedoms that we have as the system currently exists, or otherwise we are really going to shoot ourselves in the foot. I am extremely worried about the impact and influence of artificial intelligence and doing the full system in a digital method as opposed to what we are doing. Yes, I am perfectly willing to admit that a large part of this is because of my age and my resist-

ance to change, but I still feel like we are sacrificing a lot by trusting in computers, gadgets, and other things rather than in human beings to do and make decisions that are valuable.

I am in the process of scaling way back at this point and typically only work about three and a half to four days per week. I also have a practice on Ocracoke Island, which is very active, but I go there mostly to hunt and fish and enjoy the islanders, who are an extraordinarily diverse and interesting group of people. They have offered much benefit and influenced my life greatly during my time there. I love to travel, especially to see live music. My daughter and son-in-law live in Raleigh, and my son and daughter-in-law live in Spring Hope, and they have all been so great in indulging me in enjoying many of their interests and endeavors in life.

C. Roland Krueger

After two years at West Point, at which I had the memorable privilege to attend, I decided to become a lawyer. I transferred to UNC-Chapel Hill for my BS. I also went to OCS in the National Guard, later becoming a 1st Lt. I attended Wake Forest University law school. I remember fondly my professors, even the task masters. On the weekends I attended performances at the School of the Arts.

I passed the bar exam the first time and applied to be an AmeriCorps VISTA lawyer. Instead, I began my first year of law practice in 1973 in Ahoskie, NC, with the law firm of Jones, Jones and Jones (Carter Jones and Lonnie Herbin). They were most gracious, providing me trial experience (including one murder case with them, appealing two NC Court of Appeals cases - briefs and oral argu-

ments). At the local community theater I portrayed Ben Gant in *Look Homeward Angel*.

A year later I joined High Point Legal Services as a legal aid attorney. The High Point Bar was gracious, accepting me and encouraging my work. I spent over nine years with legal services in various capacities (staff attorney, executive director, codirector, and managing attorney). Legal Aid greatly expanded its services throughout the country in the 1970s and early 1980s. During that time, at the Winston-Salem Little Theater I helped (running lights, sound, building sets, stage managing, acting classes, acting), while also attending most of the performances at the Highpoint Shakespeare Festival in the 1970s and early 1980s. I also began bicycling, in particular with a statewide biking group for weekend and week long bike trips. From time to time I continue to do community theater work. My most memorable role was Otto Frank in the *Diary of Anne Frank*. After a performance, a woman come up to me to say I looked like Otto Frank. She had rented part of the Annex after the war, so she and knew Otto and Meip—quite a profound meeting with her.

In 1984 I set up my solo private law practice in Lexington, NC, where I still have my law office. I have focused in areas of the law that, at least initially, few local attorneys were participating: bankruptcy cases, Social Security disability, and juvenile court work. It was great associating with the Davidson County Bar and the Middle District bankruptcy bar members.

Finally at age 50 I got married. My wife, Debra, prior to marrying me, participated in research to develop an AIDS testing protocol

for Africa. She was then lead research coordinator in a 900 patient study involving breast cancer treatment using bone marrow transplants. 15 years ago Debra started running 5K races. Being the dutiful husband, I began running them as well.

In 2015 a fellow runner cajoled me into competing in an indoor national masters track meet in Winston-Salem. Quite intimidated by the many athletic “gods and goddesses” around me, I finished 2nd in my heat in the 400 meter race. I continue competing in track meets, (masters and senior games), last year setting three records for the 100 meter, 200 meter, and 400 meter races. I am fortunate to train with a group of runners who are ten to 20 years younger than me. In between running injuries, I’m still competing. My wife, who also is an actor in community theater and a singer, is now a black belt in tae kwon do.

I continue to be on the cusp of retiring from law practice. Years ago at a bar meeting, one of the senior attorneys encouraged all lawyers to, “take the time to smell the roses.” We all need to do so.

Richard F. Landis II

My wife, Sandy, and I grew up in York, PA, and both attended public schools there. I graduated from Catawba College in 1970 with an AB in accounting, and Sandy the same year from nursing school. We were married in September 1970 and arrived in Winston-Salem for me to attend law school at Wake Forest while Sandy worked as an RN at North Carolina Baptist Hospital.

I passed the North Carolina CPA exam in my 2L year, and several years later received my CPA license, now inactive. We moved to

Kinston where I was admitted to the Bar and joined the Kinston law firm, Wallace Langley Barwick & Llewellyn, where, I am proud to say, I have remained and still practice, though lawyers have passed away, retired, become judges, gone into public service, or otherwise come and gone. I was fortunate to be mentored by former WFU Law School alums Fitzhugh E. Wallace Jr. and Robert “Bob Scott” Langley (both now deceased) and my former law partner and longtime friend P.C. Barwick Jr. I would like to believe that my younger associates, partners, and staff over the years would say that I mentored them in some way.

I have always had an interest in math, beginning in grade school years and continuing through high school, then pursuing my undergraduate degree in accounting. I suppose the challenge of analyzing problems and working out solutions, though sometimes stressful, fascinated me and fueled my interest to one day practice law.

I have enjoyed my practice and clients, associations with other attorneys, particularly associations with classmates from Wake Forest JD Class of ‘73, and my colleagues in the Estate Planning and Fiduciary Law Section (member for some 40 years) and the Real Property Section. My undergraduate studies in accounting and my interest in business, these associations with other attorneys, and my participation in these great Bar sections have enabled me to practice over my 50 years with a focus in real estate, estate planning and administration, and business or transactional law across the state, with even one longtime business client in Ireland.

Being a practicing lawyer jump started a

career of community service and elevated both me and my wife to quick recognition in the Kinston-Lenoir County community and surrounding area. We have both been involved in the community as longtime members of First Presbyterian Church, Kinston, where I served on Session and as clerk several terms. I got involved in Jaycees upon arrival to Kinston, where I made lifelong friendships and established business relationships with other young professionals, bankers, business owners, and regular working people. Of major accomplishment to me on the civic side is my association or membership in Lions and NC Lions for some 40 years, which led to my serving on the board of Kinston’s Lions Industries for the Blind, Inc. (LIB)—one of only 92 such agencies in the United States approved by National Industries for the Blind (NIB), which employs some 30 visually impaired persons with a mission “to empower people who are blind to achieve personal and economic independence by providing them vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities—still serving as president and chair of the board for many years.”

As far as proud moments, it’s always nice to hear someone say, “Rick Landis is my attorney” or have a friend or client tell me he or she met someone while on vacation or at an event who had nice things to say about the work I had done for them. I suppose, next after introducing my daughter, Heather Landis Bunting, JD Campbell ‘04, to the Lenoir County Bar to be sworn in by Resident Superior County Judge Paul L. Jones (who came to practice in Kinston about the same time I arrived), I’m proud of my civic associations, particularly with NC Lions, and receiving a certificate of

appreciation and “Follow Your Dream Recognition” by the president of International Association of Lions Clubs in 2014 for my work as local attorney for Woodmen of the World Foundation to build a new community center in Kinston, as part of Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society’s pilot program to invest and improve the quality of life in small communities, which included a waterpark accessible to visually impaired persons, the first such waterpark facility of its kind.

Though not a prediction for the profession, as lawyers I feel we have an ongoing responsibility to the public to strive for more civility and collegiality among the Bar in our state and throughout the country.

Summing up, it’s been a great ride and still going!

T. Bentley Leonard

I’m Bentley Leonard, and I love being a lawyer.

This was not my childhood aspiration in Spencer, North Carolina, a small Piedmont railroad town adjoining Salisbury, where my relatives were farmers, mechanics, and storekeepers, never dreaming of college. As an inquisitive child, I was curious about people, events, ideas, and my surroundings. My Grandmother Leonard was the first to say, “That boy’s going places!” My father believed in me and my potential. My parents worked hard to enrich my childhood, seeing that I attended the best available public schools, traveled, enjoyed summer camp at Lutheridge, hiked, camped, and joined a Boy Scout troop, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

College became a reality. I didn’t know what to study, so I just started college and

hoped for career inspiration. As freshmen, my roommates discussed their career goals. One said, “I want to be a lawyer.” The next agreed. I declared, “I’m going to be a lawyer.” When I read about lawyers’ work as advocates, critical thinkers, and problem solvers, I saw my future.

Although UNC Law School was arduous, I reached my goal of becoming an attorney. For the past 50 years I have been fortunate to live in Asheville, specializing in consumer bankruptcy, real estate, and estate planning law.

Leading clients from financial losses toward stable futures, legally securing families’ new homes, and providing the advice and processes for clear, binding final distributions of lifetime assets are all tremendously gratifying services.

Each day is fulfilling, knowing I made lives better, whether handling cases large or small. Achieving Consumer Bankruptcy certification in 1995 has been personally and professionally important.

Early in my career, I purchased and oversaw the renovation of an old building for my law office. In 2001 I hired a young lawyer, Chris Moore, who became my partner.

Western North Carolina’s natural beauty remains inspiring. Throughout my life, frequent hikes have been adventures, with most years bringing a hard climb to the summit of Mount Leconte in Tennessee, always memorable.

I have enjoyed contributing to my community, especially teaching business law at



William Henry Stevens/Untitled

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College for 15 years. Belonging to the Asheville Optimist Club, serving on the board of the Irene Wortham Center which provides care for children and adults with physical and developmental challenges, and participating in cultural and political activities have brought great satisfaction.

My innate curiosity drives my desire to travel. My perspective grows as I tour the world, visiting 60 countries so far, experiencing diverse cultures, and taking many photographs along the way.

I am blessed with a family I love even more than law.

No reflections on my life are complete without the cheer, "Go Tar Heels!" During my 50 professional years, our basketball team beat Duke 66 times, with 56 losses. Damn referees. I look forward to being in Chapel Hill, especially during football and basketball seasons.

Each day provides opportunities for an enduring passion, learning. I'll likely be asking questions and planning another trip as they close that coffin lid.

Although I believe the future of the legal profession is strong, I do wish more attorneys would serve in public offices, especially the North Carolina General Assembly.

My greatest honor is being a lawyer. I hope that new generations of attorneys find joys in this most noble profession.

John Wesley Lunsford

I enrolled in UNC-Chapel Hill in September 1965, with thoughts of becoming a physician. Soon after classes started, my poor performance and comprehension of basic

math and chemistry forced me to consider another profession. The law seemed an appropriate choice. There was no rhyme or reason for it. I guess the order of "professions" in my head were 1) doctor, 2) lawyer. I had never been in a lawyer's office, nor was I aware of a lawyer's duties. I did watch a lot of *Perry Mason*, though. Duke allowed those students who had spent three years as a Duke undergrad to apply to their law school. I sought to do the same as a UNC undergrad, transferring to Duke law. Did not work. The Admissions Office there never said, "No," but they never said, "Yes."

So, I finished my undergraduate work at Carolina in June 1969. Having been alerted to my impending military service draft, I sought a defensible occupation and was fortunate to secure a teaching position at a non-integrated Black high school in Halifax County, Virginia. Some of my students were older than I was! Interestingly enough, the two high schools there did integrate in January 1970. It was a very crazy time. That year was the draft lottery, and my number was high enough; my residence in Virginia long enough; my undergraduate grades good enough; and my LSAT score high enough for me to be admitted to the University of Virginia Law School. I returned to my home state in June 1973, having secured an associate's position in a Greensboro law firm.

Volunteering and working with the North Carolina Bar Association in the 1980s may be my proudest moment. I was given the opportunity to form the General Practice Section at a time when other "specialty" areas were under consideration. It was an exciting time, and the NC Bar afforded me many opportunities for

travel. Speaking of that, my wife, Cindy, and I do love to travel and have traversed the globe from the national parks of the USA to England, Scotland, Switzerland, Austria, Normandy, and Tanzania. A trip to Africa was definitely the ultimate highlight of our travel experiences.

Jeffrey T. Mackie

After graduation from Wake Forest University in June 1973, I entered UNC Law School the following September. Almost immediately I realized I did not want to be in any school right after graduation. I struggled through the first semester, actually applying for teaching jobs in the area.

As the second semester began, I received notice that I could join the US Army Reserves. As the Vietnam War was drafting many people my age, I dropped out of law school and joined. After four months of crawling around in the dirt at Fort Ord, California, I decided I really did want to go to law school.

Upon graduation, I was fortunate to begin a general trial practice with Forrest Ferrell in Hickory. Upon his election to the superior court, I joined the firm of Sigmon, Clark and Mackie, where I practiced until my retirement in 2016.

In 1975 I was the first lawyer in my part of Western NC to be certified as a mediator. I enjoyed mediation and have mediated over 2,500 cases.

Currently, I play golf and pickleball several times a week. I am active in my church and Rotary Club. My wife and I will celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 11, 2023. We have traveled most of the world and US together and enjoy our five grandchildren who

live in the Raleigh area.

John W. Mason

At some point in high school I began thinking of the law as a profession. I admired a lawyer who was a good friend of my father, knew another lawyer who was my first cousin once removed, and I was a decent public speaker; thus, law became at least in the background of my thoughts as a career. For a few years while attending Davidson College I also thought about the ministry, but didn't consider myself "called" in that direction. Besides, I cussed too much for divinity school, and military service awaited as a national duty. I joined the Marine Corps Officer Candidate Program before senior year at Davidson, took the LSAT before graduation, then served as a marine rifle platoon commander in Vietnam.

Vietnam was a seminal event, a life-changing event I was fortunate to survive. I was hit twice. Following the second time, I was medevacked back to the States, spent nearly six months in hospital, and was medically retired from the Corps.

I entered Carolina School of Law in late summer 1970, graduated in 1973, and passed the bar that August. Although I was offered a job with a firm in Asheville, I accepted a position with Virginia National Bank in Charlottesville. The bank offered a salary \$1,000 more than Asheville, which was a significant factor then. Within a year or so at the bank, I realized that corporate and trust/estate legal work within the trust department was not my style. I wanted something more challenging, more bruising perhaps; I decided to practice law. Then, by either coincidence or providence, at a Carolina Law alumni week-

end in the fall of 1974, I met Albert Coates, something of a legend at Carolina, who had taught at the law school, and with his wife Gladys founded the Institute of Government. Mr. Coates asked me where I practiced. I told him that although I was licensed in North Carolina, I worked for a bank in Virginia. He encouraged me to return to our home state. A few weeks later I received a note from Mr. Coates together with a copy of his address to a graduating class from the law school. With such encouragement it seemed that I should return. And, by early January 1975, with assistance of Russ Brannon, a classmate at Davidson and Carolina Law who practiced in Asheville, I was hired as associate with Redmond, Stevens, Loftin and Currie, PA, the firm (and its successor, Robert & Stevens, PA) where I practiced for the next 45 years.

I have never regretted being a lawyer. The profession is bruising at times, consuming at times, heartbreaking, challenging, and not always just. But it is often rewarding in extraordinarily positive ways, requires discipline, hard work, and one's best effort always; it rewards creativity, strategic and tactical decisions, and is intellectually stimulating. Also, I have been blessed to be partners with lawyers like Jack Stevens, Landon Roberts, Walt Currie, and others. Working with these attorneys daily has been to my great advantage and inspiration.

My career began as a general practitioner. While I was hired due in part to experience with trust and estate planning, administration, tax law, banking law, and dealing with the IRS, I litigated cases from district court traffic offenses, to caveat and trust cases in superior court, to securities and anti-trust cases in fed-

eral court. One case, *Ray v. United Family Insurance*, was reported in *US Law Week*; another, *FUNB v. Moss*, in *Trust and Estates Magazine*. While successful in each of these cases, I (along with three other attorneys) was much less so in defending a medical malpractice case, *Sawyer v. Tauber*, in superior court where John Edwards obtained the largest verdict ever (to that time) in Buncombe County.

Over the years my practice morphed into primarily a trust and estate and trust/estate litigation practice. I have been recognized in attorney peer ratings, have been three times "Lawyer of the Year" in one such service, and have held various offices in my law firm, in the Buncombe County (28th Judicial District, now 40th Judicial District) Bar, and the North Carolina Bar Association. I am most proud of a justice fund contributed in my name by Roberts & Stevens (and several individuals) with the Bar Association Foundation. All in all, my career has been replete with both success and failure, but it is in large part a career of which I am most satisfied.

I do have a valediction, a parting thought for the bar. To me the practice of law is a healing profession. We should not forget this. We make the difference in clients' lives and possessions and values and concepts of integrity, honesty, and service. In time, the law and the legal profession have changed and will continue to do so, but our profession must—and hopefully will—project its higher calling, that of service to humanity.

H. Paul McCoy Jr.

My decision to become a lawyer began early in my high school years when my businessman father encouraged me to pursue a

profession for my life's work, as a profession would allow me to control my own destiny. Thus, I entered Wake Forest in 1966 with plans to pursue a legal education and am proud to be a Double Deacon. My father's advice proved prophetic as my legal education has afforded me the opportunity to enjoy three different roles, with each separate role preparing me to move forward into the next one.

In August 1973 I entered a general practice of law in Scotland Neck (Halifax County), NC, with Claude Kitchin Josey, better known as "Kitch." In those days in a small town, a lawyer practiced in many different areas of the law including incorporating farming operations and small businesses, wills and estate administration, real estate, domestic relations, wrongful death and personal injury cases, and criminal law from traffic citations to first degree murder cases. Much of my time was spent at the Halifax County courthouse doing title examinations between appearances in superior and district court on criminal or civil matters. I discovered that I enjoyed trial work and recall so well my first jury verdict of not guilty in a criminal case in which an inmate at Caledonia Prison was charged with selling drugs from the prison canteen. I jumped up and down pumping my fist in the air. The six years that I spent in this practice prepared me well for the next and longest phase of my legal career as a trial judge.

In August 1979, Governor James Hunt appointed me to be a district court judge, a

role that allowed me and my judge colleagues to learn and to be innovative with new court programs that would prove to enhance the court's efficiency with civil cases utilizing civil case management techniques learned in training sessions with the National Center for State Courts across NC and the nation. We piloted new programs including family financial mediation, family courts, family drug courts, Access and Visitation Programs related to Child Support Enforcement, and *pro se* divorce programs providing instructional packets of materials for indigent folks to obtain a divorce without an attorney. All of these efforts culminated in an invitation for me to speak at a National Family Court meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, on how to implement a family court in a poor, rural, single county district.

On the criminal side, we began a court for pleas in H & I felony cases to be taken in district court, a DWI court separate from other criminal dockets, a disposition court that in my district met on Monday afternoons to deal with the large number of traffic cases originating from 1-95. I often heard criticism from the public about the inefficiency of the court system, realized that some of it was deserved, and that those of us working in it were the only ones who had the ability to change that perception. I feel that many of these new programs increased our efficiency and hopefully improved the public's perception of the courts.

I served as a judge for 29 years with the last 19 years as the chief judge in my district. During that time I had the privilege to serve as chair of the State Court Improvement Project, as a member of the NC Sentencing and Policy



Advisory Commission, of the State Advisory Commission on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Judicial Council Subcommittee on Salaries and Benefits, the Rural Courts Commission, a legislative study commission on the open adoptions of children, and as president of the NC Association of District Court Judges. My years as a judge allowed me to be a public servant seeking to improve the court system for the consuming public using our services. Upon my retirement from the bench, I was honored by the NC District Court Judges' Association with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Since my retirement I have served a fairly large area of Eastern NC as a certified mediator in family financial cases and as an arbitrator in domestic relations cases. Among the many benefits to me from this work, the most important one has been the friendships that I have made with attorneys that I otherwise would not have known.

In conclusion, the best personal result of my life in the law is that my younger son, Paul C. McCoy, chose to follow me into the legal profession as a lawyer practicing civil litigation in a firm in Raleigh.

Linda M. McGee

My thanks to the NC State Bar for providing 50 year lawyers this occasion to share the stories of our law careers and for recognizing our 50 years of service as lawyers. My life has been filled with great people and opportunities, beginning with my supportive parents, Jean and Cecil Mace, of Marion. I was fortunate to grow up in a mill village with parents who encouraged me to follow my early dream to become a lawyer, at a time when women

were often teachers or nurses.

I entered UNC-Chapel Hill in 1967 and completed my undergraduate and law degrees through a special six-year program. In my law school class, there were few women and there was only one woman law professor. Happily, I also had the pleasure of meeting my husband Gary in a journalism class. We were married my first year in law school, and he began his studies for his MPA degree the day after my law school graduation. We were preparing together to have rewarding careers.

Jobs for young women lawyers were scarce in 1973, but I was fortunate to become the first executive director of the NC Academy of Trial Lawyers (now NCAJ) for four years. The leaders of the academy became my mentors and supporters throughout my law career, including Charlie Blanchard and Allen Bailey, among many others. It was a role where I could encourage young members and women members of the academy to move ahead as leaders of the organization.

I joined a law firm in Boone in 1978 that later became di Santi, Watson and McGee (now di Santi, Capua and Garrett). Tony di Santi and Don Watson were outstanding lawyers that I had the honor and pleasure to practice law with for 17 years, and Andrea Capua in later years. We were a general practice law firm, and I started by searching titles. I requested my name be added to the court-appointed lawyer list and represented people charged with traffic offenses to felonies throughout my career. As the only woman trial lawyer in town, family law soon became part of my practice. All the partners in the firm were focused on our families and we welcomed our children to the office, occa-

sionally using a conference room for child-care. My wonderful sons, Scott and Jeffrey, were the center of our family's life, and my husband and I happily shared in their care as they grew up.

In 1995 another exceptional opportunity arose when a friend, Leslie Winner, who was serving in the General Assembly, encouraged me to seek appointment to the NC Court of Appeals. We were two of the founding members of the NC Association of Women Attorneys, and a major goal of the organization was to increase the number of women serving as judges in our state. I was honored to be appointed by Governor Jim Hunt to the court of appeals, and at that time I was the only woman serving on the court. Having gone directly from the practice of law to serving as an appellate court judge, plus beginning to campaign for the upcoming statewide election, was quite a challenge.

Serving as a judge on the court for 26 years was the dream of a lifetime, for which I am most thankful. I was blessed to serve with three exceptional chief judges—Gerald Arnold, Sid Eagles, and John Martin—and many other outstanding judges. We were colleagues and friends who understood the importance of being part of an independent judiciary. We valued our opportunity to serve, to participate in important court decisions, and to support equal justice under the law. The court increased from 12 to 15 judges, and for a time a majority of the court's judges were women. I served as chief judge for my last six years on the court and worked to build a new set of skills as an administrator—especially how to actively listen and have respectful, civil discussion and fair compromise.

I have especially enjoyed opportunities to serve on the Board of Law Examiners, the boards of IOLTA, Continuing Legal Education, Legal Aid of North Carolina, the NC Bar Association, and the North Carolina Association of Women Attorneys. I was proud to lead the Women Judges Forum programs of NCAWA at all the state's law schools for years and to chair the Civic Education Consortium at the School of Government. I continue to advocate for women's rights, for providing vital legal services to people of modest means, and to expand civic education, that is so necessary in our democracy. Change is perpetual, and following the passing of my beloved husband, and now in my retirement, I am locally active in my church, women's organizations, and social outreach groups. Most importantly, I am enjoying my wonderful sons, of whom I am very proud, and their families, including two delightful grandchildren. Life is full and rewarding.

Paul J. Michaels

I grew up in Raleigh and graduated from North Carolina State University in 1969 with a BA in economics. I worked a year before beginning law school at UNC-CH in 1970, graduating in 1973.

My career began as an insurance defense lawyer, but by 1979 I was exclusively a plaintiffs' lawyer. The highlights of my career are the years spent representing textile workers with brown lung disease statewide, and then practicing the last 20 years with my recently deceased brother, John (Jack) Michaels.

During my career I served on many boards and committees of the North Carolina Bar Association, the North Carolina Advocates for

Justice, and Legal Services. Over the years I also served on committees and boards at NCSU and chaired the NC State Foundation Board, the Arts NC State Board, and the Lonnie Poole Golf Course Advisory Board.

In retirement, I've enjoyed time with my wife Martha, our four children and ten grandchildren, plus many rounds of golf with good friends.

John R. Morgan

I was born in Salisbury, NC, and went to Pfeiffer College and UNC School of Law, graduating in 1973 listening to our great commencement speaker, Senator Sam Ervin, as he encouraged us to get into public service.

I went to work first in the NC Attorney General's Office (Robert Morgan), and stayed about 18 months when I became assistant clerk of the NC Supreme Court. When the clerk retired two years later, I was appointed clerk by the Court. One of the best moments of my tenure there was serving under Susie Sharp, who had become the first elected female chief justice in the US. Among the other justices I was privileged to work with were former Governor Dan Moore, I. Beverly Lake Sr., Frank Huskins, Jim Exum, and Joseph Branch, who was chief justice when I left the Court in 1981 to practice law in Greensboro. I got my CPA certificate in 1984. I spent most of my career in the field of estate and trust, with an emphasis on tax planning. During that time, I taught several continuing education courses for the NC Bar Association and NC Association of CPAs. I am a past-president of the Greensboro Bar Association and of the NC Association of CPAs.

My wife, Beth, and I moved to

Wilmington in 2018 to be near our son and his family. I still practice on a limited basis, mostly in estate administration, and stay about as busy as I was when working full-time. The practice of law has been good to me for a long time; I highly recommend it.

W. Phillip Moseley

For reasons only my parents can say, I go by my middle name, and I am known as "Phil." This causes confusion, especially to highway patrolmen. I don't know why so many lawyers and judges go by their middle name.

I was born in Henderson, North Carolina. I never remember a time when I did not want to be an attorney. When I was in the ninth grade, my history teacher invited an attorney to speak to our class. I told the attorney that I was also going to be a lawyer. His attitude implied that it was unlikely that I or anyone else in that class would be able to meet the academic rigors to become an attorney. This challenge has stayed with me all my life.

After graduation from Henderson High School (which no longer exists), I attended the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. My first year was difficult; however, I found an educational workshop on reading through the university which taught me how to read quickly and accurately, rather than to read as an oration. With these new skills I was able to read the materials, and my reading and enjoyment of academia greatly increased. I double-majored in political science and religion because I was interested in these two institutions' effect on society. I was particularly drawn to Dr. Bernard Boyd and Dr. Ruel Tyson of the Religion Department.

When I graduated from the University of North Carolina, Vietnam was raging and I was out of money. I found a job teaching school in the Alamance-Burlington School System. I saved my money, and after one year of teaching, I went to law school. My wife, Lynn, was pursuing her doctorate in biology at UNC. Burlington was a central location where she could continue her studies at UNC, and search for employment with the surrounding seven colleges and universities. She eventually established a career at Guilford College, which was and is a key milestone in our family. I found a position with William Shoffner in Burlington, and thus began a general practice.

In criminal law, I had the pleasure of representing Ronald Cotton. Ronald was convicted of rape and sentenced to ten years in prison. It was not until DNA was discovered that he was exonerated and released from prison. A wonderful book about this experience is *Picking Cotton: Our Memoir of Injustice and Redemption* by Erin Torneo. During my career the concept of “actual innocence” has been the most significant change in criminal law. The work of the Innocence Project, including our own former Burlington Police Chief Mike Gauldin, has resulted in progress towards an improved justice system.

In civil litigation, the Daubert Test and amendment of Rule 702 of the Rules of Evidence, have had a significant impact. Our society has become divided. Some agree with science and some do not value science, but rather value their own opinion. Probably the most significant change in civil litigation is the avoidance of litigation through mediation. Of course, mediation has resulted in reducing

congested court calendars, but more importantly, mediation has resulted in a change to how attorneys approach their civil cases. I believe that mediation has resulted in greatly improved relations between attorneys.

In family law, I have seen the advent of equitable distribution, alimony based on dependency, and a strong presumption for joint custody. Again, mediation of these conflicts has greatly improved dispute resolution and reduced acrimony. When I first started practicing law, fathers saw their children on alternate weekends. Now, both parents are actually involved in parenting rather than mere visitation. After 50 years of practice in family law, I see many people in the community that I have represented as well as their children. It is a delight to see them greet me with appreciation for the professional service and advice that I provided them during a most difficult time in their life.

In addition to the practice of law, I have been active in Graham Presbyterian Church and elected as an elder and president of the trustees. My faith and service to my church community remains an important and uplifting part of daily life. I have been involved in Rotary International as club president and assistant district governor. Becoming actively involved in a civic organization is one responsibility of an attorney, but the benefits, friendships, and advancement of a sense of community far outweigh the expenditure of time. It is in such civic clubs as Rotary that people of different backgrounds and political opinions can establish lasting friendships. These friendships are especially valuable in these divisive times.

When people ask me what I do, I am proud to say that I am an attorney.

George J. Oliver

Well, well, well, it's hard to believe it's been 50 years of practicing law. I grew up in New Bern and remember my high school guidance counselor advising me that she believed I would do well if I took up a trade of some type. This might have been because of her perception that I grew up in a blue-collar family. My wrestling coach must have thought the same of my capabilities as he also commented that he did not think I would do well or go far that year. (I won every match that year and wrestled for the state championship but lost it on points). They were not the first or the last of those who underestimated my desire to overcome obstacles and find a way to achieve success.

My journey started when my mom and minister got together during my senior year in high school and decided on the best college for me to attend. Of course, being a member of the Baptist Church in New Bern meant I should go to a school that could enhance my religious upbringing. So off I went to Campbell College, now University, where I finished my BS degree in business administration. I attended chapel everyday (it was required, or I would have missed it) and had to take the mandatory courses in religion, which gave me a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Bible. Unfortunately, my friends in college corrupted me and introduced me to dancing the shag and partying, so I was never able to see myself becoming a preacher. I guess my wild and crazy side was too much for that. In any event, I graduated at a time when the draft was very much in effect and I had the luxury of being classified as 1-A, which meant I was raw meat for the draft.

Vietnam was heating up, and every time I interviewed for a job the same question was always asked, “Have you fulfilled your military commitment yet?” Of course, I had not fulfilled the commitment, so I was told to come back when I had. My mom was good friends with the lady who ran the draft board office in New Bern. She told my mom that my number was going to come up soon and they were drafting men into the army and the marines. I decided rather than get drafted, I joined the air force. I served four years in the electronics field and enjoyed every minute of it. One thing I learned when I joined was that I had to change how I spelled my name. I had always listed my name as George Gerald Oliver but, when I received a copy of my birth certificate, I learned my middle name was spelled with a J not a G. Doesn’t really matter because no one calls me George or Gerald, as everyone knows me by my nick name, Jerry.

I had never traveled much growing up and my military service was an eye-opening experience. I spent time in Texas, Mississippi, California, Japan, and Okinawa. While in the military I was able to start working on credits toward a master’s degree, but as I grew closer to being discharged, I started looking into becoming a lawyer. I believed it would give me more freedom over my work life balance (boy was I wrong about that). I was stationed in California at the time and lived in Apple Valley. I took the LSAT on the UCLA campus in 1970 and did well enough to apply to law school. My first thought was you should apply to law schools in North Carolina because that is where you want to practice. Then I thought about how long I had been out of school and how old I would

be when I received my law degree. I then decided to look at schools which were on the quarter system because it would allow me to graduate quicker. I found that the University of Tennessee was just the place for me because it was close to North Carolina, and I could be with family during breaks. I graduated from Tennessee and immediately came back to North Carolina to take the bar exam. I spent the entire summer in Chapel Hill taking the bar review course and then had the pleasure of spending three—yes three—days taking the exam.

So here I am today, the first lawyer in my family. I’ve had my fair share of laughs, moments of uncertainty, and challenges. I’ve seen the legal profession transform in ways that defy imagination. In a family where folks were more likely to be found behind a plow than a legal brief, I was the pioneer. I surprised my family and many of my old high school classmates by becoming a lawyer. In fact, my going to law school encouraged Al Bell, a high school and college classmate, to attend law school and become a successful attorney. He told me he would say to himself, “If Jerry Oliver can do this, I know I can.” Neither of us were classic students in high school nor college, but we turned out to be pretty good lawyers.

We have all witnessed a technological revolution in the legal profession during our career. Remember when we used typewriters and the wonder of watching the select typewriter work its magic? Yeah, me neither. Over the years I’ve gone from ink ribbons and fax machines to navigating more computer programs than I care to admit. It’s like I’ve earned a Ph.D. in “Google-Fu” just to keep up. But

hey, at least I can now send an email without consulting with my kids! From typewriters and physical case files to modern legal research databases and virtual law offices, I have had to adapt continually. Embracing technology has allowed me to stay competitive and serve my clients more efficiently. Now I have to worry about ChatGPT, which I hear may be smarter than me.

We all know the legal profession is notorious for its demanding work schedules. Finding a balance between work and personal life has required careful time management and self-care practices to ensure longevity and well-being. Just think, we use to be able to get away from the practice, but now with iPhones, iPads, and laptops, it is much more challenging. Nothing has made some of my golfing buddies madder than my taking a client call in the middle of playing a round with them. Clients today want lawyers to be part legal guru, part therapist, and part magician. They expect us to solve their problems with the snap of our fingers—and at a discounted hourly rate, of course. Isn’t life just a dream!

Despite the craziness, I’ve had some good times in this wacky profession. I started out practicing law in a small general practice firm in Rocky Mount doing a little bit of everything and learning most of it on my own. I left there and moved to Raleigh to work in the Attorney General’s Office when Rufus Edmisten was the AG. It was there that I really learned how to practice law.

I argued cases before the North Carolina Court of Appeals, the North Carolina Supreme Court, US Federal District Court, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Federal Maritime Commission. I became

counsel to the NC Port Authority, and it was then that I began my lifelong journey in the practice of labor and employment law. The Port Authority had a union, the International Longshoremen's Association, representing their employees and they were continuously having labor problems, such as wildcat strikes over most anything. So how could state employees be represented by a union, have a collective bargaining agreement, and be able to strike? Well, I learned that because the Port Authority operated a railroad inside the terminal, the authority fell under the Railway Labor Act and the employees were exempt from state law. So, I had to learn how to get injunctive relief under that federal law to keep the ports operating, engage in collective bargaining, and deal with the National Mediation Board. One of the most exciting events was handling a strike at the Morehead City Port. I was in Wilmington obtaining affidavits from the port executive director to support a motion to obtain an injunction before Judge Larkins in Trenton. The hearing was scheduled for 10 am. I had a state trooper standing by and he drove me from Wilmington to Trenton in a rainstorm at speeds that would scare most people. I arrived about ten minutes late and had to explain to Judge Larkins why I was late, which he smiled at me as I began explaining. I did get the injunction and did stop the strike.

Remember I said earlier that I like to find a way to be successful. Well, for the Port Authority I found a way for them to disenfranchise the union. It took some imagination and hard work, but through legislative action we were able to carve out the railroad operations from the Port Authority operations. So instead of having several hundred employees working



Outskirts of Lincolnton II / Joseph Cave

for the rail operation, the railroad only needed a few employees to operate the train. The former union employees became state employee dock workers, and the union was gone. This was one of my proudest accomplishments and is why I turned to the practice I love and still enjoy.

As I reflect on my 50-year legal journey, I see a path filled with unexpected challenges, memorable incidents, and above all, resilience in the face of underestimation. The role of the first lawyer in my family has brought unique challenges, but it has also been a source of pride and inspiration. My experiences have taught me that determination and a deep understanding of the law can help individuals

from any background excel in the legal profession. I must be pretty good at it because my peers honored me by recognizing me to be the best in my field in North Carolina's Business Lega Elite in January 2003. I guess I must have fooled them too.

Richmond H. Page

I was born in Lumberton, NC, on October 27, 1947, where I have spent most of my life. I graduated from Campbell University in 1970 with a BS in business administration with emphasis in trust administration, having been the Student Government Association treasurer (1966) and recognized in the Who's Who in

American Colleges and Universities (1966).

In 1973 I graduated from Wake Forest University School of Law, a member of Phi Delta Phi law fraternity, and was sworn in to the bar on September 7, 1973, and shortly thereafter the Federal District Court of Eastern North Carolina. I was blessed to practice with my father as Page & Page for over a year until his death. I had several partners including W. Earl Britt (who left for a better paying job, a federal district judgeship) and finally as Page & Rogers, P.A. until November 2001. I moved across the street to my own building in 1985. In 1997 I was the interim city attorney for Lumberton.

In 2001 I took the position of in-house counsel for Consumers Title Co. and in 2005 created South Atlantic Land Title Inc. (SALTI) serving as president/counsel until June 2015. I then returned to private practice, associated with Page & Rogers, P.A. as Of Counsel, but basically ran a solo practice as a Robeson County public administrator.

Like many other small town lawyers, in the beginning I did the gamut of legal work, including general trial work in the civil, domestic, and criminal courts, appellate appearances before the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and general office practice of business law, wills and probate, collection work, and real estate title work. Throughout the years my practice became more refined to doing an office practice (real estate, estates, and small businesses) and domestic practice. I enjoyed, from time to time, teaching business law and real estate law at Robeson Community College. When the opportunity came, I went into title insurance.

I joined the NC and American Bar

Associations and Academy of Trial Lawyers, and am a past-president of the Robeson County Bar Association and past-president of the 16-B Judicial District Bar where I presided over the Buck Harris annual banquet.

I am an Eagle Scout, BSA with the God and Country Award; member and then chair of the Lumberton Planning Board and Lumberton Board of Adjustments serving for 25 years; was a choir member, Sunday school director, former treasurer and vestry member of my former church; former staff member for Cursillo retreats (spiritual renewal retreats); past treasurer and then president of the Lumberton Cotillion Club; former member of the Board of Presidential Advisors at Campbell University; former member of the Executive Board of the Cape Fear Council of the Boy Scouts of America; former director of the Robeson County Dispute Settlement Center; and former participant of the Lumberton Downtown Association and Lumberton's Main Street America program.

I am the third son of Ellis E. Page and Rebekah M. Page. Ellis Page received his L.L.B. from Wake Forest University in 1933 (later converted to a JD in 1971 while I was in law school, making me a proud son seeing his father receive his diploma). He had a solo legal practice until I joined him in 1973. My lovely wife is Cheryl Lawson Page, retired after 40 years in banking. We have four grown children and six grandchildren. We have recently relocated to the coast in hopes of spending more time with family and friends.

For pleasure I had a private pilot's license and flew for a decade or so, enjoyed bareboat

sailing in the Virgin Islands and on my Hunter 310 sailboat in the Inner Banks and in Southport areas. My wife and I have enjoyed traveling to many beautiful places. I also enjoy reading history, mysteries, and thrillers; however, the best of times are being with family.

John P. Paisley Jr.

I feel that my legal career actually began in my grandparents' country store where, as a child, I listened to my grandparents' passionate debates over politics, daily news, religion, and life. Their exchanges were greatly enjoyed by all visitors to the store. Their expressed differences of opinion taught me to defend my views using facts that were convincing and ethical. I learned to disagree without being disagreeable. These skills have been a major factor in the success of my legal career.

Law has been a good career fit for me. I enjoy challenges, problem solving, and serving others. The practice of law has provided numerous opportunities to engage in all of these activities.

I was encouraged to attend law school by my business law professor, John Patterson, at Elon University, by Judge Benjamin Miles, a graduate of Wake Forest Law School, and by the support of my family.

It is impossible to pick a single proud moment in my career. I have received "not guilty" verdicts with jury trials, including everything from murder, to appealed misdemeanor cases, and multimillion dollar cases in civil matters. I have resolved corporate issues involving large monetary and/or personal issues for clients. I have also been privileged to enable individuals and families to resolve

major personal crises.

My life outside of my law profession includes a marriage of more than 50 years, four successful children, seven grandchildren, and three great grandchildren with whom I enjoy spending time and sharing interests. I have a commercial pilot certificate for Lighter than Air, and have successfully flown in competitions all over the United States. I have served my community in many capacities. I am currently serving as the chair of the Board of County Commissioners.

Elon College, Wake Forest University, my family, and God have blessed me.

E. Fitzgerald Parnell III

Rather than myself, I'd like to talk about the collective experience of the class of 1973.

By any measure those born in the late 1940s and admitted to practice law in North Carolina in 1973 have lived lucky lives. We were born to members of the Greatest Generation, leavened by difficult economic times and tempered by World War II, they earned public benefits not previously provided by government. The GI Bill of Rights subsidized college educations for a generation of veterans, and through VA loan guaranties, they got opportunities for home ownership—and home appreciation—at a level not previously known. Thank you, parents.

But more than simply being born to our parents' generation, we luckily came to practice law just ahead of a tsunami of others similarly intentioned. In 1973 some 431 of us were admitted to the North Carolina State Bar, bringing the total of licensed lawyers to 4,359. State Bar membership dues were \$30 annually.

Today there are 32,128 North Carolina licensed lawyers whose numbers—so far this year—have increased by 472. If my math is accurate, over the past half century the number of licensed lawyers has experienced a 7.3-fold increase. Current State Bar dues are \$300, which—allowing for math errors—is a 10-fold increase over the past 50 years.

The state and national legislatures helped us out, too. Soon after we were admitted, Congress provided a new way for tax and labor lawyers to make an even better living by enacting the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974, and by amending it repeatedly. Thank you Congress for making the law so complicated.

Domestic relations lawyers have the North Carolina legislature to thank for the enactment in 1981 of the Equitable Distribution Act. I'm informed that some family lawyers have quit altogether arguing about child custody, child support, and visitation in favor of equitable distribution cases, to the considerable appreciation of their Retirement Income Security. Other examples appear almost without limit.

For those wishing to know more about the horseshoe we've all carried around for 50 years, I recommend reading *The Gifted Generation* by Dr. David Goldfield, a history professor at UNC Charlotte.

John L. Pinnix

Over the years I've witnessed—and even made—a bit of history. I was in the first class of undergraduate residential men enrolled in the recently rebranded UNC-G. My senior year I became the first male editor-in-chief of *The Carolinian*, the then twice weekly student

newspaper.

After graduation from Wake Forest Law School, I joined a respected Rockingham County general practice firm, completed a master's degree in history, coordinated an unsuccessful US Senate primary race, and served as special counsel for the mentally ill and inebriate at Broughton Hospital. In 1977, Noel Allen, a friend from state student legislature days, and I formed our Raleigh based law firm.

I became point person after we made immigration law a major component of the practice, even though immigration law was not taught in area law schools, and no other Raleigh firm had yet committed an attorney to full time immigration practice.

I am a founding member of the Carolinas Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Starting with seven members, it now has more than 450 attorneys throughout the Carolinas. I was the first national AILA president installed after the 9-11 attacks, and have served on AILA's national Board of Governors for 30 years. I was a founding director of the American Immigration Law Foundation (since renamed the Immigration Policy Council). I taught at three area law schools and was among the first State Bar certified immigration law specialists.

Over almost five decades, Allen & Pinnix, PA has had many incarnations even as it continues to host North Carolina's oldest immigration practice. I have had the privilege of representing clients from virtually every country on earth.

In other times, the State Bar's request that the 50th anniversary honorees share predictions for the profession might have seemed



perfunctory. Not so in 2023. As to my specialty, I have no doubt that scores of upcoming immigration attorneys will continue to demonstrate the highest professional standards as they protect and advance the cause of their clients. Many are already my heroes. But today the entire Bar faces unprecedented challenges. Benjamin Franklin, who historian H.W. Brands called “The First American,” said the founders gave us a Republic, “if we can keep it.” The Bar, above any other entity, has a

unique responsibility in preserving, protecting, and defending our sacred Constitution. This generation of attorneys once again has a rendezvous with destiny.

I’m extremely proud of my wife, Sally, who, like my late mother, was a career public school teacher. *The News & Observer* recognized Sally as “Tar Heel of the Week” for her tireless volunteer efforts on behalf of the National Inclusion Project. More recently she has become an ardent volunteer with the

League of Women Voters. Over the years we have enjoyed extensive travel opportunities and visits to the North Carolina coast. Our children—Jennifer and Will—are flourishing, and we have a talented, amazing 16-year-old granddaughter, Carmen. Charley, the golden-doodle, rounds out our extended household.

Franklin R. Plummer

My father had aspired to be a lawyer, but lack of funds and the onset of World War II prevented him from ever pursuing his career dreams. Through the sacrifice of my parents, I was able to go to college and further my education with a law degree. My sole aspiration was to become a private practitioner.

When my co-applicants and I took the bar exam in 1973, it was a three-day examination and was only offered once a year. I had attended an out-of-state law school, Cumberland at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. 1973 was the first year the Multistate Bar Exam was incorporated into the North Carolina bar exam. One of the three days was devoted to the multistate portion. We applicants really didn’t have much in terms of study material available to use in preparing for the multistate exam. The preparatory course given by Robin Hinson only covered North Carolina law. As I studied for the exam, I felt such enormous stress that I feared I was growing bald as I saw my hair drop onto my Bar Review Course material. The facts that my wife was pregnant with our first child and that I had been commissioned as an infantry 2nd lieutenant through Army ROTC while the Vietnam War was still being waged only added to my worries. Finally, the bar exam was administered in the ballroom of a motel

which was still under construction. In fact, as we took the exam, we could hear jackhammers being used in other parts of the building. To say I was relieved to learn I had passed the bar exam would be a gross understatement.

I began my career as a lawyer in practice in Murphy, following a four month stint at Fort Benning where I received my training in the army's Infantry Officers Basic Course. A couple of years later I moved to Concord and continued my practice there.

It wasn't until I moved to Concord that I ever met or even laid eyes upon a fellow lawyer who was either female or of a racial minority. This welcomed experience increased my awareness of the diverse legal needs of our communities.

My practice of law has essentially been the equivalent of that which formerly would have been practiced by a "general practitioner" in the medical field. I have done everything in the criminal field from minor traffic offenses to trying out before a jury five different murder trials resulting in three acquittals, one life sentence, and the imposition of the death sentence, the last time the gas chamber was used in this state. My practice in the civil field was equally varied, from drafting deeds to trying a wide variety of civil cases. One of my most gratifying experiences was successfully maneuvering to collect over \$70,000 in child support for a destitute mother.

I thoroughly enjoyed my practice and I'm looking forward to continuing my recently begun retirement as an active member of my church and community.

Marvin P. Pope Jr.

I was born in Asheville, NC, on January

26, 1949. My father was a NC highway patrolman, and my mother was an elementary school teacher. Active in the Boy Scouts, I attained the rank of Eagle Scout in 1965. I attended Hickory High School, and I graduated in 1966. Lenoir Rhyne College was the next education experience, and I graduated in 1970. I was fortunate to attend Wake Forest University School of Law, graduating in 1973.

Returning to Asheville with my law school classmate, Ronald C. Brown, also a native of Asheville, we opened the law firm of Pope & Brown engaged in the general practice of law. Ron became district attorney for Buncombe County in 1978, and from that time forward I was a solo practitioner until Governor Hunt appointed me to the district court in January 2001. I served in this capacity until 2010, when appointed to the superior court bench upon the retirement of Hon. Dennis Winner. I was a resident superior court judge until mandatory retirement at the age of 72 in 2021, but soon became an emergency/recalled superior court judge. I continue to serve in this capacity, as well as enjoy my work as a family financial and superior court mediator.

While serving as resident superior court judge we started a superior court Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) in Buncombe County in July 2015. Since 2015 our 50-plus graduates from VTC have had zero recidivism in criminal activity. I continue to preside over VTC and hope to spread the VTC non-adversarial court concept across the state. The Buncombe County VTC has been so successful that a 501(c) (3) foundation was established to help all veterans with special needs.

Blue Ridge Honor Flight (BRHF) has been a special part of my life by honoring WWII,

Korean, and Vietnam veterans with a special one-day round trip to Washington, DC. BRHF was established in 2006 to pay special homage to the sacrifice and service these veterans have given by their military service to protect our freedom. October 14, 2023, will be our 44th flight for these heroes.

My wife, Rebecca B. Knight, retired district court judge, and I currently live in Flag Pond, TN, on an over 100 acre farm where I continue traditional archery, which has been an interest of mine since childhood. Currently I instruct folks in archery and wing shooting with a bow and arrow. I make my own arrows and custom build arrows for others engaged in the art. Gardening has always been a hobby, and the greenhouse makes it a year-round pastime. Horses have also been an interesting part of my past and continue with our three equine geriatric "yard ornaments" that we tend and maintain.

The practice of law and my judicial responsibilities have been a source of pride and accomplishment in my 50-year journey. My dad always said that, "If you enjoy what you do, you'll never work a day in your life." This has truly been my experience.

Thomas W. Prince

I was born on September 1, 1946, in Harnett County, NC. I grew up as the son of a "sharecropper" on a tobacco farm. I attended public schools in Harnett County and graduated from Lafayette High School in 1964, then graduated from Campbell University in 1968. I had the honor to serve as the president of the student body my senior year. Due to the efforts of Dr. Norman Wiggins, president of Campbell University, and Dean Carroll

Weathers, dean of the Wake Forest University School of Law, I was admitted to the Wake Forest Law School in 1968. However, due to the military draft at the time, I elected to withdraw from school and volunteered to enter the US Army in December 1968. After basic training at Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty), I was assigned to serve my two years in the army at the Pentagon in Washington, DC. I was automatically re-admitted to Wake Forest Law School in the fall of 1970. After graduating and being admitted to the Bar in 1973, I began my legal career in Kernersville, NC.

I practiced law in Kernersville from 1973 until September 1989, when I sold my law practice and purchased an interest in a machine shop, Carolina Hydraulics, Inc. In 2003 I became the sole owner of the company. We at Carolina Hydraulics, Inc specialize in the repair and manufacture of hydraulic cylinders. We also repair and sell hydraulic pumps and motors along with hydraulic parts. I am still active in the company, go to work most days unless traveling, and have no plans to retire any time soon.

I am blessed to have two beautiful daughters. Heather, my oldest, works with me at the company. Heidi is a pharmacist who lives and works in Durham. I have five lovable grandchildren and two unbelievable sons-in-law.

Even though I do not actively practice law, I have never regretted the years I spent in law school and the time I did spend in the practice. I do keep my law license current. The legal education that I received at Wake Forest and the experiences that I had in the practice have opened enormous opportunities for me. I have practiced law, built homes for sale, and developed residential subdivisions. I served in

the Kernersville Lions Club, the Kernersville Chamber of Commerce, and other community organizations, and served as the mayor of Kernersville from 1991 to 1997.

The law profession has changed drastically since I was admitted to the Bar. Some changes have been good, some not so good. I will have to let future generations be the judge. However, I am proud to be an active member of the legal profession in North Carolina. In the words of Wake Forest University School of Law Professor Robert E. Lee, “the law is a jealous mistress.”

J. Norfleet Pruden III

I became a lawyer, I believe, through a combination of three factors: destiny, laziness, and luck.

I may have been destined to become a lawyer, since my father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all lawyers. But my father died when I was eight, and the others were then long gone, so I had no role model for the legal profession, only a family sentiment that I should carry on the tradition. I can now appreciate the pressure my son—a fifth-generation lawyer—must have felt.

The laziness factor came into play as I was finishing college and thinking about what was next. The prospect of military service, which I had expected to be in my future, went away as the Vietnam War wound down and my relatively high lottery number insulated me from the draft. Thanks to a college scholarship, my savings for college were available for graduate school, which seemed to me at the time to be a better alternative than entering the work force. I knew I had no aptitude for medical or business school, so I enrolled in

law school and looked forward to three more years of student life. (I quickly learned that laziness was not a trait that led to law school success, and later learned that it was not a good trait for professional success either, so I have endeavored since then to overcome or at least diminish my laziness proclivities.)

I count the luck factor as my primary motivation for studying law, becoming a lawyer, and sticking with it. It was my good fortune to find early on that I enjoyed the law and lawyering, and to find (at least in my own view) that I had some proclivity for it. I enjoyed the intellectual aspects of it, applying abstract principles to real life situations. I enjoyed my interactions with clients (or at least most of them), helping them solve their problems and standing up for them in business negotiations and before governmental authorities. I was lucky to be able to do this while making a good living and developing a profile that opened other doors for professional, church, civic, and charitable involvement and leadership.

But the greatest reward for me, the one I value most looking back over the past 50 years, was the opportunity to be in the company of other lawyers—some of them my law partners, some my mentors or mentees, some my adversaries in transactions or controversies, some fellow participants in bar and other activities, some merely friends or acquaintances who happened to be lawyers. Serving a stint as president of the North Carolina Bar Association was a great honor for me, of course, but where I found its greatest value was in getting to know so many lawyers from all around the state—lawyers in many different practice areas, from big cities and small

towns, in big firms and solo practices, and corporate offices and judicial chambers, of different races, genders, creeds, and political views. I continue to hold that, as a class, lawyers are the best people that God makes!

So, I was mostly lucky to become a lawyer. I was lucky to be part of a great profession made up of great people who for the most part share the same ideals and strive to live up to them. And, frankly, I'm lucky to have a son—and maybe someday a grandchild or two (or four)—who will carry on the family tradition. No pressure though. I'll leave it to luck.

Robert D. Rouse III

First and foremost, I want to honor my beloved wife, Bobbe M. Rouse, who has been at my side through law school (even though it caused her to delay her MA degree), the bar exam, and over 50 years of my practice. Along the way we have been blessed with two daughters, Suzanne Rouse Haley and Deedee Rouse Gasch, who are also UNC alumni, law school grads, and who have taken and passed multiple state bar exams. Our daughter Suzanne is in-house counsel for Wells Fargo, and Deedee, who practices with an insurance defense firm, was recently honored by becoming a new member of the Association of Defense Trial Attorneys. I do not think I can express my feelings about my opportunity to practice law better than Deedee when she wrote an article for the ADTA. The following is what she wrote:

“When I get asked why I went into law, I am immediately transported back to being around ten or 11 years old, growing up in my family home. I would hear noise from the

kitchen in the middle of the night and go downstairs to find my dad at the kitchen table. Papers would be spread all over it: Exhibits marked, depositions flagged and ready to use for impeachment. He would be poring over evidence, usually preparing for trial. Thrilled that he either had company or an audience, even as a young child, I quickly became juror number one, watching my dad put on a mock trial at any hour of the day or night. During high school, he would let me go watch him try cases when I was out of school for the summer. While most of my peers were at the pool or the beach, I was at the Pitt County courthouse learning the rules of evidence and civil procedure. I came into this profession naturally; I never gave it much thought. Doing anything else just seemed like I was postponing the inevitable. Being a lawyer is in my blood—three generations of it, in fact. My grandfather, after a successful career as a trial lawyer, went on to serve as a North Carolina Superior Court judge. His son, my dad, is 76 years old and still practicing law and trying cases.

“There are many lessons you learn watching the man you admire most hone his craft. In addition to observing him while I was growing up, we were law partners for awhile. My dad passed on to me lessons of perseverance, determination, preparation, dedication to doing your best for each and every client, and an absolute refusal to ever back down or give up on something you believe in. My father established an incredible path to being a successful trial lawyer. I know that when I walk into a courtroom, I'm carrying on a tremendous legacy, and I will never stop being thankful for the privilege and opportunity to do just that.”

Jan H. Samet

I went to law school because I thought I could not stand the sight of blood. I practiced law to earn a living. I enjoyed it...mostly. However, after 33 years of practicing law, I was bored.

When I was in law school I worked as a gopher for the solicitor of the 16th Judicial District. I went to superior and district courtrooms in Orange, Alamance, and Chatham Counties. It was exhilarating, both district and superior court, but particularly district court.

Luck or divine intervention, in 2009 there was a vacancy in the district court for Guilford County. I decided to see if I could convince the lawyers of Guilford to recommend me and the governor of NC to appoint me. The efforts were successful, and at the end of January 2010 I took the oath of office during a blinding snowstorm.

I went into the business of being a judge like Alice went down the rabbit hole. Sometimes the law led me, and other times the law trailed behind, but I always tried to act in the interest of justice and fairness. Every morning when I woke up, my first thought was, “I wonder what kind of crazy stuff is going to happen in my court today.” I was rarely disappointed.

In early 2012 I was driving to criminal court in Greensboro when NPR reported that Guilford County had the highest percentage of children who suffered from food insecurity. I was flabbergasted. The question of what I could do to help hungry children in Guilford County was on my mind as I opened criminal court. The first cases I heard were attorneys representing indigent defendants. One of the indigent defendants said that he needed at

least 90 days to pay the \$200 court costs, and like Saul on the way to Damascus, I had a revelation. From that point on I waived the court costs for all indigent defendants.

I did not tell anyone about my decision. The Clerk's Office in Guilford County noticed, however, and within two weeks of my decision every courtroom I entered in Guilford County had forms for the waiver of costs.

By 2014, others had noticed, and I got a call from the AOC. We had a frank discussion. The legislature had passed a law requiring every courtroom clerk in every courtroom in NC to record and report the names of judges who waived court costs and how many times the judge waived court costs in that session.

In 2017 the results were released. I was pleased that I was second in my efforts to thin debtors prison population. I continued my practice even as a retired emergency judge. Did it make any difference? Probably not to anyone except to the defendants who had \$200 less in obligations to the state. I hoped that the savings would be put to buy food for their children.

When I took the oath of office, I made a personal pledge to the citizens of NC to treat everyone in my court with the respect and dignity all people are due. I tried.

Michael A. Schlosser

Upon graduation from law school, I returned to my hometown of Greensboro and was hired in 1974 as an assistant district attorney for Guilford County. After serving in that capacity for five years, with the urging of law enforcement, court observers, and many oth-

ers who wanted an even-handed prosecution, I resigned and ran against the incumbent district attorney and won.

Shortly after taking office, Chief Justice Branch of the North Carolina Supreme Court summoned me to his office to discuss his concern for "certain" judicial practices in Guilford County. While the DA for Guilford County, several distinctive judicial matters and trials occurred.

One of the first significant matters that I dealt with was a practice in district court known as "Judgment Day." This procedure was put in place, with the approval of the DA, for youthful offenders of minor charges to perform community service, which resulted in the dismissal of their cases. One district court judge abused and morphed the program by placing adults—without the DA's consent—charged with DWI, repeat DWIs, and other serious charges into the program that would, likewise, result in dismissals. To halt this practice by the judge, I filed the common law Writ of Prohibition with the North Carolina Supreme Court. *In the Matter of Williams*, 301 N.C. 224, 270 S.E. 2d 409 (1980). The Court found that he "...failed to follow applicable statutes, rules, customs, or practices, and the actions taken by him were not within the judge's inherent or discretionary powers." This practice ceased immediately.

Another consequential event, at the request of law enforcement, involved my filing of a request to the SBI to begin an investigation of a Guilford County Superior Court judge for alleged wrongdoing. The inquiry became statewide, and the NC Attorney General's Office assumed the year-long investigation. *In Re Kivett*, 309 S.E. 2nd 442 (1983). The

Supreme Court found that "...We hold the respondent's conduct constituted willful misconduct in office and conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice." Both the Judicial Standards Commission, and upon appeal, the Supreme Court, found that the only appropriate action should be the removal of the judge from office.

The most published case during my term as district attorney occurred when the Communist Worker's Party (CWP) challenged the Ku Klux Klan and Neo Nazi Party members to come to Greensboro and witness a "Death to the Klan" rally on November 3, 1979. They came. I've described this fateful event as "...The three salient hate groups of the western hemisphere gathered in an area the size of a basketball court, all armed. Bloodshed was inevitable..." Five CWP members were killed.

Ten members of the KKK and Nazi groups were arrested. And the trial of the first five defendants lasted for five months, the longest trial in North Carolina history. The CWP survivors/witnesses refused to testify for the state in the murder trial of their comrades, contending that I and other governmental officials conspired with the Klan/Nazi's in orchestrating the shootout. Contemporaneously, a den of Nazi's in the western part of the state were recorded by an FBI informant in discussions to kill me. The first five defendants were acquitted of all charges, and the remaining charges against the other defendants were dismissed.

The trial was widely covered by local and national media, as well as international agencies such as Radio Free Europe.

Upon completion of my four-year term as

district attorney, I entered private practice and opened my own office. The law firm grew quickly and soon had five attorneys on staff. I remained active in the practice until 2018, when I was placed on inactive disability for medical complications resulting from exposure to Agent Orange during my time served in the Vietnam War.

Nancy Russell Shaw

North Carolina and the law have been central to my entire adult life. I came to North Carolina in 1966 as a 17-year-old undergraduate at Duke University and never left. Growing up in Hagerstown, Maryland, the daughter of a physician, Dr. Robert M. Russell, and a gifted homemaker and active participant in the community, Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Russell, I entered college in Durham with the intention of eventually returning to Maryland and the Washington area. However, I fell in love with Duke and Durham and a rather charming Duke medical student, and so was easily convinced to stay at Duke for law school, graduating in 1973.

Both Durham, where I practiced law as a partner at Powe, Porter, and Alphin, and Charlotte, where we have lived for over 35 years, have been home to us in North Carolina. In Charlotte I was a partner at Moore and Van Allen before joining Poyner and Spruill, both fine firms where I enjoyed many years of interesting legal work. However, I was given the opportunity by Duke Law School to expand my work to include not only the pleasure of helping clients, but also the fun of teaching law students for nearly 25 years in my areas of interest: trusts and estates, federal estate and gift

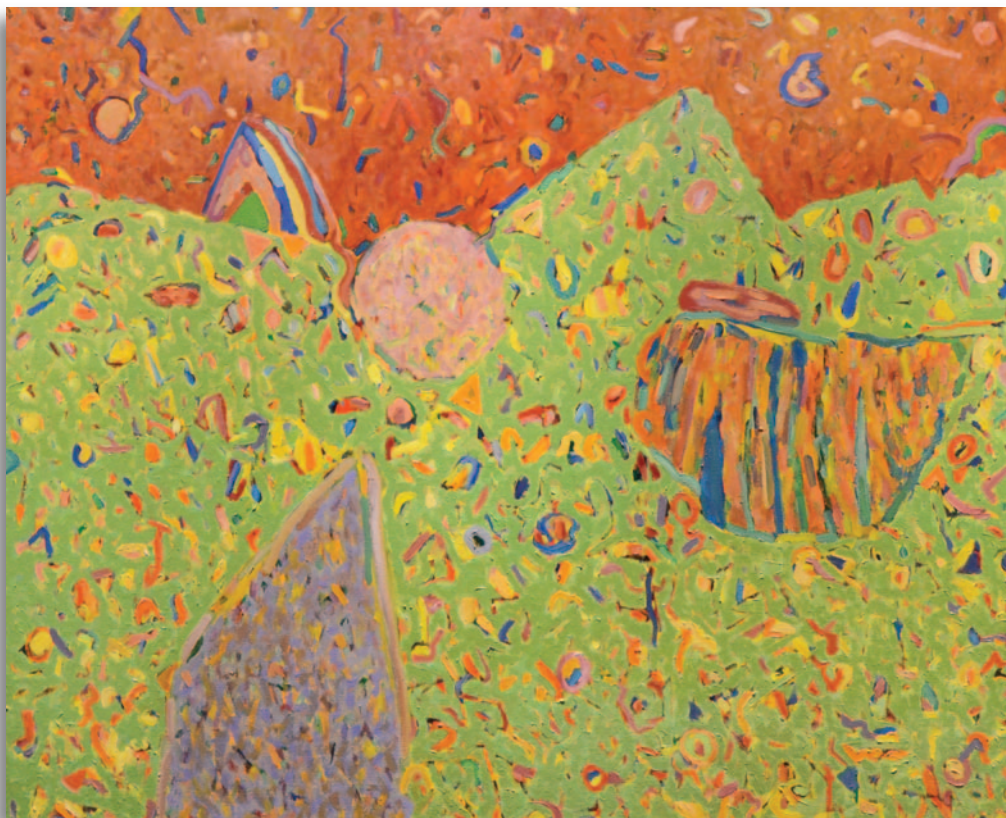
taxation, estate planning and wealth transfer, and international taxation.

Accommodating my teaching schedule and the complexity of commuting several days each week, I shifted my practice format to my personal shingle, the Law Offices of Nancy Russell Shaw, which was a particularly happy result for me, as it afforded me the luxury of maintaining the practice of law while also teaching. The intellectual discipline of the law certainly first attracted me to the profession and sustained that attraction over the decades, but my clients, as people and not just legal projects, have been equally impor-

tant to me over the years.

Of course, the members of my family have always been the supporting pillars of my life. My husband, Charlotte physician, Dr. Dale R. Shaw, and our two children, Elizabeth and Robert, and their assorted interests and activities have shaped and continue to fashion my life. Dale came to Charlotte from the Duke medical faculty to join a practice in radiology. We raised our children in Charlotte. Both of them graduated from Charlotte Country Day and, unsurprisingly, Duke.

Our daughter Elizabeth Shaw Avitable



Tartide du Paris/Marvin Salzman

followed me to the law, also graduating from Duke Law School. She now lives outside of Washington, DC, in Arlington, Virginia, with her husband, David Avitable, another attorney, and our granddaughter. This means many visits to DC to share in their interesting lives there. Our son, Robert Russell Shaw, lives in Charlotte and is an investment consultant at boutique firm, Carolinas Investment Consulting. We are so pleased to have him close at hand.

Over the decades we have both been very active in Duke alumni activities and organizations as well as community organizations. And now, at this stage of life, we hope to find time for more adventures in travel and continued involvement in community. I am particularly interested at this moment in time in the upcoming 250th celebration of our nation's founding. Thus, I am turning increased attention to my chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and involvement in acknowledgment and celebration of this momentous patriotic anniversary.

William Frank Slawter

I was born in Burlington, NC, in 1945. At the age of three, I moved to Greensboro, where I lived with my parents and five siblings through high school, except for four years in Charlotte during elementary school. I graduated from Greensboro Grimsley High School in 1964. I earned my AB in English from UNC in 1968. Following two years in the US Army, I earned my JD from UNC School of Law in 1973.

I live in Asheville with my wife Carolyn. We will celebrate our 50th anniversary in

2024. We have two sons, William Jr and Andrew, both of whom live in the Triangle area with their families, including our four grandchildren. Andrew is a 2006 graduate of UNC School of Law and practices law in Pittsboro with Robinson Bradshaw Slawter & Brainer LLP, focusing on commercial real estate transactions.

I engaged in private law practice in Asheville from 1973 until retiring in 2013, at times as a solo practitioner and most years in a small firm with two to four lawyers. I practiced for more than 20 years in partnership with my 1973 UNC School of Law classmate Martin L. Nesbitt Jr., who died in 2014. I had a general civil practice focusing on real estate transactions, civil litigation, and local government law. From 1983-1996 I served as city attorney for Asheville on a contract/retainer basis. From 1996 until retirement, I continued to represent the city of Asheville in multiple areas of civil litigation and real estate transactions. From 1996 until retirement, I also occasionally represented other local governmental entities on an ad hoc basis, including Buncombe County and smaller municipalities. I served as president of the 28th Judicial District (Buncombe County) Bar in 1983-84.

Following retirement, I began enrolling in writing classes at UNC-Asheville with a goal of completing a book that I had long-contemplated writing. In 2022, Atmosphere Press published my book, *Sit-Ins, Drive-Ins and Uncle Sam*, a memoir-based history of the 1960s. Centered in Greensboro, my book focuses on the civil rights revolution, the turmoil of the Vietnam draft, and the joy of fast cars and drive-ins that define that decade. It is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and

other national and independent bookstores.

Carolyn and I enjoy spending time with our grandchildren and time at the beach. We especially enjoy the times when we can combine those pleasures. We enjoy other occasional travel, although that was curtailed through the COVID years. Hopefully, the worst of that long nightmare is now behind us and it will be clear sailing ahead.

When I began practicing law in Asheville in 1973, I soon got to know virtually every lawyer in town and many across Western North Carolina. I personally knew the majority of them and was well aware of the reputations of the rest. Most of us got along with each other in an arena of competition that was exemplified by hard-fought battles in the courtroom and a brotherhood of camaraderie outside the courtroom. It didn't take long to figure out whose word meant something. Today's practice of law seems to be much more about grinding out a work product and much less about personal relationships. The sheer numbers of new lawyers within the bar, combined with the evolution of internet-based lawyering, means that too many lawyers don't really know each other, even though they practice in the same judicial district. Even worse, they may never even really get to know their own clients. I don't know if that trend can be reversed, but I see that as a huge loss and an impediment to the professionalism that once epitomized our profession.

David B. Smith

My aspiration to become an attorney began in the early '60s, watching *Perry Mason* single handily successfully defend his clients against criminal charges and defeating the assets of the

state District Attorney's Office. Even in the fictional TV setting, there was always a mutual respect and courtesy between Mason and DA Hamilton Burger.

In 1966 I graduated from James B. Dudley High School in Greensboro, NC, and began undergraduate studies in business administration at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro. I participated in social justice demonstrations in Greensboro during the early '60s as well as four years in army ROTC, being commissioned a second lieutenant-Military Police.

In 1970 I graduated from North Carolina A&T State University with a BS in business administration and entered law school at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. There were five first year law students who looked like me. My high school and undergraduate educational experience prepared me for the rigors of law school academics, and I adjusted to the social and personal dynamics of the university and marriage. In June of 1973 I graduated from law school, with the late LeRoy Upperman the only other graduate who looked like me.

In November 1973, after passing the North Carolina bar examination and completing the MP Basic Officer course at Fort Gordon, GA, I began the practice of law at the then Greensboro Legal Aid Foundation as a staff attorney handling civil litigation for low income individuals. In January 1975 I moved to the Guilford County District Attorney's Office as an assistant district attorney in district and superior court under the late E. Raymond Alexander Jr. The state court experience provided extensive trial practice in district and superior court before judges and

juries. From February 1978 to May 1996, I was an assistant United States attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina, based in Greensboro, NC, representing the United States of America in federal criminal litigation at the trial and appellate level, under the Honorables Henry "Mickey" Michaux, Kenneth W. McAllister, and Robert Edmonds. During that tenure, I received the distinction of senior litigation counsel for the Middle District of North Carolina, and other awards and recognitions. Since February 1997 I have been in solo private practice in Greensboro, in the primary area of state and federal criminal defense representation.

My 50-year legal experience has been the constant dedication of providing the best and most effective representation for the client, regardless of which side of the courtroom I was on. Both clients, adversaries, witnesses, court personnel, and all others I have encountered over the course of my career are entitled to the same respect and courtesy exhibited between the fictional characters of Perry Mason and Hamilton Burger. Unfortunately, partisan politics are infecting the legal profession and many judicial decisions to the detriment of the rule of law, established legal precedent, and respect of legal authorities by attorneys and the public. Without a return to the fundamental principles of civility and the basic concepts of American jurisprudence, the next 50 years do not appear positive for the practice of law.

James W. Swindell

My proudest moment in the practice of law occurred in September 1973 in the superior court of Robeson County in Lumberton,

North Carolina, with my wife Annie and our first son James standing by my side when I was sworn in as a lawyer in the state of North Carolina.

As far as I know I am the first Black lawyer in Beaufort County, North Carolina. In 1961 I graduated from S. W. Snowden Colored High School in Aurora, North Carolina. At the conclusion of an oratorical contest in May 1961 among the Colored senior students in Beaufort County held at P. S. Jones Colored School in Washington, North Carolina, a teacher at P. S. Jones came up to me as I was walking off the stage and gave me these challenging words: "Son, you got the makings to be a lawyer." I will forever thank her for those encouraging words.

The late Franklin R. De Witt was the first Black lawyer I met. Frank was my mentor, my friend, and the best man in my wedding. He told me I would never regret becoming a lawyer. I am certain Frank is in heaven now representing lawyers trying to get in. Professor Dawson from Texas taught me business law at the University of Maryland at College Park. I asked him if I should go to law school in the state I want to practice in. He told me to go to the best law school I can get in. I graduated from Cornell University. I asked him how do you know when to stop cross-examining a witness and he replied, "When you strike oil you stop drilling."

During my 50 years in the law profession I earned a master of divinity in theology from Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York; pastored two churches in North Carolina; taught business, real property, and insurance law in junior and community colleges; and practiced civil and criminal

law in state and federal courts in South Carolina and North Carolina.

I experienced lawyer burnout and stopped practicing law from October 26, 1996, through August 1, 2003, during which time I was employed by Costal Transport, Inc. as an over-the-road truck driver.

My most satisfying court victory occurred in saving German Jermaine Grace's life, who at the age of 19 was convicted by a superior court jury in High Point of first degree murder and armed robbery after nearly 13 hours of deliberation. The jury was then required to decide whether German should receive the penalty of death or life in prison. The jury returned a verdict of life in prison.

The extension of my practice of law will be to get published my completed manuscript titled *The Judicial Voyage of the American Negroes From Property to Personhood (1792 - 1896)*. This book can be used as a guiding light for instructors to use in helping their students find the areas of law they may choose as a legal profession. This book addresses the disciplines of business, economics, psychology, sociology, and politics.

D. Keith Teague

My professional career has been a gateway into a 50-year career of helping people. I was fortunate enough to be in the last class admitted to Wake Forest School of Law by Dean

Carrol Weathers. When I went in for my interview, I distinctly recall his steely blue eyes as he ate the lunch his granddaughter had brought to his office. Our time was spent with him asking and me answering mostly ethical questions. At the end of the conversation, he told me I had been accepted. I was to return to Elon, finish out my senior year, score well on the LSAT, and he would see me the following year.

These past 53 years included the law school experience with the names of Weathers, Gort, Webster, Lee, Sizemore, Lauerman, and Corbett; an eight-year service in the DA's Office of the First Judicial District, and the opening of a private practice 1981.

My legacy, however, will be accomplished in the time spent being a husband and father and not as a lawyer or advocate. Judge me by my efforts as a husband of 50 years, a home school dad of three sons and a daughter, a member of a community and a desire to never disappoint Dean Weathers' standard of professionalism. As Robert E. Lee would often say, "The law is a jealous mistress." Balancing life at home and a legal career has been no easy task and it is not for the faint of heart. But you ask, would I do it again?

You betcha! Being a trial lawyer, an advocate, and a counselor is a privilege and one that has been extremely gratifying.

Brian H. Tenney

I was the first person in my family to live in North Carolina. My father grew up in San Francisco and my mother is from Washington, DC. My parents met in the summer of 1943 in DC and married in September 1944 just before my father shipped

Atlantic Beach V/Robert Irwin



out with the US Army's 8th Armored Division to Europe. He fought in Northern Germany until World War II ended. He also fought in the Korean War from 1950 to 1951. My father was a career US Army officer, and he graduated from West Point Military Academy in 1943. I grew up on army posts across the United States and West Germany. I was born in Denver, Colorado. I am the second oldest of five boys. I came to Raleigh in 1966 to attend NC State University. I met my future wife, Susan I. Allen, in 1969. She is from Raleigh. Her father was James A. Allen, a CPA with A. T. Allen & Company.

I graduated from NC State University in 1970 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army Reserves. The army gave me a deferment from active duty to attend law school. I attended Wake Forest University's law school, graduating in 1973. Susan and I married after my first year of law school. Upon graduation I was transferred from the infantry branch to the Judge Advocate General Corps (JAG Corps). I was stationed in Aschaffenburg, West Germany, for three years. My wife and I returned to Raleigh in October 1976. I was honorably discharged from the US Army and began a general practice of law in Raleigh, sharing office space with Paul Carruth.

I have two sons, Walter D. Tenney and Travis N. Tenney. Both are graduates of NC State University. Walter also graduated from the New England School of Law, and he and I practice law together in Raleigh in our practice known as Tenney & Tenney, LLP. Travis received his accounting master's degree from NC State, is a CPA, and works for Solar Winds in Austin, TX. I have three

grandchildren.

My practice is now limited to wills, trust, and estates. I was a defense counsel and information officer, have reviewed contracts for a Defense Supply Agency, and was a tax officer, amongst other duties, while I served in the JAG Corps. For the first 20-plus years of my practice here in Raleigh I was a criminal defense attorney, dealing with contracts and real estate closings, forming small business corporations, and handling personal injury cases. My son Walter handles the civil litigation, real estate closings, commercial closings, buy and sell agreements, forming corporations and LLC's, etc. in our law practice. My wife works as a real estate broker and has her own company. We have busy professional lives, but we try to slip away to our lake house at Kerr Lake whenever possible.

C. Everett Thompson II

I was born to G. Ward Thompson and Kathryn King Thompson on October 22, 1946, in Elizabeth City, NC. I was named after my grandfather, Judge C. Everett Thompson, who was a great lawyer and served as superior court judge in Elizabeth City for over 12 years before his death. Unfortunately, he was murdered at his home shortly after my birth. My family and I lived in Chapel Hill, NC, and Rock Hill, SC, before moving to Winston-Salem, where I attended R.J. Reynolds High School and graduated in 1964. I spent the next four years at UNC Chapel Hill and graduated in 1968. During the summers I worked at the Seafare Restaurant in Nags Head, NC. After graduation, I joined the United States Navy and became an officer for a short period of time. I

was released from the navy with an honorable discharge. Shortly after my father's suggestion to go to law school, I applied and was admitted to Wake Forest School of Law in Winston-Salem where my parents were living and my father was running a hotel downtown.

While in law school, I continued to spend my summers at the restaurant in Nags Head, where I met my wife. I was married to Dru Davenport on December 19, 1971, at her parent's home in Columbia, NC. Shortly after I graduated from Wake Forest School of Law in 1973, my wife and I moved to Elizabeth City, where I started my career as an attorney and our family. We have two children. Our son, Charles Everett Thompson III (Charley) and his wife Tiffany live in Apex, and our daughter, Morgan Thompson Bullock and her husband, Bill, live in Greensboro. They have three sons, Norris, Ward, and Huck.

I started my career practicing law with Russell E. Twiford. I have practiced law in all forms including criminal and civil matters in state and federal cases. I have been a member of the NC State Bar, NC Bar Association, NC Advocates of Justice, and American Association of Justice. I have also been admitted to practice law in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court. After practicing with Russell Twiford and the other members of his firm, I joined a practice with John Trimpi and Tom Nash. I opened my own firm in 1990 in Elizabeth City. In 2012, David Pureza joined me as a law partner. We currently practice together in Elizabeth City at Thompson & Pureza, PA.

I also served as the councilor for the First Judicial District in the State Bar Council for nine years and retired from that position in

2022. Upon my retirement from the State Bar Council, I commented that I am from the First Judicial District, not only do our members refer to our district as just the First Judicial District, but also as the Number *One* District (just a joke).

James W. Thompson III

It would be impossible to write one page of memories over my 50 years of practicing law, but I should first say why I went to law school. There is one initial reason I entered the profession—the Johnson O’Connor Research Foundation, which is nonprofit scientific research and educational organization committed to studying human abilities and providing people with a knowledge of their aptitudes that will help them derive more satisfaction from their lives by discovering their natural potential. As a not-so-good undergraduate student at UNC in 1965, I was, well, clueless in career choices, and my grades reflected that. Through family friends, it was suggested that I go to Johnson O’Connor in Philadelphia for a series of testing, where they had sent their own son several years earlier. I had no idea what that was or what they did. After going through their program over a long weekend, taking all sorts of tests (fortunately none of which were academic), I met for the final interview with the local director. The objective of the program, he said, was to determine what career I would be happiest in at age 40, considering my personality, interests, proclivities, and inherent abilities. He said that in my case the results were very clear...I was suited in every way to be a lawyer. I had never considered law, but I began to think about it.

After four years in the navy, getting married (having children), and taking correspondence courses to get back into school, I was accepted into UNC beginning in 1970. I had no problem with grades in law school, and passed the bar exam the first time in 1973, thanks in part, I believe, to getting “re-oriented” at Johnson O’Connor. The rest is history. In reflection, I can honestly say that I’ve been very happy practicing law, and while there were many challenges along the way, I couldn’t have chosen any profession in which I would have derived more personal satisfaction. In the first 20 or so years, I did it all including trials and appeals in state and federal court, involving the US Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. My proudest moment in trial practice was winning a civil rights case for my Black client who had been denied his right to complete a purchase contract on a new house. The last 30 years or so were in solo practice, primarily in real property law issues and transactions. Being a solo guy, I could do exactly what I wanted to do. I credit my outstanding staff during those latter years in making my practice so enjoyable, all of whom were with me for many, many years. I think I paid them well, and never had to dismiss anyone. I honestly tried to help folks, especially folks who were in need and had limited financial resources—and there were many. I took pleasure in providing services without charge to many elderly folks. I would even go to their houses on appropriate occasions. That must have gotten around though because I started getting a lot of phone calls.

My concern for the profession going forward is that it is becoming too impersonal. By

that I mean it seems possible now, through cyber space, gadgets, and so forth, to represent a client you’ve never seen or even spoken to. I would encourage every new lawyer to guard against doing that, otherwise your experience will be reduced to nothing but vacuous clicks on a keyboard and flickers on a computer screen. Get involved personally with your client; find out more about them than simply what they want you to do; take your eyes off the money you may earn; put the intangible reward in your heart of making life a little better for someone, and you will not be one of so many lawyers who encounter “burnout” midway of their careers.

John P. Van Zandt III

After graduating from Wake Forest Law School in 1973 with an ROTC commission and an army obligation, I elected to serve my country as an army judge advocate general with the 1st Armored Division in Nuremburg, Germany. I spent three years handling (both prosecuting and defending) court martials, which was at the time the busiest court martial jurisdiction in the world.

I returned to Winston-Salem with my wife Joy and new daughter Kimberly in 1976 (John IV was born in 1978) and worked/partnered with the small firm of Frye, Booth & Porter for seven years doing a general practice, and then in 1984/1985 partnered with my classmate, Brandt Deal, and have been with Brandt continuously since that time. In 1989 Brandt and I entered into a partnership with Wake Forest icon Wes Hatfield, George Mountcastle, and John Mann, and that practice continues

today, even after the death of Wes and George.

While I would characterize my law practice as a general practice, I focused on litigation, and in my later years have practiced in the family law arena.

One of my proudest moments was having former Senator Sam Ervin offer his sincere compliments to a jury argument I just completed in Morganton in the mid-1980s. I believe that all attorneys licensed in 1973 received a congratulatory letter from him, and he was certainly a fine gentleman.

I served Wake Forest University School of Law as a trial clinic supervisor for many years, and have told the 50-plus students I had under my tutelage that I never had a day in my career that I dreaded coming to work.

I cannot believe that 50 years have flown by.

Michael E. Weddington

While I was on active duty in the US Navy from 1966 to 1970, I made the decision to pursue law school. Prior to my joining the navy, I had given some fleeting thought to law school. However, once I had begun active navy service, that thought was relegated to the back of my mind as I was concentrating on being a professional sea-going naval officer. I had a standing offer to return to my former employment with Wachovia Bank & Trust Co. in Raleigh, where I began my adult work life after graduating from the University of Florida in 1963, but in discussion with my wife, Nancy, as my active duty navy commitment was winding down, we concluded it was “now or never” for law school. So, in the fall

of 1970, with my wife and new baby daughter, I moved to Durham and began law school at Duke University. The following three years passed quickly, and I graduated from Duke in the spring of 1973, passed the bar exam, and accepted an offer to join the Smith Anderson law firm in Raleigh. I happily spent the next 46 years with that great law firm, retiring in 2019. Concurrent with my law practice, I remained in the active naval reserve and ultimately retired from the navy in 2000 with the rank of commander.

In the course of my legal career I spent most of my time and effort in three areas of practice: commercial litigation in state and federal trial courts, appellate litigation in the state and federal appellate courts, and administrative litigation before state professional licensing and regulatory authorities. I also was involved in trademark prosecution and litigation. In addition to these practice areas, during the second half of my legal career I became certified as a mediator and mediated cases in NC Superior Court and in US District Court. Additionally, I became an arbitrator for FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority) for securities industry disputes.

I found the practice of law to be consistently challenging, fascinating, and satisfying. There were always new things to learn, new skills to master, and good people with whom to work. I also enjoyed working for the betterment of the profession, serving at various times as chair of the State Bar Board of Legal Specialization; chair of the NC Bar Association Administration of Justice Committee; chair of the Young Lawyers Division of the Wake County Bar

Association; and a member of the Wake County Bar Board of Directors.

A huge challenge for the legal profession going forward is how to reasonably integrate artificial intelligence into legal work. As that technology develops and matures, the legal profession will have to adapt its “best practices” accordingly.

In closing, I offer my profound thanks to my wife and family for tolerating the many times that “Lady Law” had to take precedence in my life; and to my former law partners for the wisdom they generously shared with me; and to the many lawyers throughout the state with whom I have been privileged to work.

Cecil L. Whitley

I was born and reared in Union County, North Carolina. We lived in a log house on a tenant farm raising and picking cotton, corn, wheat, and other crops. One of the highlights of my childhood was when we obtained electricity and running water when I was 16 years old. Milking cows in the dark was a challenge. Secondary school was during the summer and winter—spring and fall was planting and harvest time.

I graduated from Forest Hills High School, Wingate Junior College, Catawba College, and attended graduate school at Appalachian State University. I was drafted into the army and had the honor and privilege of serving our country. I attended Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. I served one year at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. I served as a platoon leader and company commander; infantry with the 1st Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne

Division. Search and destroy missions and combat were a way of life for me and my men for one year (1969) in Vietnam and Cambodia. I was honored to receive three Bronze Stars (Oak Leaf Cluster), a Silver Star, Combat Infantry Badge, and numerous other medals. Leading young men in combat was the most challenging experience in my life. I literally had their lives in the palm of my hand. Thanks be to God!

After three years of military service, I went to law school at Wake Forest University (1973). Dean Weathers and the other great law professors had a profound impact on my life.

I started my practice of law in Salisbury, North Carolina, and have been blessed in so many ways. The Rowan County Bar has been blessed to have so many outstanding lawyers, a number who have been judges. Five of my partners have or are currently serving in that capacity including The Honorable Chief District Court Judge Robert L. Warren (deceased); The Honorable Mary Mac Pope, who was one of the first female superior court judges in North Carolina (deceased) and paved the way for the many ladies we have in our profession today; The Honorable James Dooley; our new Superior Court Judge Michael Adkins; and new District Court Judge Chris Sease. One of my current partners, Darrin D. Jordan, is the current immediate past-president of the North Carolina State Bar. Darrin continues to be the longest serving partner in our firm with me. Another is Robert Inge who was recognized on September 19, 2022, by being elected to “The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers” (AAML). Two other current mem-

bers of the firm are Marlowe Rary and Evan Hiatt. They continue to carry on the principles and values that our firm has exemplified and provided the last 50 years. We are very, very proud of our *pro bono* program for all military veterans and those currently serving.

My family and I are currently entering our 45th year with our youth athletic program. We prepare young men and women for further education (college) and values for the rest of their lives. Dean Weathers told us many times that honesty, integrity, knowledge of the law, service to the profession and to the community, and always keeping God first and foremost in our hearts were the most significant traits of a lawyer. I have tried my very best to live up to those worthy attributes.

I have been honored and humbled to receive the following:

(1) 2016 – The John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award given by the North Carolina State Bar

(2) 2022 – The Citizen Lawyer Award given by the North Carolina State Bar

(3) 2023 – The Chief Justice’s Professional Certificate Award

I would be remiss if I did not mention two other former partners, namely: Attorney Janet Ward Black and Attorney Mona Lisa Wallace; and also former District Attorney William “Bill” Kenerly, a Purple Heart marine veteran; and Chief District Court Judge Charlie Brown. They all have helped to mold me into the member of our profession I try to be.

Finally, none of the above would have been possible without the love and support of my wife, Nan, of 49-plus years, our children: our daughter, Adrian Gantt, a captain with

the Salisbury Fire Department and head of our youth program and her husband, Jim Gantt, Catawba College and Rowan Legion baseball head coach; our son, Alex, a double doctor – radiation oncology – and his wife, Dr. Heather Whitley, professor of pharmacy at Auburn University; and our four grandchildren, Blakely, Reese, Colin, and Lane who are on the rise. What a great life. Thanks to God above!

PS: I HAVE NEVER HAD A JOB! BEING A LAWYER IS TOTALLY AWESOME!

Rob Wilder Jr.

About the same time that I decided I didn’t want to go to medical school, I got draft number 32 in the draft lottery. My family pushed the idea of joining a profession, and I discovered that I could get a deferment by joining the JAG Corps, so law school it was.

After leaving the navy, I joined the US Attorney’s Office in Charlotte. There I quickly learned that I didn’t know much about being a trial lawyer as well as life in general. Luckily, we had good training and supervision, mostly from two cosmically smart legal assistants, Judy Barbee and Jane Sechrest. It was definitely the school of tough love, but I managed to persevere under their tutelage and left to practice criminal law with the great Pat Cooke in Gastonia with some of my ego and most of my reputation intact.

However, much I thought that the US Attorney’s Office was eye opening, criminal and domestic law in Gastonia in the late 70s was mind blowing. I got enough material for at least two movies and five novels during

my days with Mr. Cooke. I was lucky enough to get to be second chair with him on a number of murder cases, and he even let me handle several on my own. Despite the excitement at the Cooke firm, it was a little too much, and I joined my friends Graham Mullen and Lang Cooper at Mullen Holland & Cooper, where I got to learn health care law and civil litigation for several decades. After Graham left for the federal bench, I thought I needed a larger platform and left to join several large firms, where I stayed until recently. Then I joined my son, Beau, and my long-time friend, Annemarie Pantazis, and started a very small litigation firm.

I've enjoyed the entire ride and am grateful to have been exposed to so many wonderful lawyers and judges along the way. I was fortunate to have a great legal assistant, Debbie Young, for several decades. I'm still practicing full time and tried a two-week jury trial several weeks ago.

The two main things I've noticed by way of change in the practice are technology and the sheer number of lawyers. When I joined Mr. Cooke, we had a memory typewriter for things like separation agreements. The secretaries still often used carbon paper, and it was routine to make changes to important documents by ballpoint pen at the courthouse (with everyone initialing the changes). Now, if the internet goes out, we just close the office. Also, back in the early days of my career, I thought I had a pretty good handle on the trial bar's members in this part of the state. Now, in every new case I'm almost always meeting someone for the first time. I'm glad for the region's prosperity which

has allowed this type of growth, but I believe it has greatly diminished the collegiality and collaborative spirit I used to see.

I don't have a legitimate basis for predicting the future of the legal profession. I feel sure that in some way artificial intelligence will have an effect, but it's early enough in its development that it's hard to say what the changes will be. I suspect that it won't be the disaster that some pundits have predicted, and I hope it can make legal research and writing better and easier.

I have noticed that there seems to be a generational preference not to try cases to a jury. I hope that trend abates and that when my son is writing his 50th anniversary essay, the jury system will still be strong.

Robert Pate Williams

My parents, the schools, and church taught me to love my neighbors as myself and show respect to every human. I graduated toward the top of my class in high school. I worked summers and Christmas holidays at my father's tire dealership that sold bikes, TVs, and appliances.

I gained a partial scholarship to High Point University and graduated in 1970. I was speaker of the Student Legislature there and earned various honors. In 1973 I graduated from UNC law school, worked for UNC-Chapel Hill in the Business and Finance Division as a lawyer, and practiced law in Asheboro many years prior to retirement. In addition to drafting wills, searching land titles, filing civil suits, and preparing legal documents, I was appointed by judges to represent indigents in criminal courts. Representing indigents, I learned how

poverty, lack of education, or illness can limit someone's earning ability and life. I learned everyone had something to teach me. We should educate children well; it is less expensive to educate children than to imprison poorly educated ones later in life.

My son, Matt, graduated from Asheboro High School, Guilford College, and American's University's Washington College of Law. He is an intellectual property lawyer in DC. My oldest stepson graduated from Asheboro High School, earned an Eagle Scout Award, attended community colleges, and is a firefighter in High Point. My youngest stepson played high school football, and graduated from Asheboro High School and Wake Forest University. He is a banker in Winston-Salem. My wife taught at Guy B. Teachey Elementary School and later retired as the head technology teacher and leader of the media specialists in the Asheboro city schools.

I have served many community groups as committee chair, officer, or board member. At different times, these groups included Jaycees, Kiwanis, United Way, Boy Scouts, The Chamber of Commerce, Chapel Hill Drug Treatment Association, the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church of Asheboro, Randolph Senior Adults Association, Helpline suicide-prevention ministry, the Randolph Mental Health Association, and the Deacon Board of First Baptist Church in Asheboro. I was also a Gideon. While I was separated and before I was re-married, I was also an officer of Parents without Partners and of Positive Singles Connection, a ministry of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in

High Point. My father taught me an individual can contribute best by serving with others and sharing good ideas without seeking credit.

Parents want what is best for their children. All children deserve access to high-quality educations that prepare them for real life and equips them with tools for success. Our schools should provide what it takes for children to learn and to grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually. A strong public education system has been a core value in our country for centuries. It has provided many to gateways of success. Quality-trained, caring teachers and personnel provide that gateway. Students who are learners and special-needs students deserve good educations, too.

I closed my law office when I became ill. I had a benign (non-cancerous) brain tumor requiring an operation at Wake-Forest Baptist Hospital. I was there three months through Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. I twice had to learn to walk again. While still in the hospital, I ended my law license to save money. I had to learn to talk and swallow again. I lost the use of one eye and hearing in one ear. I still walk with a walker or cane. I am thankful for the help my wife, sons, and church provided. It taught me how important support systems are. I am partly recovered now. My medical conditions provide me empathy for others and insight.

I sought God's guidance and the best human advice I could obtain. I hope I acted with insight, vision, and explanation. I sought to serve with prudence, temperance, fairness, and humility. I sometimes made

errors, but I always acted sincerely and honestly. Listening and feeling are as important in law and life as scholarship.

William E. Wood

People are often surprised when I tell them I'm from Chapel Hill, but I didn't go to Carolina. I had attended every home football game and my share of concerts and fraternity parties by the time I graduated from high school. So, when my time came, I decided on a smaller school and froze for four years at Colgate University in upstate New York. Then back south to Washington and Lee Law, followed by eastern North Carolina where my family had been for over 200 years.

I started as assistant solicitor in the 13th District, and Susan and I settled in Whiteville. Three years later there was a district judge opening with no older lawyers interested, so I ran against two magistrates and won. I served two terms, the second as chief district judge. Then into solo private practice for the next 39 years doing everything from domestic and personal injury to workers' comp and court appointed capital cases.

Every lawyer does make a difference in people's lives. Of course, you have to know what you are doing, but just as important are attitude, honesty, and courtesy. When I first started as assistant solicitor there were two district judges. One would find a defendant not guilty, and they would leave the courtroom cursing under their breath. The other would find a defendant guilty and they would leave declaring what a wonderful and fair judge he was.

The legal profession is going in the right direction with more law schools and more access to lawyers. However, I'm afraid that

mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and mandatory minimum sentences move the docket, but at the cost of the parties not having their open and public day in court, which may lead to a reduction in public confidence in the integrity of the system.

Melvin F. Wright Jr.

Growing up in Elizabeth City, a small town in eastern North Carolina, I learned the importance of friendship, respect, and willingness to help others. Being involved in extracurricular activities and varsity sports in high school, as well as becoming an Eagle Scout, were very rewarding.

For undergraduate school, I attended UNC-Chapel Hill. The classes and programs there were helpful in leading me towards a path to student government and junior class president. I learned how to make the right decisions when faced with difficult choices.

Finishing undergraduate school in 1967, the Vietnam War beckoned. I made the decision to enroll in the army and attended OCS. I was fortunate to serve as a company commander and aide-de-camp to the commanding general of the Saigon Support Command. As many of us did while serving our country, I received the Bronze Star. I also was awarded the Air Medal. After my military obligation was complete, I was able to return to Wake Forest Law School where Dean Carroll Weathers taught us to "avoid even the appearance of impropriety." I graduated from law school in 1973.

During law school, I was able to clerk for a law firm in Winston-Salem. I was offered a job in that firm after I passed the bar exam, and my wife Jo was employed at Bowman Gray

School of Medicine. I practiced law in Winston-Salem for 26 years in primarily civil litigation, domestic, and criminal law. I participated in local legal groups and the Forsyth Bar Association.

In 1999, Chief Justice Burley Mitchell of the NC Supreme Court, Bill King, and Jerry Parnell (both presidents of the NC State Bar), founded the NC Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism (CJCP). When I read about the application for the executive director position, I decided to apply, was selected, and served until 2017. I retired but was asked to return in 2019, and I will retire again on December 31, 2023. I have been fortunate to work for seven chief justices, and I consider this to be a highlight of my legal career. While at CJCP, I also taught professional responsibility at UNC Law (2004-2017) and Campbell Law (2011-2017). I chaired the ABA Standing Committee on Professionalism and the National Consortium on Professionalism Initiatives. Professionalism has also been the topic of many of the articles and podcasts that I have done.

My wife and I have been married for 55 wonderful years and are members of Ardmore Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. I am involved in Bible Study Fellowship in Raleigh and Winston-Salem. I am honored to have received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine (NC Gov. Mike Easley); The NC Chief Justice's Professionalism Award; The Robinson O. Everett Award (Campbell Law School); and The John B. McMillan Award for Public Service (NC State Bar). I am so thankful for having the opportunity to serve on the NC Chief Justice's Commission of Professionalism. It has been a blessing to have

served in this capacity for so many years.



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