

Seventy-Five Years of Service

A Brief History of the Arlington County Bar Association

BY *GEORGE W. DODGE, ESQUIRE*

The Arlington County Bar Association was founded on April 26, 1926 and consisted of twenty-six charter members. Of those twenty-six, twelve eventually served as Arlington Bar President and five charter members, Benjamin Hedrick, Emery Hosmer, Walter McCarthy, Hugh Reid, and Harry R. Thomas, had distinguished careers as jurists. In addition, charter members Crandall Mackey, Frank Ball, Sr., William Gloth and Lawrence Douglas served as Commonwealth Attorneys. Seventy attorneys have presided as Arlington County Bar President with Frank Ball, Sr., Charles Jesse, Amos Crounse, Thomas Phillips and Foster Hagan serving two year terms. The Arlington County Bar Association's initial president, Frank Ball, epitomizes the quality and independent leadership of the bar. Ball served as Arlington's Commonwealth Attorney and later was elected to the state Senate. According to Arlington Commonwealth Attorney William Hassan, Frank Ball was fondly referred to as "The Wizard" for his ability to enchant a jury. An opponent of massive resistance and the poll tax, Ball represented the Arlington School Board in litigation for desegregation.

The Arlington community has been served by the Arlington County Bar Association in a variety of ways during the bar's 75-year existence. A high level of participation in pro bono work is a trademark of the bar. In the early 1950s bar members had certain days in which they received pro bono referrals. Law Day, a day in which bar members speak on legal issues at schools and other public locations, has been actively and continuously promoted by the bar since the early 1960s. The Arlington Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service (LRS) began in October 1969. More than 100,000 persons have received referral service for initial consultation at a nominal fee. This program continues daily as a major public service provided by the bar. For twenty-three consecutive years bar members have provided advice at the bar's booth at the Arlington County Fair as well as through Legal Services of Northern Virginia. The Arlington County Bar Association is active in Christmas in April, the Glebe School homework club, and mentoring programs. A variety of causes have also received financial assistance from the bar. In addition, the bar established and continues to support the Walter T. McCarthy Law Library, which is also open to the public. The development of that law library was spearheaded by Tom Phillips, one of the bar's most influential members.

The social events of the bar have historically provided both comic relief and relaxation. For many years the bar conducted "Smokers" which consisted



Courtesy Arlington County Bar Association

Judge Walter T. McCarthy became a Circuit Court judge in 1930 at the age of 32. He decided landmark zoning cases and in 1958 set aside Virginia's racial segregation law in regards to separate seating in public places. Judge McCarthy presided over cases for more than 50 years, serving Arlington as a Circuit Court Judge longer than anyone else. The Arlington Courthouse now houses the Walter T. McCarthy Law Library, which is open to the public.

of elaborate scripts and skits. In the 1960s and 1970s there were jointly held dinners by the lawyers of the Arlington Bar Association and the Arlington Medical Society. Original Field Day events of the bar, which began in the late 1930s, included a full day of golf, tennis, and swimming, followed by a dinner dance.

The Joseph C. Gwaltney Invitational Golf Tournament continues the bar tradition of golf outings. The bar has a custom of monthly luncheon meetings which occasionally include Continuing Legal Education (CLE) speakers and programs. A history of the Arlington Bar includes the activities of the Arlington Lawyer Wives from the 1960s to the early 1990s, a social and service entity separate from the bar. The Arlington Lawyer Wives conducted, among other things, art and silent auctions for law school scholarships and grants for court-related programs and led courthouse tours for sixth grade students.

Praise and thanks go to the many members of the Arlington County Bar Association, both past and present members, for their leadership, cooperation and membership in the bar. The bar's success relies on its sustaining and continuing membership. One outstanding member, Robert J. Arthur, was instrumental in beginning the bar's Continuing Legal Education seminars prior to the origin of accreditation. Other CLE chairman and their committees have continued to maintain the bar's CLE status as an approved sponsor for Virginia CLE credit. Arlington County Bar Association members also participate in the Arlington County Bar Foundation, a non-profit organization which has raised and contributed funds to numerous organizations. The Foundation also has created, among other things, a highly acclaimed Juvenile Licensing Ceremony program.

The Arlington County Bar Association's leadership is well represented throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. For example, four Virginia State Bar Presidents were members of the Arlington bar: Thomas W. Phillips, 1949-50; James H. Simmonds, 1958-59; C. Wynne Tolbert, 1971-72; and William D. Dolan III, 1984-85. Retired Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court Charles S. Russell and Retired Judge of the Court of Appeals Charles H. Duff are Arlington County Bar Association members. In the Eastern District of Virginia Federal Court are Arlington bar members Judge Claude M. Hilton and U.S. Attorney Helen F. Fahey. Numerous respected leaders of the legal community have come from the ranks of the Arlington County Bar Association. The tradition lives on.

Charter Members of the Arlington County Bar Association

Clarence R. Ahalt
Frank L. Ball
Basil D. Boteler
J. Hammond Brewer, Jr.
Amos C. Crouse
Cornelius H. Doherty
Lawrence W. Douglas
H.W. Dudley
W. Thomas French

William C. Gloth
Bryan Gordon
Benjamin M. Hedrick
Emery N. Hosmer
R. Bleakley James
Charles T. Jessee
Crandal Mackey
John C. McCarthy
Walter T. McCarthy
H. Jeter Phillips
Edgar W. Pumphrey
Hugh M. Reid
H. Smith Rucker
Robert A. Ryland
Claude O. Thomas
Harry R. Thomas
Walter U. Varney

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