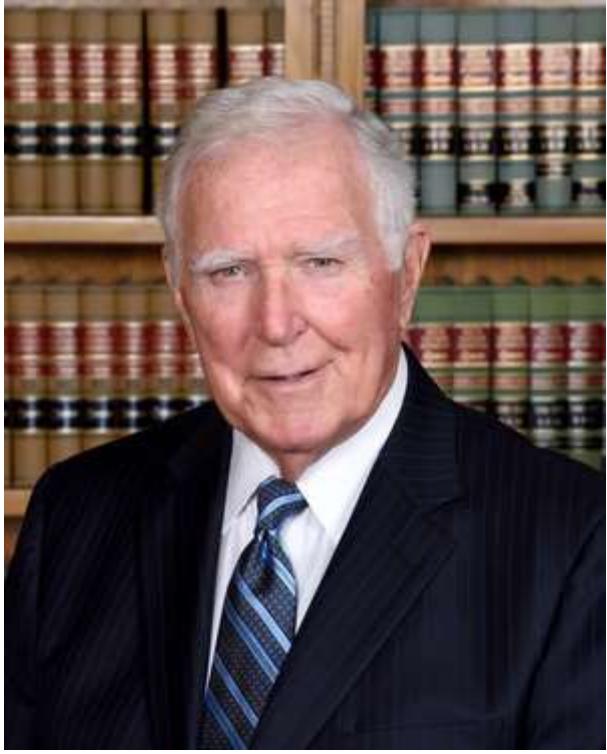


Interview with Jones Webb
By: Dodie Sachs, Esq.



Carlton Rouse and I had the opportunity to go to lunch with Jones Webb over the summer. Currently, Jones Webb is the oldest surviving GCBA president. He will be 90 years old in January 2018, and still works every day at Webb Tanner Powell. Mr. Webb was married for 66 years to Marian Allison Webb, who passed away in December 2016. Mr. Webb has two children and six grandchildren.

What sparked your interest in the law?

Mr. Webb grew up in Etowah, Tennessee. His father was a lawyer, but died when Mr. Webb was eighteen years old. His father said that being a lawyer is like ploughing a field – you have to apply yourself, and money didn't come easy. Despite the saying, Mr. Webb

planned to be a lawyer. Mr. Webb graduated high school at the end of World War II, and was drafted into the US Army and served in the Korean War. He attended Emory University, but transferred to the University of Tennessee when his father passed away.

What was your first job out of law school?

Marvin Allison, his father-in-law, and Charles Pittard were his role models as attorneys. In 1952, Mr. Webb joined Mr. Allison's and Judge Pittard's law firm that would become Webb Tanner Powell, PC. Marvin Allison died when Mr. Webb had only been with the firm for seven years, and at that time Charles Pittard was on the Superior Court bench. Mr. Webb found himself running their firm.

When were you President of the Bar Association? When Mr. Webb began to practice in Gwinnett County, there were only thirteen practicing lawyers in Gwinnett County. Originally Gwinnett County was part of the Piedmont Judicial Circuit, which included Gwinnett County, Banks County, Jackson County, and Barrow County. The Piedmont Bar Association was a close knit group. They taught each other how to get along with people and each other. The Gwinnett Judicial Circuit was formed in 1961, and the bar association was formed thereafter. The Gwinnett County Bar Association met quarterly. Mr. Webb was president from 1966-1967.

Who was on your Board? Rhodes Jordan, Hughel Harrison, and Gene Reeves. R.F. Duncan was the immediate past president.

How have things changed with the bar association since you were President?

Lawyers then had much closer feelings toward each other. Attorneys were not adversarial outside of the courtroom. Lawyers were professionals but not focused solely on business. Your responsibility to your client was key - to represent your clients the best way. This all changed with the “billable hour”. Before lawyers started using billable hours, they did charge a retainer, but lawyers were more flexible with the costs of representation. Mr. Webb acknowledged that Abraham Lincoln said, “A lawyer’s time is his stock in trade” and all lawyers have to sell is their time. However, before the billable hour, lawyers didn’t bill extraneous things that didn’t contribute to the case, and lawyers would charge less if they lost the case. Lawyers would think about how important the case was to the client, and the fair cost of the representation in setting the total fee.

Mr. Webb cautioned lawyers regarding involvement in politics. In his view, he believed that you could alienate your clients with politics. Further, he believes that judges should be appointed based on their experience and qualifications, and not elected. In the past, Judges did not use lawyers as campaign managers, and the campaign manager would solicit the funds to (re) elect the judge, but would not tell the Judge where the funds came from. This is not the case today. Mr. Webb also added that, in his opinion, some of best judges in Gwinnett County have been women. They have done a great job, and he never hears complaints about them.

If you had a word of advice for a new attorney, what would it be? Be of service to the Community. Lawyers owe a responsibility to the public and the profession. Lawyers now don’t consider their obligations to their community. Participating in and volunteering for service organizations and non-profit organizations shows the public that lawyers are helping. This also helps lawyers meet new people. Lawyers now don’t do enough. It is important to connect with your community and church or religious groups. Go to funerals of family members of your client. Be involved with your clients. This is very important. Lawyers now have to realize that people look up to us. We should be the leaders in the community.

We will feature a prior President each month in the newsletter. If you are a prior President and would like to be featured, please contact Dodie Sachs or Carlton Rouse.