

Forrest Ferrell Receiving Citizen Lawyer Award

The Citizen Lawyer Committee of the NCBA Young Lawyers Division, in conjunction with the NCBA Local Bar Outreach Committee, provides expanded coverage of the 2017 Citizen Lawyer Award recipients in recognition of their volunteer service and leadership in their communities and beyond. The following article is submitted for your consideration by the North Carolina Bar Association. The 2017 Citizen Lawyer Awards will be presented on Friday, June 23, at the NCBA Annual Meeting in Asheville, but the recipients have been notified of their selection and there is no embargo on this information. A photo of the recipient is attached.

By Rebecca Poole

HICKORY – For more than 50 years, Forrest Ferrell has been an active citizen and leader in the Hickory community. After graduating from the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1963, Ferrell practiced law in Hickory where he litigated cases involving insurance companies and automobile accidents. Early in his legal career, he became involved with the Catawba County Board of Elections which taught him a great deal about how elections work within the community and allowed him to meet many people from different walks of life. In 1968, Ferrell recalled a letter he received from the chairman of his opponent's party where he congratulated Ferrell for running such a fine election.

In 1975, Ferrell was elected as a Superior Court judge where he served for 24 years. During his time on the bench, he and a close friend organized the Catawba Valley AAU, an amateur youth basketball program. This program not only promoted women's athletics, but it also awarded approximately 50 college scholarships to female players. Ferrell recalled his recruitment of Charlotte Smith of Shelby, who was a junior in high school at the time. Smith went on to have a successful basketball career and now serves as the women's basketball head coach at Elon University. Ferrell remained involved with the Catawba Valley AAU from 1988 through 1995.

Throughout his time on the bench, Ferrell regularly gave speeches about the judgeship and trial law. After retiring from the bench in 1999, Ferrell returned to private practice at Sigmon, Clark, Mackie, Hanvey & Ferrell, P.A. where he focuses on the areas of eminent domain, estate and business litigation.

Throughout Ferrell's legal career, he has recognized the importance of mentoring young lawyers. Ferrell's key piece of advice for those establishing their legal career is to guard against too much practice of the law. "You can't do it all the time day and night. You have to get away from it. You have to tend to personal responsibility. The better lawyers do this." Outside of the legal world, Ferrell enjoyed riding his motorcycle. He joined a motorcycle group who rode cross country one time per year. Ferrell is confident that his wife was "happy to see him go!"

Ferrell has set an example of balancing his legal career with family commitments and community involvement over the past 54 years and the North Carolina Bar Association is pleased to recognize Ferrell with the 2017 Citizen Lawyer Award.

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