After the recent profile on one of the section’s younger members, we switch back to one of the veterans, Charles Case, like Amos Dawson, whom we profiled in 2014, has been practicing environmental law since its beginnings in North Carolina. Charles is one of the premiere environmental attorneys in the Old North State and now practices in the Raleigh office of McGuireWoods, but followed a meandering path to get there.

Charles didn’t start out on the common attorney track of an undergraduate degree in English or history. He attended N.C. State University and had planned to major in physics and physical chemistry, and eventually focused on physics. Charles received his BS in physics with high honors in 1973, graduating in only three years. That summer, he had what he called a “typical physics summer job,” working at Harry Diamond Labs for U.S. Army Materiel Command on a project to harden the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) system against electromagnetic pulses that could disable NORAD. He helped develop a model to predict vulnerability of electrical circuits to electrical pulses. Yes, a typical summer job for a college student. However, the summer of 1973 was not a typical summer in the U.S. Watergate was the major topic of news and Harry Diamond Labs were located just outside D.C. where the Watergate hearings were being held and local interest was high.

Although studying as a scientist at State, Charles had shown signs of interest in law and policy. He was a debater in high school. At N.C. State, he was a Student Senator and Student Lt. Governor. Not being certain his future lay in science, N.C. State allowed him to return to school in the Master's program in physics, where he continued to work on high energy electron physics, but also took non-science courses, including an advanced composition class at Meredith College and a timely seminar on Congress and the Presidency taught by Professor Abraham Holtzman at State. North Carolina Senator Samuel Ervin, Jr., who was heavily involved in the Watergate investigation, and was a seminar speaker, and Professor Holtzman hosted a dinner at his house that evening in the Senator’s honor. Professor Holtzman located Charles between himself and Senator Ervin at the dinner table. Professor Holtzman, having received graduate degrees from Harvard, proceeded to lobby for Charles to attend its law school, and Senator Ervin contributed his story about his being the only graduate to have gone through Harvard Law “backwards” (starting with the third year, then second and first). Their encouragement echoed what he had already gotten from Charlie Dixon, a Hickory lawyer, Harvard alum, and family friend.

Charles attended Harvard and found the students to be “ultra-competitive.” He had a summer job after his first year of law school in Raleigh working on utility and insurance cases, and after his second year of law school, a summer job with Cleary Gottlieb in Washington, D.C., which had an established environmental law practice. Charles received his J.D. from Harvard in 1977, a year that saw amendments to major environmental statutes and a scandal at the U.S. EPA, which pushed initiatives in environmental law to the states.

Returning to Raleigh after receiving his degree, Charles taught law courses as an adjunct professor at Campbell University Law School and began to focus on environmental law. He served as chair of the Wake County Board of Zoning Adjustments and was a part-time hearing officer for the state’s OSHA program, being appointed by Governor Jim Hunt. Charles met his wife-to-be, Margie Toy, when she represented a client in a hearing on one of the first cases he heard. A mutual friend brought them together at a party the next week. The after-party discussion they had convinced Charles she was the one. They dated two weeks and a day, and Charles proposed to Margie in a park next to the PULSTAR nuclear reactor at N.C. State.

While the State of North Carolina was setting up environmental programs, Charles worked with the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce on the necessary legislation. As manufacturers expressed a desire to form a group focused on environmental matters, Charles and his firm, Moore & Van Allen, worked to form the Manufacturers and Chemical Industry Council of North Carolina (MCICNC), which is now the North Carolina Manufacturers Alliance (NCMA); Charles has worked with them and other groups to propose and comment on laws and rules regarding protection of the environment, health and safety. Charles worked with Moore & Van Allen from 1977 to 1992, but his clients increasingly needed access to EPA offices, principally its Region 4 office in Atlanta, as well as its headquarters in DC, so Charles and his team of attorneys moved to Hunton & Williams, which had offices and environmental practitioners in both locations. The team continued their work on legislation and rule-making, as well as the developing work in permitting, compliance and enforcement that was coming from these new environmental programs.

In 2016, Charles joined the Raleigh office of McGuireWoods, along with other attorneys and staff from Hunton’s Raleigh office. He welcomed the opportunity to join in a new, growing office with an active environmental litigation practice, as well as work with Benne Hutson and other McGuireWoods environmental attorneys to grow the firm’s practice, which has included such recent issues as coal ash, unregulated pollutants and water transfers.

Charles’ wife, Margie, received her BA in Latin and Greek from Dickinson College and a Masters in classics from McMaster University in Canada, after which she received a J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh Law School. After practicing in the Pittsburgh area for several years, she moved to Raleigh to join the Maupin Taylor & Ellis law firm, where she practiced labor and employment law, and later became a partner. Margie retired from law practice and worked as a legal recruiter for several years. Margie and Charles have two sons, Everett, a Penn State alumnus, and Elliot, a Purdue alumnus. Everett is a dentist living in Charlotte, and Elliot works in the executive training program at Hendrick Automotive Group in Cary. Margie and Charles live in Hayes Barton neighborhood in Raleigh and have a house at Holden Beach.