

NCBF Justice Fund Biography

Robert C. Cone

Robert C. “Bob” Cone was born to Barbara and Herman Cone, Jr. on February 13, 1952, in Greensboro, where he grew up the middle of three brothers, amidst a large extended family. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all textile executives; but, Bob chose a different course.

Bob began his formal education in Greensboro’s public schools. He then followed his father in attending Asheville School, where he was an outstanding student. He was awarded the Morehead Scholarship to UNC-Chapel Hill, graduated from there in 1974, and went on to obtain his J.D. from UNC School of Law in 1978.

Bob and his law school classmate, Sally B. Cone, married soon after sitting for the NC State Bar Exam. They moved to Greensboro that fall, where Bob began his legal practice with the firm that eventually became Boone Higgins Chastain & Cone.

In 1986, Bob joined Tuggle Duggins P.A., where he spent the remaining 31 years of his practice. He primarily handled business and commercial litigation, as well as some types of personal injury cases. He won jury verdicts in federal and state courts, led complex litigation in the NC Business Court, and argued cases on appeal in the NC and federal appellate courts. His practice also included alternative dispute resolution procedures. Bob was respected and admired by his peers. He genuinely enjoyed practicing law, which he viewed as an honorable profession to be used for the good of society. He saw the “big picture” and was known for providing “solid and pragmatic” legal counsel. He often said that the job of a lawyer is to “resolve the problem,” which doesn’t necessarily mean “winning the case.”

Bob contributed mightily to the legal profession in ways beyond his practice. He felt great appreciation for and was unwaveringly loyal to UNC School of Law. He chaired the UNC Law Foundation Board and could always be relied upon to support and participate in fundraising efforts, annual and otherwise. Bob served as President of the Greensboro Bar Association (GBA), after having served as President of the GBA Young Lawyers Division. He chaired the Fee Dispute Resolution Committee of the GBA. He co-founded the Herb Falk Society, which promotes pro bono service by GBA members. He worked on the GBA Habitat Houses. He helped organize and lead the Guilford County Inns of Court. His peers elected him as the 18th Judicial District Bar Counselor to the State Bar from 2010 to 2016, where he served as Vice-Chair of the Legislative and Grievance Committees and as a member of the Executive Committee. He served as a Preceptor at Elon Law School and volunteered with the Lawyer on Line Legal Service Program.

In 2011, Bob was honored with the NCBA Centennial Award, presented jointly by the North Carolina Bar Association and the Greensboro Bar Association. In 2016, he was presented the North Carolina State Bar’s John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award for exemplary service to the legal profession.

Bob did not limit his service to the legal profession. He was a lifelong member of Temple Emanuel (TE), which he served in many capacities. He chaired the TE Education Committee and taught Hebrew School for years. He led efforts to preserve and perpetuate the Temple's historic Greene Street location. Bob served the Greensboro Jewish Federation in many capacities as well, including providing legal counsel, chairing the Men's Campaign, chairing the Community Relations Committee, and, with Sally, serving as a host family for Jewish refugees resettled in Greensboro from Baku, Azerbaijan. The Federation posthumously presented Bob the Benjamin Cone, Sr. Leadership Award. Bob also served as a Trustee of the Jewish Foundation of Greensboro, an organization established to create permanent endowments ensuring the viability of Jewish community life and education. Bob chaired the Greensboro Public Library Foundation Board, the Cone Health Foundation Board, was Vice-Chair of the Greensboro Urban Ministry Board, and was President of Rotary Club of Greensboro. For twenty years, he served as a Trustee of The Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital, now known as Cone Health. He and his wife, Sally, were co-recipients of the 2016 North Carolina for Community and Justice Brotherhood/Sisterhood Citation Award for their "extraordinary efforts to combat bias, bigotry, and racism and create a more compassionate and respectful community for all of us – not just some of us."

Bob had many interests. He loved music. He read voraciously on subjects he found fascinating, including Abraham Lincoln and early Christianity. He excelled at skeet shooting and scuba diving. He enjoyed dancing at parties. He was a wonderful breakfast cook, specializing in omelets and whole-wheat pancakes. He baked bread and sugar-free cheesecake, which he eagerly shared. He felt deeply connected to Israel and traveled there often.

Above all, Bob loved his family – his wife, Sally, his son, Sam, and his daughter, Laurie.

Bob's full and ebullient life ended on March 18, 2017, after a courageous battle with a rare cancer. He continued practicing law until days before his death.