

ATTORNEY PROFILE



BY BILL VINES

WARREN KENNERLY

1998 WINNER KNOXVILLE BAR ASSOCIATION'S GOVERNOR'S AWARD

An award is presented annually by the Knoxville Bar Association to one of its members as special recognition for their stature in the legal profession. Consideration is given not only to their work as an attorney, but also service to the community. The recipient is chosen by vote of the Board of Governors of the Knoxville Bar Association and the recipient's name is placed on a plaque which hangs at the City-County Building.

The 1998 winner of the Governor's Award was Warren W. Kennerly, who was presented the award on November 20, 1998 at the Golden Gavel Award Banquet.

Warren Kennerly was one of the founding members of the firm of Kennerly, Montgomery & Finley and has been licensed to practice law for 68 years. He was born in 1909 and received his license to practice law in Tennessee in 1930. This was a year before he graduated from the University of Tennessee with a law degree in 1931! He was able to pass the requirements to be an attorney before he actually received a degree.

Warren Kennerly has always been a very modest person and few knew, because he did not broadcast the fact, that he actually is "Dr. Kennerly". After his degree from the University of Tennessee, he attended the University of Michigan and graduated with a doctorate in judicial science in 1933. Importantly, he has always been known as a scholar, particularly in the field of municipal law and equitable doctrines and theories. He kept his own meticulous notes regarding cases in the area in which he practiced. Attorneys report that he was willing to unselfishly share the compilation of his information with young attorneys who called upon him for advice throughout the city.

Warren Kennerly served as Law Director for the City of Knoxville from 1938 to 1941 and represented the City of Knoxville before the United States Supreme Court. When the City of Knoxville attempted to set up its own power system, this action was opposed by the Tennessee Public Service Company and the case handled by Dr. Kennerly provided the groundwork for Knoxville's system.

Dr. Kennerly actually wrote the act creating the predecessor to Knoxville Utilities Board. Further, he served as General Counsel to Knoxville Utilities Board for over fifty years.

He was a very meticulous, careful and honorable attorney. When one named partner in his own firm asked him to notarize his own car title for transfer, Dr. Kennerly asked him to hold his hand up and swear. When the attorney balked, he was told that if Dr. Kennerly was to notarize the signature, he would hold his hand up and swear! He was honored to be chosen for the Selective Service Board but when his own son's name came up, he resigned to avoid any possibility of conflict.

He has served the Knoxville Bar Association as president in 1956 and, subsequently, served as Vice President of the Tennessee Bar Association.

He has been a "significant contributor" to the University of Tennessee and is a member of the Benefactor's Society. He served as President of the University of Tennessee Alumni in 1948. He has been a Board Member of the Fort Sanders Hospital Foundation and very active in the United Way.

Dr. Kennerly was married to the late Lucille Donaldson Kennerly and has three grown children; Craig Kennerly, Lucy Gump and Mary Myers.

The presenter of the award indicated to Dr. Kennerly that the Bar Association was proud of his stature in the community and concluded by saying "Well done Dr. Kennerly."

Governors' Award - 1998
Warren W. Kennerly