

ATTORNEY PROFILE

DICK STAIR – 1999 GOVERNOR'S AWARD WINNER

BY BILL VINES

On December 10, 1999, Richard Stair, Sr. was presented the 1999 Governor's Award at the Annual Knoxville Bar Association meeting. He stood with wife, Millicent, with whom he is celebrating their 60th year of marriage; his son, Bankruptcy Judge Richard Stair, Jr.; grandson, John Stair, a Knoxville attorney; and other members of his family.

The Governor's Award is given annually to a member felt by the Knoxville Bar Association Board of Governors to be someone who has brought special pride to the profession. A committee is appointed, makes recommendations and the elected board then makes the selection.

A plaque hangs in the courthouse with the name of each recipient. . . a way for the Bar Association to tell members of the public that it is proud of the accomplishments of these special members.

This award is not given for any one accomplishment, but rather is given to a member felt by his peers to be representative of what a superb lawyer should be. Dick Stair well meets those qualifications.

He was active in the Knoxville Bar Association. Dick served on the Board of Governors for many years and served as President of the Association in 1961. Many lawyers noted that when there was a controversial issue in the Bar Association, and Dick Stair rose to express an opinion, the odds were overwhelming that the membership would follow his recommendation. Quite simply, he was highly respected by the other attorneys.

Dick graduated from Columbia University and then attended the University of Tennessee Law School. He was admitted to practice in 1941. He first practiced with the Poore, Kramer, Cox firm and later with the Hodges and Doughty firm before opening his own office. In his own individual practice, he gave a start to many young lawyers. One lawyer who practiced with him for a number of years was Bob Ritchie, who describes Dick Stair as "the best mentor anyone could

possibly have." Dick Stair's practice emphasized corporation and estate matters. He was involved in many complex zoning cases in the 1960's and 1970's as the City of Knoxville expanded westward.

Though he retired from active practice in 1989, he remains active in the Knoxville Bar Association. In fact, he founded the Senior Section of the Bar Association in 1993. Many young lawyers do not know that lawyers over the age of 55 gather for luncheons, have great speakers, and are able to stay actively involved with the Knoxville Bar Association. All of this was Dick Stair's idea.

He was active in the service of his country. He entered the United States Navy in 1943. He was commissioned an officer and spent 17 months in New Guinea in World War II.

Dick Stair was active in the community. He was present at public meetings involving crucial issues of the day, either in an advisory capacity or as an interested citizen. He was involved in the political process for the right reasons. He believed in good candidates and worked hard for the principles in which he believed. He served as campaign manager for Representative Duncan each time Representative Duncan ran for Congress. One member noted that Dick Stair was often "a voice of reason" and "our conscience." Importantly, he never asked for any position on his own, but generally worked to improve the process.

He served as president of the West Knoxville Chapter of the Kiwanis Club and served as Lt. Governor of Kiwanis International.

Dick Stair is an environmentalist and loves the mountains and lakes. In fact, he lived for many years on a farm on Melton Hill Lake. He was quite active in the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association for many years.

In short, he is the type of lawyer highly respected by his peers. He is very deserving of the highest award of the Knoxville Bar Association.

