

ATTORNEY PROFILE

EDWIN H. RAYSON 2001 GOVERNOR'S AWARD WINNER

John Rayson & Jack Burgin

On December 14, 2001, the Knoxville Bar Association presented to Ed Rayson the award the Association considers to be its highest. Ed was described by presenter Bill Vines as someone with "great presence" who is highly respected by his peers and by the courts.

Ed Rayson was born in a small town in northern Illinois called Earlville (population 1400). "His father was a physician and when Ed enrolled at the University of Tennessee in the fall of 1941, it was with the intention of attending medical school. World War II intervened, and Ed served as an officer in the South Pacific.

After the War, Ed entered the University of Tennessee law school, receiving his law degree with honors in 1948. He was a

member of *The Tennessee Law Review* and The Order of the Coif. Ed Rayson has been a strong presence in the firm of Kramer Rayson, Leake, Rodgers and Morgan, having been a partner of that firm since 1950. Before coming to Kramer, Rayson, however, Ed along with the late Andrew Johnson, formed a partnership (Johnson and Rayson) and opened their offices on Market Street. After a year or so, R.R. Kramer arrived unannounced and offered Johnson and Rayson a job with his firm, at the time, Kramer, McNabb and Greenwood.

From the beginning, Ed devoted much of his time and attention to the field of labor law. He taught the subject at the UT law school for some 20 years. Labor law in the 1950s consisted mainly of dealing with matters under the National Labor Relations Act. Ed's expertise in the field became evident in his very first case. A union had filed an unfair labor practice charge against a hospital he was representing. After reading the NLRA for the first time (he had not taken labor law in school), Ed discovered that hospitals were expressly excluded from coverage under the Act, (they no longer are) and so he successfully moved for dismissal of the case on jurisdictional grounds. The client was duly impressed by the stunning and efficient victory. It was an auspicious beginning to what has become a distinguished career in the labor-employment law field.



Ed Rayson is proof that civility and success can and, in fact, must, go hand-in-hand.

A fitting commentary on Ed Rayson is that he has successfully represented both "management" and "labor." Over the years, Ed has not only represented some of the largest corporations in the country (if not the world) he has also represented unions. One such union was the United Mine Workers of America, one of the most aggressive and litigious labor unions of all time. In the course of representing the UMWA, Ed became involved in a series of cases that eventually made their way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Two of them, *UMWA v. Pennington*, 381 U.S. 657 (1965) (antitrust) and *UMWA v. Gibbs*, 383 U.S. 753 (1966) (pendent jurisdiction), are landmark cases. This success might have gone to anyone else's head. Ed, however, has never stopped helping individuals, some of whom can't afford to pay him, in, for example, trying to secure a pension they believe they might be due.

While there are a number of reasons Ed Rayson has excelled at the practice of law, one stands out. Ed quickly grasps even the most complex legal principles (assuming he doesn't already know them), writes exceptionally well and has an uncanny ability to immediately focus on the most significant or fundamental issue in a case. Perhaps what sets Ed Rayson apart more than any of these qualities, however, is his judgment to know when to argue a point, what point should be argued and, perhaps even more importantly, what points should not be argued when attempting to persuade a judge or a jury to rule in favor of your client.

In an age when courts have been forced to actually establish civility guidelines, civility simply has never been an issue for Ed Rayson. No matter how many disparaging allegations may be made, no matter how prominent the case or client may be, Ed Rayson is proof that civility and success can and, in fact, must, go hand-in-hand.

**Governors' Award - 2001
Edwin H. Rayson**