



ROBERT L. CROSSLEY

2005 RECIPIENT KNOXVILLE BAR ASSOCIATION GOVERNORS AWARD

By Bill Vines

At the annual Bar Association meeting on December 9, 2005, Robert L. Crossley was honored by the Association as the recipient of the 2005 Governor's Award. The Governor's Award is intended to be the highest award of the Knoxville Bar Association and recognizes those members of the Bar who have been exemplary both in their service as attorneys and their service as citizens in the community.

The Award was noted to be particularly appropriate with regard to Bob Crossley. After all, Bob was the attorney who successfully prepared the majority of the lawyers practicing at the Knoxville Bar to take the Tennessee Bar examination. Bob founded the Crossley Review course in 1959 and conducted that course for 38 years in Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis. The course successfully prepared over 7,500 law graduates for the Tennessee Bar Association. He authored most of the materials for use in the course and was the principal lecturer.

He has distinguished himself as a practicing attorney. He is a 1952 graduate of the University of Tennessee where he was Order of the Coif and Editor-in-Chief of the Tennessee Law Review.

He has been listed in The Best Lawyers in America each year since it began publication and is certified as a Civil Trial Specialist by the Tennessee Commission on CLE and Specialization. He served the Knoxville Bar Association as its President in 1975 and has served as a member of the Commission on the Future of the Tennessee Judicial System, Dean's Circle University of Tennessee College of Law, and was nominated for appointment to the Supreme Court by the Judicial Selection Commission in 1998. Bob was a founding member of the Law Firm of Baker, Worthington, Barnett & Crossley which grew from 4 lawyers in 1965 to more than 90 in 1994.

Bob Crossley has served the community. He served as Law Director for the City of Knoxville from 1962 to 1965 and was trial counsel for the City of Knoxville from 1965 to 1972. He served as an Assistant District Attorney for Knox County.

Interestingly, Bob Crossley served as Mayor of the City of Knoxville from December 7, 1964 to January 13, 1964. His one month "reign" was marked by rigorous law enforcement.

Bob has three children, Louis, Trinka, and Mary. Louis is a distinguished member of the Knoxville Bar Association and Mary is the Dean of the Law School at the University of Pittsburgh.

Bob has served the legal profession and community well. It is appropriate that he be honored with the Knoxville Bar Association's highest award.

By: R. Louis Crossley Jr.,
Long, Raybald & Waters, PC.



Legends of the Bar: *Bob Crossley*



Ralph Waldo Emerson is claimed to have said, "The man who can make hard things easy is the educator." Bob Crossley made the twenty-five or so subjects tested by the Board of Law Examiners so easy that nearly ten thousand of his pupils obtained the coveted license to practice law in Tennessee.

For those younger members of the bar (and the non-lawyers who are reading this in some lawyer's waiting room), Bob was the founder of what was for thirty-eight years Tennessee's only real bar review course. His concept was simple: abandon the Socratic approach used by law professors to make their students think, question, and debate about the law, and instead tell the soon-to-be lawyers what the law actually is. And even more importantly, tell them what to look for on the examination. This concept worked.

The Crossley Bar Review was born in the summer of 1958 when U.T.'s law school dean, Harold Warner, approached my father and asked him if he would be interested in teaching a seminar on taking the bar examination to U.T.'s graduates. Bob had only been out of law school six years at that time, had two young children to feed, and was struggling to make ends meet off the practice of law. While the tuition charged in the first year was meager by today's standards, it would help to buy his young son that pair of PF Flyers that were guaranteed to make him run faster and jump higher, so Bob accepted the Dean's invitation. His first class in 1959 numbered in the teens, but all passed the examination!

Initially the task was daunting. There were no competitor's materials to pattern his after. Copies of previous examinations were not publicly available. No treatises or encyclopedias of Tennessee law had been published. So armed only with subject outlines from *Am Jur*, Bob began reading and distilling every Tennessee decision touching on the

tested subject areas. He created course materials that began as a total of twenty-five pages in length, and grew to hundreds of pages. I remember him spending countless evenings and weekends creating and refining his lecture notes. And he delivered nearly eighty hours of lectures every time the bar exam rolled around.

By the mid-sixties, his labors began bearing fruits. Nearly every U.T. law graduate was enrolling in his course. His students' success rates in passing the bar examination were consistently in the high nineties. Graduates from the other law schools in the state were contacting him and urging him to teach a course they could attend as well.

Over the years the course went statewide, with classes expanding to Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga. As the venues expanded, so did the time it took to manage the course. Course materials had to be commercially published instead of being copied on an office copier. "Guest" lecturers had to be hired. Classrooms had to be secured. The Crossley Bar Review course had evolved from an evening seminar to a thriving business.

When Tennessee joined ranks with other states in requiring its prospective licensees to pass a multi-state examination, as well as the traditional Tennessee essay examination, the game changed for the bar review business. National bar review companies began testing the waters in Tennessee, creating the first real competition for law graduates.

Bob saw an opportunity in the changing market. Over the years he had cultivated a personal friendship with the head of one of the national companies, BRI. He convinced his friend, Richard Conviser, to team up with him instead of competing with him, on the theory that together they could keep virtually the entire Tennessee bar review market, instead of splitting it apart. That marriage was a very good one, as the Crossley Bar Review course remained the only viable option for Tennessee law graduates.

All the while he was growing the bar review business, he was also developing a reputation as one of Knoxville's top lawyers. He began his law practice as a young attorney with the Morton and Morton firm, spent four years as law director for the City of Knoxville (including a 30-day stint as interim Mayor), joined up with Howard Baker and Bob Worthington in a firm that ultimately would get bigger than Bob liked, tried a West Knoxville practice for a few years, went solo for a few more, and finally ended up with Lacy, Moseley & Crossley. Throughout all his affiliations, Bob proudly claimed that he was just a general civil lawyer.

By the mid-nineties, Bob was growing weary of juggling his law practice and his teaching. Practicing law was his true passion. And his feet were hurting from all the years of standing up and lecturing. So Bob made the decision in 1997 to sell his beloved course to his friend Conviser's company, which was then known as BAR/BRI.

Through his thirty-eight years of teaching and practicing law, Bob made countless acquaintances. He could attend a motion day or docket sounding in any court in the state and be greeted by lawyers (and judges) that attributed their license to his course. But he took no credit for their success. In his view, he only provided them a disciplined way to prepare for the examination. His ultimate advice about preparing for the bar examination was, "Do it once, do it right, and never do it again." Thank goodness I followed at least one piece of his advice!