

Strong Ties to our Founding Fathers and to the Community

Based on an interview of C. Lacey Compton, Jr., by Alissa N. Hudson in July 2014

When asked why he chose law as a career, C. Lacey Compton, Jr. replied the “law was my first choice and only choice based on my family. I grew up among lawyers and started working around lawyers when I was 14.” He counts among his mentors his father, C. Lacey Compton, Sr. and Stanley Owens, both founding members of the PWC Bar Association, along with Selwyn Smith and Percy Thornton. These more senior members of the Bar, “were known for their experience and their willingness to take the time to mentor me and other[s]. As far as mentors are concerned, it was really the entire Bar in those days wanting to help the few young attorneys succeed.” His contemporaries were Bud Latimer, Frank Hoss and Tom Underwood.

Compton Jr. graduated from William and Mary Law School “in 1965 and immediately went into the Army for three years.” Upon his return, he went into “practice with [his] Dad and Bud Latimer in Manassas.” His early practice was “solely real estate transactional work.” His father, C. Lacey Compton, Sr. served as a judge for over 25 years as a County Court Judge in what later became General District Court. At that time, it was a part time position and Lacey Jr. recalls that the clerk’s office was in his Dad’s law office. Serving as a judge prevented Lacey’s Dad from handling any trial work, so his “Dad built his reputation as a real estate attorney and as the county started to grow he was in a unique position to handle land use cases, most of which were comprised of large developments. He was involved with almost every major development in the county until the late 70’s.”

According to Compton Jr., in the early years of his practice, “the east and west ends of the county were like two different worlds and there was little exchange between the two.” He felt the timing was right to open a second office in Woodbridge, so he and his father and Bud Latimer followed that lead. Business was growing at both offices and new attorneys were hired to manage the caseload, but “it became difficult to manage two growing offices so we decided to divide the firm.” Compton, Jr., Doug Bergere and Michael Lubeley established Compton, Bergere & Lubeley. That firm eventually dissolved to be followed by the establishment of Compton & Duling, which continues to this day, handling a variety of civil litigation needs.

“Outside of the legal community the county was growing very fast but with support facilities” lagging behind. A group of businessmen invited Compton, Jr. to join them as they explored the possibility of building a hospital in the eastern end of the county. “Wide support was going to be needed to build a second hospital” said Compton, Jr., and his contacts in both the east and west ends made him an asset to the project. Bud Latimer, who served Prince William Hospital for over 30 years was very helpful in giving general guidance during the process, despite the “east-west split.” Compton, Jr. credits a “population shift to the east and subsequent realignment of the magisterial districts” with creating the “political clout” necessary to help with the establishment of Potomac Hospital. C. Lacey Compton, Jr. was among the founding members of the new hospital and considers this his “principal civic activity.”

Such insight to the early days of the Prince William Bar and the local legal community not only ties today’s Bar to our roots but also highlights the integral role local attorneys have played in the development of our community. Today’s Bar Association continues the traditions of collegiality, mentorship and community service.