

“Do Your Homework!”

An interview of Judge Paul F. Gluchowski by Alissa N. Hudson in January 2016

Paul F. Gluchowski hails from Rochester, NY. His father was career military, so the family traveled the country and beyond, ultimately settling in Fairfax, Virginia. Gluchowski graduated from Fairfax High School and attended the University of Virginia, graduating with a Bachelor’s Degree in History in 1968. Upon graduation, he married his wife, Vikki, of 48 years, who he credits for supporting everything he did. While at UVA he enrolled in ROTC and graduated with a commission in the Army, and “went on active duty until 1971.” He became an intelligence officer, serving first in “Fort Bragg and then to Vietnam.” As a child, Gluchowski thought he would pursue a military career, but while in the service, he changed his mind and decided he wanted to become a lawyer. So he took the LSAT before he went to Vietnam, and applied to law schools while there. Following his tour of duty, he attended T. C. Williams Law School on the GI bill, graduating in an accelerated program in 1973. Dick Boatwright was a classmate of his, and Bill Evans, his first law partner, graduated a couple of years earlier.

Gluchowski’s first job after law school was with George Failmezger, Esq., a friend of the family who shared Paul’s interest in stamp collecting. Failmezger befriended Paul and kept in touch with him through his years of service and law school, offering him a job in his title company upon graduation, if he wanted it. Though Gluchowski had offers from larger firms, Failmezger matched the highest salary offered, so Paul took the job, and moved to Manassas. While working for George, Paul came to know lots of people in the record room, including Bill Evans and Bill Hamblen, who was working for Coon and Kellam at the time. (E. Ralph Coon, Jr., and The Honorable Raymond O. Kellam from PWC JDR District Court.) Evans and Gluchowski eventually formed a partnership, continuing to handle title work for Failmezger, while expanding their practice. Eventually, Bill Hamblen joined them. In 1980 Hamblen joined the Commonwealth’s Attorneys’ Office and in 1982, Gluchowski, who was developing an interest in personal injury work, joined Ed McGolrick.

Gluchowski referred to his style of practicing law as one of preparation. He got into the “nitty-gritty, the investigative type of thing, preparing witnesses, preparing for objections, and research.” He mused that he “wasn’t flamboyant on [his] feet” because he felt he lacked the “golden tongue in front of the jury” that he admired so much in Hamblen and McGolrick. During his years with McGolrick, Gluchowski earned a good living doing tort work, which gave him “the opportunity to do the work I really liked, and that was in juvenile court doing guardian ad litem work and court-appointed work.” He “loved representing kids” and “felt as an attorney as I [later] did as a judge that that’s the place where you can make a mark.” Through a steadily growing stream of work in juvenile court, Gluchowski earned such a good reputation, that in 1989, he was given the Bar’s first, “Court Appointed Attorney of the Year” Award, recognizing his exemplary work in J&DR District Court. It seems he’d developed a “golden tongue” of his own. (Note: At its inception, only one attorney per year was honored. Individual awards by court began in 1995.)

In one particular case, Gluchowski was appointed to represent a client, a painter by trade, who was “charged with assaulting his wife.” The prosecutor investigating the case offered to nolle pros it if the defendant would simply pay the court costs. Paul pointed out that his client was indigent, and couldn’t pay the costs, so they went to court, and presented the same offer and inability to pay to Judge Kellam. Kellam asked the defendant, “You see the prosecutor over there? He has got a coat and tie on. You see your lawyer? He has got a coat and tie on. I have got a tie underneath my robe. Why can’t you dress up at least like.....” where upon, Gluchowski interrupted, saying, “Judge, excuse me. Look at his shoes. He doesn’t have shoelaces in his shoes either.” Judge Kellam took a five minute recess and called counsel to his chambers. He said he had no idea why he’d made those remarks in court and apologized and said he was ‘going to go back out and apologize’ to the defendant as well. That apology from the bench “had a profound impact” on Gluchowski. It truly went to the quality and character of the man serving.

Gluchowski felt he “had an affinity for JDR court”, so when the General Assembly added the fourth seat (Molinari, Wellington and Becker were the sitting judges at the time) he submitted his name for consideration. McGolrick queried him, saying, “What do you want to retire for?” To which Gluchowski replied, “Are you crazy? It’s going to be more work as a judge than it is practicing law. I have no intention of retiring!” Paul Gluchowski was appointed to the J&DR Bench in 1993 and gives much credit to Ed McGolrick for that opportunity. He served until his retirement in 2013. During his time on the bench, Gluchowski applied the same “do your homework” approach to his docket as he once did to his cases. It seems he gained a sense of comfort from becoming proficient in the universe of law that applied in his court.

As a retired judge, he enjoys fly fishing, antiquing, and is once again taking guitar lessons. He also substitutes all over the state, and observed that, “we have a great judiciary in Prince William County, it’s well thought of throughout the state, and that means a lot to me.”