

Obituary

Athens - James Ralph Beard, Dean Emeritus of the University of Georgia School of Law, passed away Thursday, August 14, 2014, after an extended illness.

Born September 27, 1925 in Gadsden, Alabama, he went to Los Angeles, CA a week after his 1943 high school graduation to work in the Office of the General Counsel of Douglas Aircraft. On his 18th birthday, he registered with the draft board and soon joined the U.S. Army Air Force. After basic training, he was assigned to the 10th Army, which participated in the invasion of the island of Okinawa beginning April 1, 1945, the largest amphibious operation in the Pacific theater of World War II. He vividly recalled the landing and the Japanese kamikaze suicide planes attacking the Allied ships.

A year later, he returned home and enrolled at the University of Alabama where he earned the B.S. degree in business in 1949 and the LL.B. degree in law in 1951. He earned the LL.M degree from George Washington University in 1953. In 1950, he wed Jeanne Ralls, a native of Gadsden, a devoted marriage of 60 years until her death in 2010. The couple moved to Virginia where Ralph joined the U.S. Department of Labor, rising to Assistant Solicitor, Associate General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, and Associate Solicitor of the Department of Labor overseeing the caseloads of 1,200 attorneys in 28 regional offices. In 1965, he came to Athens as a Visiting Professor for one year at the UGA law school and returned to Washington. He accepted a full-time professorship at the law school in 1967 where he remained until 1989, serving as Acting Dean from 1972-74 and Dean of the school from 1976 to 1987. In 1974, he was named University Professor, a designation denoting outstanding service to the institution beyond one's specific academic discipline, and Counselor to the President of the University.

The growth in quality and program diversity of UGA's law school during Beard's deanship is evidenced in the growth of its private funds endowment from less than \$450,000 in 1972 to \$17 million in 1987; establishment of the Dean Rusk Center for International and Comparative Law in 1977; granting of an Order of the Coif chapter, the Phi Beta Kappa of legal education, in 1978; 21 endowed professorships established by 1987; the founding of the Institute for Continuing Judicial Education in 1977, growth of the advanced degree LL.M. program; increasing academic credentials of entering students and bar exam passing rates; international programs; addition of a 25,000 sq. ft. annex to the law library in 1981; doubling the law library volumes from 1973-1987; conversion to the semester system; and other advances that led to ranking the Georgia law school as among the nation's best. In 1989, he retired to private practice with the Athens law firm of Blasingame, Burch, Garrard, and Ashley.

He is survived by two daughters: Carol Beard Welsh (Jack) of Marietta, GA and Becky Beard Scarboro (Leonard) of Watkinsville, GA; three granddaughters: Rev. Kristin Scarboro Heiden (Chris) of Roswell, GA, Meredith Scarboro Elder (Bryan) of Columbus, GA, and Lindsay Scarboro Maher (Todd) of Powder Springs, GA; and two great-grandchildren: Ruthie Jeanne Heiden and James Elder.

Interment will be in Oconee Hill Cemetery. The funeral service will be held Monday, August 18, at 12:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Athens, immediately followed by a reception in Hancock Hall. Bernstein's Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Members of the Tuck Sunday School Class will serve as honorary pallbearers.

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His family wishes to thank the staff of Athens Heritage assisted living center where he resided in recent years and to express their special gratitude to his devoted caregivers, Linda and Emory Elder and Cedrita and Quitman Brown.

The family requests that, in lieu, of flowers, those wishing to honor his memory may do so with a gift to The Jeanne and Ralph Beard Law Library Fund at the UGA law school or to Athens First United Methodist Church.

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