

In Memoriam

Trudi Willcox Wood 1952—2008

Trudi was born in 1952, graduated from A.I. Dupont High School in 1970, received her AB from Vassar College in 1974, and her JD from The Delaware Law School of Widener University in 1979.

In 1976, she began her professional career with First Federal Savings Bank in Wilmington, Delaware as an Urban Loan Officer, and eventually was named Executive VP and General Counsel. In 1982, she was elected a Director of the bank, and in 1987 she was appointed President of First Federal. Trudi was named a Director of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board of Pittsburgh in 1988, becoming the first female to be confirmed as a FHLB director.

In 1989, Trudi moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma to become Director of Operations and General Counsel for the Children's JUSTICE Center, Inc. This emerging non-profit partnered with The University of Oklahoma, College of Medicine-Tulsa to fund, develop, design, and build an innovative multi-disciplinary medical education and treatment complex which could provide graduate education to physicians in the evaluation and treatment of abused children. As a direct result of her dedication, imagination, and personal strength, the Center opened its doors on March 15, 1992.

Due to the design innovations Trudi implemented within the JUSTICE Center and its impact on the children served there, it was named a Center of Excellence by the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents and was later designated a national teaching model.

In 1995, Trudi and her husband, Spencer, moved from Tulsa to Tucson. She was a member of the Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Arizona Bars and volunteered her legal services to numerous non-profit projects. Trudi was also a proud member of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. ☪

W. Laird Stabler, Jr. 1930—2008

by E. Norman Veasey, Esquire
Former Chief Justice of Delaware

The name of the lovely and moving banquet honoring Laird Stabler in January 2006 was “What a Guy!” It was an extraordinary tribute to an extraordinary man. The Gold Ballroom of the Hotel duPont was filled to overflowing with family, friends, colleagues, lawyers, Democratic and Republican politicians, and people from all walks of life.

President George H.W. Bush (“Bush 41,” father of the incumbent President), as the keynote speaker, had glowing remarks about Laird, including his ability to get along with “both sides of the aisle.” There were many other speakers as well, all singing Laird’s praises, and all the praise heaped on him that night was well-deserved and well-earned.

But, that was only one wonderful night in Laird’s long and distinguished career. First and foremost, he was a warm and kind family man, a great friend, and a remarkable human being. Second (and high on my own personal list), he was a lawyer—not just a lawyer, but he was one who excelled as a lawyer-leader in public life as Delaware’s elected Attorney General and presidentially-appointed United States Attorney. And, of course, as Delaware’s Republican National Committeeman, he was a rare breed of the Gentleman-Politician.

Aside from these highlights, his distinguished career is portrayed nicely in the obituary in the *News Journal*:

“He graduated from the University of Virginia Law School in 1954 and practiced law in Delaware with the law firm of Potter Anderson and Corroon and in his own law firm. He concluded his business career as a vice president of the former Delaware Trust Company. He was appointed a Deputy Attorney General in 1961 and was elected to the Delaware House of Representatives in 1965. He served as Chairman of

the House Judiciary Committee and was elected Majority Leader during his second term. In 1970, he was elected to serve as Attorney General for Delaware and thereafter was appointed United States Attorney for the District of Delaware. He was elected Republican National Committeeman for Delaware in 1985 and served until 2005. [And he] served on numerous non-profit boards, including Blood Bank, Director of the Academy of Medicine, Trustee of the Medical Center of Delaware, Vice-President of Delaware Hospice, Chairman of the Board of Delaware Performing Arts Center, and President of the Princeton Alumni. He was chieftain of the Scottish Games of Delaware.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Margaretta du P. Kitchell; his children, W. Laird Stabler, III, of Montchanin, Ramsay C. Stabler of Denver, CO; his daughter, Margaretta S. Andrews of Nantucket, MA and their spouses, Wendie C. Stabler, Holly P. Stabler, and William H. Andrews III; and 10 grandchildren. He is also survived by his sisters, Cornelia S. Canby and Caroline Applegate of Wilmington and Wilhelmina Bergland of Litchfield, CT.”

I was honored when he served with me as a Deputy Attorney General in the ‘60s. It was in those days while we worked together as prosecutors trying criminal cases, I had the chance to observe first-hand not only his skill and grace, but also his keen sense of justice, ethics, civility, fairness, and integrity. Later, after I was long-gone from the Attorney General’s office and back in private practice, Laird was the Attorney General of Delaware. In that high office, he earned the admiration and respect of other lawyers, judges and his staff.

As I was preparing my presentation as a speaker at the “What a Guy!” banquet, I contacted Chief Justice Myron Steele, who (as a Democrat) had been Laird’s principal Kent County Deputy Attorney General in the early ‘70s. The Chief Jus-

tice authorized me to pass along to the guests at the banquet his thoughts about Laird, including the following:

“Laird, uniquely I think, displayed the qualities that inspire people to want to work hard and give their all to their boss. He treated us all as colleagues and not employees...

He was patient, understanding and knew how to build an esprit de corps. When you worked for Laird, even at 24 years old, going to work every day was a pleasure and personally and professionally rewarding...

I love the man.”

Laird was loved, I believe, by all who knew him well. I am included, certainly. I have never met anyone, regardless of party or station in life, who disliked Laird. If he had any enemies they must have lived under a rock. I never came across them, and I have been around a long time—thank the Lord!

So Laird—and I address this closing to you—we all give thanks for your exemplary life. You are one of a kind and you will be missed in ways we have not begun to measure. I can not say it to you any better than Horatio said to Hamlet upon the latter’s passing:

“Good night, sweet Prince;
and flights of angels take thee
to thy rest!”

William Shakespeare
Hamlet Act V Scene 2



**Visit the
new
DE-LAP
website at
www.de-lap.org**