

1LIFE IN THE LAW
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In 1972, the year I graduated from UNC, Cumberland County drafted men up to lottery number 125. Instead of getting drafted, I thought I would approach both the Air Force and Naval recruiters and see if I could become a pilot. I passed flight exams for both the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy and I was interested in flying multi-engine aircraft for the Navy. In late 1971, I signed a contract with the Naval recruiter wherein I was promised, upon completion of flight training, I would be assigned to a multi-engine aircraft.

In the late 1972, I visited the Naval recruiter to review the contract and realized that the commitment to the U.S. Navy would be 6 years. I didn't turn 22 until June 6, 1972. Six years seemed like a long time. I elected not to proceed with my plan to join the Navy and thought I would take my chances with the draft. Shortly thereafter, I received my draft notice. The Thursday before my draft physical I was playing basketball on the UNC campus and broke my right ankle. When I showed up for the physical, I was told one would not be conducted because the examining physician would need to see my right ankle. Since I was wearing a cast up past my calf, that was not possible. I was told that my name would be placed on the list at a later time.

As graduation moved closer, I had not heard from the draft board. I decided that I would take the LSAT test and apply to law school. The only law school I applied to was UNC Chapel Hill. In mid-May, 1972, following graduation, I flew to Europe where I spent the summer. I talked with my mother on an overseas call six days before the start of law school in 1972. I learned that I had been accepted to UNC and left Europe and returned to North Carolina the Saturday before law school began.

I can't say that I enjoyed the first half of my first semester but I went to every class and read all of my assignments. During that time, I made new friends and began to enjoy my law school experience. The best part of law school was our Friday afternoon basketball games.

During my 50-year career, I tried cases from North Carolina to New Mexico and New York to Florida. I served as an Assistant District Attorney in 11th Prosecutorial District for 4 years. I left the District Attorney's office in 1979 and began a law practice with James Narron, and Hampton Whittington. For 39 years, we practiced law together and the firm dissolved in 2018 and I became a solo practitioner along with my youngest son, Frank. During my career, I had the privilege trying cases with many great lawyers and I learned much from all of them.

I owe my professional career to UNC law, my wife, Claudia, and our three children, all of whom have law degrees. I have been a member of the UNC Alumni Foundation, UNC Law Foundation, and UNC Board of Visitors. My wife and I endowed a scholarship to UNC Law. In Johnston County, I was a member of the Johnston County Board of Education for 8 years.

The past 50 years has been a great experience.