

# A TIMELINE OF SUCCESS

After 70 years, Ernest C. Trimble '48, or Ernie to his friends, is finally retired. Seven decades that saw this extraordinary individual as a college student, Air Force captain, law school student, legislator, magistrate, chief judge and of course, attorney.

BRAD DWIN

But it wasn't the military or politics or law that Trimble held dearest. It was the Kiwanis Club of Loch Raven, Babcock Presbyterian Church and a commitment to *pro bono* work for those less fortunate that drove him on a daily basis. Trimble has, in essence, dedicated his life to using his legal and business skills to better the lives of those around him.

With such a long and varied career, Trimble has plenty of interesting stories to tell. In fact, one of these interesting anecdotes started and ended at the University of Maryland. Like many college students at the time, Trimble was drafted into the military before he was able to complete his undergraduate work. "I was drafted in July of 1941 and was supposed to serve one year and one day. Well, Pearl Harbor happened in December of that year and needless to say, I was discharged in 1945." Determined to make up for lost time, Trimble attended law school part-time while working as a dance instructor to make ends meet. In his second year of law school, he had an idea. Trimble recounts, "I approached the dean of the law school and told him that I wanted to take the bar exam as a practice. He told me that I couldn't do that because if I passed, I would have no need to finish law school. I told him that I didn't think it was possible for me to pass the exam at this stage of my education, but that if I did I would still fulfill my obligation to finish law school. So he agreed. Needless to say, I passed the exam by one point. So technically, I was already a lawyer. But I did hold up my end of the bar-

gain and I completed my last year of law school."

And so began the remarkable career of Ernie Trimble. From 1948 until 1985, Trimble worked for several private firms, culminating with his partnership at Whiteford, Taylor & Preston, LLP (formerly Whiteford, Taylor, Preston, Trimble & Johnston). Even after 1985, Trimble served as counsel for the firm until his full retirement in October 2001. The scope of his work has comprised all areas of law, including criminal, banking, and real estate law. In addition to his private practice, he has served as counsel for McCormick Properties, Inc. (early 1960s until retirement) and Chesapeake National Bank (1964 to 1979). In fact, Trimble was a founder of Chesapeake National Bank in 1964. "A gentleman from my church asked for my assistance in starting up a bank in the area. It took a while to get the necessary paperwork and approvals in place and by 1964, I was heavily involved in all aspects of the bank as a board member and general counsel."

During his career, Trimble even has served as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, representing Baltimore County (1954), a trial magistrate (1955 to 1959) and chief judge of the Peoples' Court for Baltimore County (1959 to 1967). He states that after six or seven years as judge of the Peoples' Court, he grew tired of listening to small claims and domestic disputes. Instead, he wanted to focus more time on *pro bono* work, his involvement with the Kiwanis Club of Loch Raven and Babcock Presbyterian Church.

"Throughout my legal career, I have always donated much of my time to *pro bono* clients and have commit-





ted myself to 'public interest law,'" notes Trimble. An excellent example of his commitment was a case involving an elderly woman named Louise Hughes, who banked at Chesapeake National. Trimble became heavily involved with the Hughes' financial and legal affairs since she had few family members. Eventually, Hughes became totally dependent on others and needed to be placed in a nursing home. Trimble took it upon himself to find her a nursing home and handle her day-to-day affairs. "I managed her financial and legal affairs and visited her in the nursing home every day until her death. Even though she wanted to leave me money, I never accepted a penny from her. I got great satisfaction in helping her and that was my reward," says Trimble.

Throughout the years, Trimble has handled more than 100 similar cases and in each instance has never profited from his services. *Pro bono* work was always a large part of his business.

When asked about his most important work, Trimble is quick to point to his commitment to the Kiwanis Club. In fact, he was a founding member of the Kiwanis Club of Loch Raven, its first president and he maintained a perfect attendance record for 30 years. Trimble speaks fondly of the club, "I did more good work as a member of the Kiwanis Club than as a member of any other organization in my life. Whether it was planning parades, handing out American flags or sponsoring youth mentoring programs and Little Leagues, I am very proud of what we were able to do for the community." During Trimble's involvement, the club has won several national awards for community involvement.

Trimble himself has received numerous awards, most recently, the School of Law's Star Award, presented at this year's Honors Banquet. He was nominated for, among other things, his longtime involvement in the School's phonathons. He also served his alma mater as president of the Alumni Association (1968 to 1969) and is particularly proud to have succeeded Nathan Patz in that position.

After seven decades of loyal service at every level of his career, Trimble sums it up by saying, "You'd think after all of these years, I'd be an extremely wealthy man. I may not be by modern standards, but I never sought fame, fortune or publicity. The good Lord knows what I have done. And that's all that matters."

Trimble and his wife, Ellen, have been married for 56 years. They have a daughter and two grandsons. ■

*"The good Lord knows what I have done. And that's all that matters."* — ERNIE TRIMBLE