



Gordon B. Davidson

June 24, 1926 – August 17, 2015

Gordon B. Davidson, former Managing Partner of Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP, former U.S. Supreme Court Clerk, legal adviser to numerous business interests, including the Bingham family and its holdings, and the group of Louisville business people who first sponsored a young Cassius Clay (“Muhammad Ali”), and one of the driving forces behind the Kentucky Center for the Arts, the downtown Convention Center, and the merger of Norton Infirmery with Children’s Hospital in the downtown Medical Center, has died.

“Gordon Davidson is a Louisville legend. He had the rare combination of a brilliant mind, passion for his work and civic causes, charisma and leadership. He knew how to get things done, for his clients, for our law firm and for Louisville. His legacy lives on today at Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs.” said Franklin Jelsma, Managing Partner.

Known for his intelligence and sense of humor, Gordon was born and raised in Louisville. He graduated from Male High School, received his undergraduate degree from Centre College, and law degrees from the University of Louisville and Yale Law School. He served in the military twice, as cadet-midshipman during World War II, and as a judge advocate during the Korean War. After serving in the Korean War, Gordon clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stanley Reed, and assisted with the research on the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation case.

Returning to Louisville, Gordon joined Wyatt, Grafton & Sloss, practicing in the areas of corporations, taxation, trusts & estates and appellate law. He was managing partner of the firm when it merged with the Tarrant, Combs & Bullitt firm, and continued in that role for the combined entity.

In reflecting on his career, he once said “I always wanted to be a lawyer, from the 9th grade in high school until this very moment. I’ve been luckier and more fortunate than most and exceeded my fondest expectations. There’s not a lot I would do differently. I hope I’d be better than I was the last trip through, but I really don’t want another trip through. I am absolutely delighted with the trip I had and I wouldn’t risk it again. I don’t think I would have done as well the second time around.”

Gordon was dedicated to the community, having served as Chair of the Louisville Chamber of Commerce, Chair of the Kentucky Center for the Arts, President of Louisville Central Area, and on the boards of the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership, Centre College and the Fund for the Arts. He was also a board member of several businesses, including Norton Healthcare Inc. (Chairman), BellSouth Corporation, Trans Financial Advisors, Inc. (Chairman), and DNP Select Income Fund. His service and dedication were frequently recognized. He was named “Outstanding Lawyer in Kentucky” by the Kentucky Bar Association; Fellow of the American Bar Foundation; Gold Cup recipient by the Louisville Chamber of Commerce; Business Hall of Fame Laureate by Junior Achievement of Kentuckiana; and “Man of the Year” by the Advertising Club of Louisville. He also received the Education, Arts and Humanities Award presented by the Governor of Kentucky; and the Alumni Fellow Award presented by the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law.

Gordon was profiled in the book “Passing the Torch, Lessons Learned—Wisdom Shared, Conversations with Louisville Leaders about Life, Leadership and Service” by Butler Books. In that book, he gave his perspective on leadership for young lawyers, or anyone else starting out in the business world – “*I would say, have goals in your life. I’m talking about your personal life as well as your professional or business life. Have goals. I don’t want to just be a regular lawyer, working for a firm. I want to be an outstanding lawyer and have my own clients as well as the firm clients. I’m using the only example that I know. You know, I came to the firm. I had to work for the partners and so forth and I enjoyed and continued to do it. But, I really wanted to build*

my own practice, as part of the firm, of course, but I wanted to be not just one of 150 lawyers. I wanted to be in the top 3 or 4 of those lawyers. So, that was a goal of mine. And I worked very hard to try and achieve the goal. A goal in civic activities. What is your real interest? Have a goal. I want to be on the board of the orchestra. I want to be on the board of the opera. I want to be on the chamber of commerce. Have a goal and work toward that goal. Get to know the people who make the people. You're not going to get asked sitting home at night and waiting for the phone to ring. I mean, you've got to get out in the community and you've got to get to know people and you've got to serve your stewardship as a young minion, but make yourself known. Show that you've got the talent, the ability, the desire, and you will achieve a goal. And the other thing I said earlier, and I'll say it again, is not only set goals, but be active in pursuing them and be active after you have achieved them."

Gordon is survived by his wife of over 66 years, Geraldine (Gerry), and his two children, Sally and Stuart, and one grandchild.