

An Appreciation for Community

Based on an interview of Ed Flournoy by Alissa N. Hudson in April 2012

Ed Flournoy, originally from Richmond, Virginia, graduated from the University of Richmond with a Bachelor of Arts in History, Phi Beta Kappa, in 1952. He earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of Richmond Law School in 1955, where he was a member of the McNeill Law (Honor) Society. His first job after law school was as a claims representative for State Farm Insurance Company. After ten years with the company, and numerous promotions, he was managing the State Farm Offices in Delaware and part of Maryland, when he suddenly realized he wanted to return to Virginia to practice law. To facilitate that transfer, he posted an ad seeking employment through a Virginia State Bar Journal, which was answered by an attorney from Manassas named Harold Hersch. Flournoy took the position with Hersch and said, "It's the best thing that could have happened to me at the time. [He] was a wonderful person as a mentor."

In 1965, Harold Hersch's law practice was located in the Hersch and Bridges Building, 9113 Church Street, in Old Town Manassas. Flournoy's practice was comprised primarily of personal injury work, drawing on his experience at State Farm, and criminal defense work. He worked with Hersch for ten years; then set up his own practice in the same building where he worked until his retirement in 2000.

When asked who he admired most, of the attorneys practicing in the area when he arrived, he mentioned Percy Thornton. Flournoy described Judge Thornton as "...an excellent lawyer, a wonderful person, a salt of the earth type of man who would help anyone. Judge Thornton was just a wonderful judge, no nonsense, to the point, totally completely fair. He's what every Judge should be."

Ed Flournoy also spoke glowingly about Harold Hersch, describing him as having "a brilliant mind, a totally honest person. As a young lawyer I'm so fortunate to have had an association with him. He was five years older than me, but he had practiced law right out of law school, so he had fifteen years' experience. He was just a marvelous human being and anything he told you, you didn't have to have in writing, you could take it to the bank." Hersch was also an excellent businessman who "knew real estate like the palm of his hand." According to Flournoy, Hersch anticipated the development of the area which now surrounds the I-66 and Route 234 exchange, and along with other investors purchased the then undeveloped land in what we know today as the greater Coverstone area.

Other attorneys practicing in the Manassas area when Ed Flournoy arrived were Selwyn Smith, W. Hill Brown, Ralph Coon, Bill Stephens, Jim Davenport and Turner Smith. On the other end of the county, Flournoy recalled Gordon Heath and Floyd Bagley. He also recalled Stanley Owens, Tom Beane, Tom Underwood and Lacey Compton, Sr., saying that together, these attorneys "were at the heart and core of legal representation at the time." It is interesting to note that Brown, Owens and Compton were three of the seven founding members of the PWC Bar Association back in 1941. Flournoy reflected pleasantly on the camaraderie among the lawyers practicing in the area. He became a member of the PWC Bar, which he described as having more of a social focus at that time, and fondly remembered bar meetings and an elaborate party at Ed McGolrick's home. Everyone knew each other in the legal community and Flournoy enjoyed that sense of collegiality.

Flournoy described the greater Manassas community in 1965 as an "extended hamlet. It was just beautiful." While he was starting a law practice, his wife, Mary, worked as a nurse at PW Hospital. They have always lived within the city limits, raised their two children here, and enjoyed going to football games on Friday nights. There was only one grocery store in town when they arrived, no fast food restaurants, and area pharmacies still had lunch counters. There were many old established churches in Old Towne, and he recalled the construction of the First Baptist Church on the corner of Sudley and

Stonewall Roads. Flournoy was a member of the Manassas JC's, (a men's civic group), was active in the Mental Health Association and served on the board of the Speech and Hearing Clinic which his wife, Mary, helped to establish in the area. His appreciation of community was evident throughout this interview and he seems to have truly enjoyed the last 47 years in Manassas both professionally and personally, "a community where people know each other."