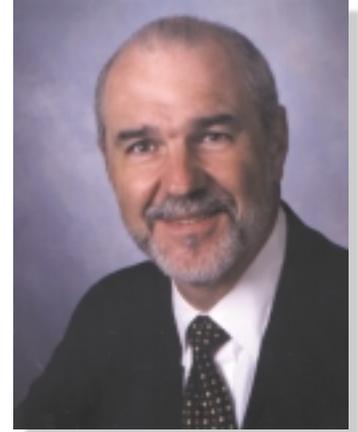


Joseph Condo Installed as State Bar President



The foothills of the Adirondack mountains around Lake Champlain, in upper New York State, have attracted vacationers for as long as Joseph Condo can remember. The new president of the Virginia State Bar grew up in and around Plattsburgh — in those idyllic natural surroundings.

“It was a great place to grow up,” Condo says, but Plattsburgh was small and economically depressed, and “not a particularly great place to settle down and make a living . . . There was a handful of lawyers in our town. Those who were financially successful made their money outside of their practice of law. I don’t think my life as a lawyer or as a person would be anything like what it is if I had stayed in northern New York.”

Condo’s father was the middle of five children of Sicilian immigrants, and the first of his siblings to be born in the United States. In October 1948, three days before Condo was born, his dad opened Condo Pharmacy, which is still in business in Plattsburgh (though no longer in the family). Joe Condo’s mother was the daughter of French-Canadians who had settled in a hamlet just inside the U.S. border, about 20 minutes from Plattsburgh.

Condo says he decided in elementary school that a sure road to politics—his fascination at an early age—was through the law. “Many of my parents’ friends were doctors or lawyers. And a lot of those lawyers seemed to me to be the people who made things happen—they were on the hospital board, on the town council. They ran things.”

After attending parochial schools in New York, and graduating from LeMoyne College, a Jesuit college in Syracuse, Condo applied to Albany Law School, “as any self-respecting aspiring lawyer in New York would,” but wasn’t accepted because of his “modest” LSAT scores.

Then a recruiter from Catholic University Law School, by the name of Arthur John Keeffe, visited LeMoyne to interview applicants. Condo describes Keeffe as a colorful, “Horace-Rumpole-like” figure, complete with vest, fob and watch chain, and a huge Mont Blanc fountain pen, “who thought that every law student ought to have a working knowledge of Gilbert & Sullivan as a condition for graduating. Keeffe was a marvelous man. And he took a shine to me. He went back to Washington and, I think, instructed the CU admissions committee to accept me.”

A week after graduating from LeMoyne, Condo married Chris Pascale, originally from Erie, Pennsylvania, who lived in Syracuse and was a day student at LeMoyne. (He and Chris have two daughters, ages 25 and 27, and celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary in June.)

The summer after their marriage, the Condos moved to the Washington, D.C. area. They loved it, for the social life, the relatively mild climate—and he, especially, for the politics. One summer during law school, he worked as an intern on Capitol Hill and, he says, caught “Potomac Fever.” He believed that even the lowest staff had a chance to “be in control, work the levers, make a difference.” He dropped his resume in congressional placement offices to try to find a part-time job after his internship, but nobody noticed—at least not right away.

A couple of years later, near his completion of law school, Condo was looking for work, weighing a career in politics or government against entering private practice in Virginia. Then one of the resumes he’d dropped off two years earlier was pulled out of a file by Congressman Peter Rodino, then Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Rodino was looking for an administrative assistant. It was 1973, and the country was in the midst of the Watergate scandal, and on the cusp of the historic Judiciary Committee hearings that led to the impeachment of Richard Nixon. Rodino interviewed Condo and offered him the job, but there was a catch: he had to start immediately after graduation, with no time off to take the bar exam. Even though Condo had no other job prospects, he and Chris decided, after “some pretty intense soul-searching,” that he should decline the offer, and he took the Virginia bar exam.

Looking back, he still finds it hard to believe that, so early in life, “we somehow had the foresight and the maturity to see that taking that job would be a mistake. My life would have been completely consumed by the impeachment process. I would never have seen my wife and child, and I probably wouldn’t have a marriage,” he says.



His Law Partner Comments: “A Sense of Optimism”

It’s no surprise to those of us who practice law with Joe that he has ascended to this leadership position. For as long as I have known him, he has emphasized the importance of bar service. First with the Fairfax Bar Association and then with the State Bar, Joe put into action that which others just talk about—the need to give back to the bar.

The other thing that’s remarkable about Joe is that he has achieved this level of success, both professionally and politically, without losing a sense of optimism for the future and a committed belief that he will make a difference. At this point, after years of working on bar projects and having the usual mix of success, compromise, and occasional defeat, he would be entitled to be jaded; instead, he is genuinely energized by the opportunities he sees coming from the bar presidency.

Our only concern is that he’ll put too much energy into making his term as president a complete success. We’d like to see him around here over the next year, too.

*David D. Masterman, Esq.
Condo & Masterman*

2000–2001 VSB President Joseph Condo, with wife, Chris, and daughters Morrigan (left) and Andrea (right).

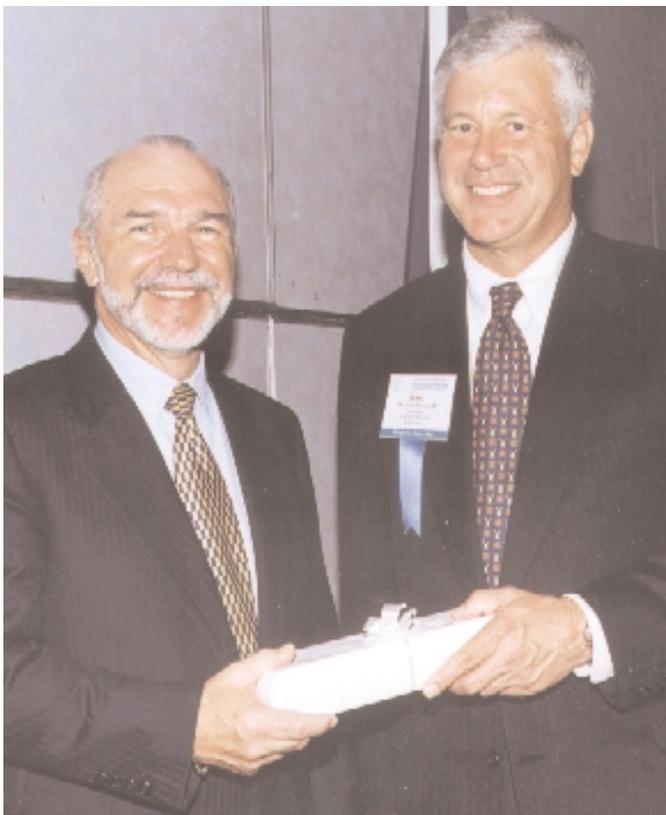
After about a year’s practice with two small, Northern Virginia law firms, Condo went solo, taking over the practice of an experienced family law practitioner who was leaving private practice to become a law professor. In 1979 he joined what was then known as Rees, Broome, Birken & Condo (now Rees, Broome & Diaz). He was a partner there until 1993, when he left to found his own domestic-relations firm. He says he now knows that family law was his destiny: “It is probably what I was put here to do—in terms of temperament and talents.”

Condo first became involved in the local bar for the same reasons many young lawyers do: to network, to help his practice grow. But he soon found that he thoroughly enjoyed working in bar activities, especially getting to know and work with his fellow lawyers. He eventually served as president of the Fairfax Bar Association, then chaired the VSB’s Family Law Section, was elected to Bar Council, and rose, committee-by-committee, to the chairmanship of the State Bar’s Professionalism Committee that oversees the VSB’s professionalism course. It was this position, he says, that crystallized his interest in the mission of the State Bar. “It [the course] helped me appreciate what an absolute privilege it is to do what we do for a living. It reminded me that

the profession doesn't get credit for its essential role in society, being the glue that holds the whole legal and political system together."

"I realize that not a lot of what I start—if anything—is going to come to fruition during my year as bar president, but I mean to plant a lot of seeds. I have an obligation to do as much as I can to try to recharge [lawyers'] pride in the profession . . . to open their minds a little bit about their ability to change things or actually make a difference." Condo concluded by paraphrasing a quotation, long a favorite of his, from Robert Kennedy. The full quote reads like this:

Let no one be dismayed by the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills. Few of us will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can change a small portion of events. And in the sum total of these acts will be written the history of our generation. ☪



VSB President Joe Condo and Immediate Past-President W. Scott Street, III at the VSB annual meeting in June.

Joseph A. Condo

Education:

B.A., Political Science, LeMoyne College

J.D., Columbus School of Law, Catholic University of America

Law Firm:

Principal, Condo & Masterman, P.C., Vienna, Va.

Other Law-Related Positions:

Commissioner in Chancery, 19th Judicial Circuit

Judge Pro Tempore, 19th Judicial Circuit

Neutral Case Evaluator, 19th Judicial Circuit

Fairfax Bar Association

President, 1985-86

Judicial Screening Committee, 1988-91 (Chair, 1990-91)

Virginia State Bar

President 2000-2001

President-elect 1999-2000

Member of Council 1987-1993; 1995-present

Executive Committee 1997-present

Chair, Committee on

Professionalism 1997-1999

Chair, Committee on

Bench-Bar Relations 1990-1993

Faculty, Professionalism Course 1992-1995

Judicial Nominations

Committee 1993-1996

Budget & Finance Committee 1996-2000

Chair, Family Law Section 1986-1987

Fellow, American Academy of

Matrimonial Lawyers 1984-present

Best Lawyers in America, 1983-2000 editions

"Washington's Best

Divorce Lawyers,"

Washingtonian Magazine March 2000