

Maestro

by John Y. Richardson Jr., 2007–08 Conference of Local Bar Associations Chair



*No; the two kinds of people on earth
I mean
Are the people who lift, and the people
who lean.*

— “Which Are You?”
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Several years ago, I wrote a president’s column in my local bar newsletter about what epitaphs tell about a person.

We cannot predict what we will be remembered for when we are gone. In many cases, it’s what the epitaph does not say that is most telling. One of my favorites was that of a Virginia lawyer who was described as “an avid golfer.”

A few weeks after my column ran, I was stopped by a lawyer I knew only slightly. He said he was moved by my column and, although the birth of his first child was imminent, he was eager to lend his hand to a worthwhile bar event. In the months that followed, he took a major role in a unique fundraiser for a local charity and the local bar association. This gentleman should lose no sleep over his legacy.

I was thinking of that episode recently when I was moved by the work of Fairfax attorney Edward L. Weiner, a member of the Conference of Local Bar Associations.

Fairfax has a lot to offer. Finding one’s niche is not always easy. Ed Weiner does not do things in the customary manner—he creates niches. A few years ago he was attending a recital at the George Mason University Department of Music. He was impressed by the music, but distressed by the small audience. As a member of

the Fairfax Bar Foundation board, he saw that the two organizations might complement each other.

From Ed’s ability to look at the flower and avoid the thorns blossomed a new venture: Jazz 4 Justice. Due largely to Ed and his wife Maura’s efforts, the event has grown from a standing-room-only crowd in a small theater to the elegant George Mason University Center for the Arts. The event consistently earns a substantial sum of money for the foundation, which contributes a portion to the music program. Musical instruments have been bought and donated. The corpus that funds the bar foundation’s charitable gifts has grown to benefit many programs in need.

Each year, Ed oversees all the critical factors: the arrangements, the musical guests, the time and day of the week. He is a tireless promoter. Those of us who serve with Ed on the Conference of Local Bar Associations board have been given more than one Jazz 4 Justice baseball hats.

The fifth annual concert was held in November 2007 at the GMU Center on a Friday night. I was there with some other CLBA members. Also attending were state and local bar presidents, judges, legislators, and prominent members of the community.

The concert was fabulous. The George Mason’s Jazz Ensemble was incredible by itself. Members of the music faculty and a six-year-old trumpet prodigy guest added to the unique character of the event. In the foyer following the concert, there was a jam session by members of the ensemble and other

musicians who had just walked in. Many in the crowd stayed to enjoy the after-concert music and conversation.

The small CLBA contingent attended the concert to see Ed, whom we affectionately call “Maestro,” conduct one of the concert numbers. He lived up to all our expectations and then some. Coming onto the stage in his showman manner, he spoke briefly and quietly to the musicians. Once he started, the stage was his. He put on a show. It was an evening none of us will soon forget.

Footnote: On Saturday evening, February 2, 2008, at the Verizon Center in Washington, D.C., after the conclusion of the Washington Capitals hockey game, Ed put on another uniform.

His daughter Maurissa is in remission from recurrent respiratory papillomatosis, a condition that causes rapidly growing tumors on vocal cords, larynx, and lungs and sometimes requires numerous surgeries. Maura, Ed’s wife, is on the board of directors of the RRP Foundation, and Ed is national fundraising chairman.

February 2 was the Sixth Annual RRP Hockey Night, and major contributors to the foundation were recognized. Concluding the event was a hockey game in which Ed, who plays in two hockey leagues, challenged the limits of his physical ability to benefit the foundation.

Ed Weiner will not have to worry about finding text for describing his life. Ed is a person who lifts. He lifts us all.