

When Seasons Change

I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

—Stephen Grellet 1773-1855

Jimmy F. Robinson Jr., 2005–2006 Young Lawyers Conference President



Earlier this year, my family suffered a tremendous loss. The matriarch of my family, my great grandmother, Mae Ola English (“Aunt Mae”) passed away. Her generosity, love and leadership served as the foundation on which five living generations stood and the glue that connected our many parts. Always conscientious, Aunt Mae, seeing the moon on the horizon, prepared for the inevitable in painstaking detail. As was typical in almost all dealings with Aunt Mae, there was little left for us to do, but much that we would learn. She was prepared for seasons to change, and her example served as a lesson for all of us.

The seasons of our lives serve as chapters of change. Each season takes us on a journey where we are constantly growing, evolving, transforming ourselves; gaining more insight, wisdom and courage; and challenging ourselves to go further, be better, do more, take less and give from the heart. The reality of life is that we are only here for a few seasons. While most members of the Young Lawyers Conference are changing from the spring to summer of their lives, there are plenty in our ranks who are moving into their fall or winter. As young lawyers we are acutely aware of the many issues facing today’s senior citizen.

Some of us are fortunate to still be able to call or visit our aging parents. Life for them can change at any given moment. As our parents and family members move into the season of life where age-related illnesses such as heart attack, stroke, arthritis or dementia trigger concerns about the future and how to plan for it, the Young Lawyers Conference becomes a resource for them.

The Young Lawyers Conference recognizes that the constantly changing laws of our commonwealth can become confusing to most people. Therefore, partnering with the Senior Lawyers Conference, we publish the *Senior Citizens Handbook*.

The *Senior Citizens Handbook*, first published in 1979, is a joint project of the Senior and Young Lawyers conferences. Over the years, we have jointly distributed tens of thousands of copies. The current handbook addresses a broad range of laws, issues and programs affecting Virginia’s elder citizens. It provides practical guidance for dealing with many of the problems faced by older Virginians and includes comprehensive resource and con-

tact information to aid readers in locating organizations that serve seniors.

Among the many topics covered are health care (Medicare, Medicaid, Medigap, managed care, long-term care insurance, Alzheimer’s disease), long-term care (nursing homes, assisted living, adult day care, home care), housing (landlord-tenant issues, reverse mortgages), real estate transfers, probate and estate administration, advance directives, guardianship, funeral services, consumer issues, age discrimination, elder abuse, grandparent rights to visitation and custody, and financial assistance (Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, pensions, veterans benefits, federal tax relief).

This handbook is an invaluable tool for many seniors who otherwise would not have access to this information. This useful guide has been designed, updated and even translated into Spanish to remind seniors and their family members of their many rights and privileges as citizens, and to prepare, as Aunt Mae did, for the seasons to change. Each year that the handbook is updated, we hope that it will help answer questions or locate services that may be beneficial.

Participating in this project allows the Young Lawyers Conference to pay tribute to our valued senior Americans who protected our freedom, preserved our legal heritage, marched and sat down so that we could enjoy equality under the law. We salute these valued citizens. Many of our senior Americans fought world wars to carry our democracy forward into the twenty-first century. Just as important, many continue to fight the domestic wars of drugs, child abuse, spousal abuse, discrimination and poverty. Our contribution to this handbook allows the Young Lawyers Conference, in our own way, to honor our seniors and extend our appreciation by helping them with their legal rights.

William T. Wilson and the Senior Lawyers Conference are doing a tremendous job distributing these handbooks and educating our seniors across the state about their rights and how to plan for the future. If you want to help, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you need handbooks for your “Aunt Mae” or any other family member, please give me a call at (804) 783-7540.