

# Outside the Courtroom and Inside the Classroom:

## Career Attorney Discovers Joy of Teaching

By Kimberly L. Wright

Sometimes people look for new opportunities, a change of direction. Other times, in an act of kismet, new opportunities find people.

George C. “Bud” Garikes didn’t intend to change careers in 2001 after 19 years of practicing law. At that time, he was an attorney with almost 20 years of experience, including plenty of governmental legal exposure, who was pursuing a job with the Bush administration. He was the epitome of a career attorney immensely satisfied representing the public interest in court.

But something happened on the way to a political appointment. Something seemingly trivial crossed his path—a want ad. A pivotal advertisement in the *Washington Post* piqued his curiosity and changed his life. He has since transitioned from career attorney to educator, and he hasn’t looked back. Garikes is now the upper school director of St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School, a private school in Alexandria, Va.

Despite what seems to be two totally unrelated career tracks, Garikes finds himself employing the same skills he learned and honed as an attorney on a daily basis as an educator and administrator. The mentors who helped him become an ethical and successful fighter for the public good as a government attorney now help him influence the public good outside the courtroom and inside the classroom, helping to influence the success of young people.

### Legal Aspirations

Garikes didn’t start out with an inclination toward a career in education. Graduating with a bachelor of arts from the University of Alabama in 1979, he majored in history and minored in English and speech communication, along the way taking classes that would help him prepare for trial work as an attorney.

He soon zeroed in on a legal career. Garikes continued his academic studies at the University of Alabama, graduating from law school in 1982. At Alabama, he found mentors to help light his way: faculty members George Peach Taylor, Nat Hansford and Richard Thigpen, all three members of the Alabama State Bar. Their lessons would influence his growth and development as a lawyer and, later, as an educator himself.

According to the University of Alabama School of Law spokesperson Aaron Latham, Taylor was the faculty member



*Garikes, with two upper school students, feels “nothing is more important and rewarding as working with young people.”*

who established the university’s trial advocacy program classes and taught them for many years. His contributions included developing the curriculum, finding lawyers to teach sections of the class and helping mentor trial competition teams. He also taught classes in criminal law, criminal procedure and equity. Taylor was very available to students and often spent time outside of class encouraging and advising students. Upon his retirement, he became the public defender for Tuscaloosa County. His pre-faculty life included volunteering with the Peace Corps and working with several civil rights programs.

Taylor’s legacy is held in such high esteem that the law school recognizes excellent students with the George Peach Taylor for Award for Trial Advocacy. The award is sponsored by the firm of Hare, Wynn, Newell & Newton LLP and is presented to University of Alabama law students selected through competition as members of the national trial teams.

Garikes noted about Taylor: “He would take intangible concepts and show you the practical effects of them, which made his lessons memorable. I found myself readily drawing upon his lessons many years later. I thought I was well-trained by him.”



*As the upper school director, Garikes continues the traditions of rigorous preparation for college, as well as good character, spiritual development and social awareness.*

Hansford, who taught contract law and moot court, made an impact on the prospective attorney despite Garikes's lack of interest in that particular niche of the legal profession.

"Hansford was a tremendously gifted individual," he said. "He was always accessible to students. He was a delight as an instructor, and his intelligence was apparent in the way he presented the material. He took dry material and made it interesting."

Like Garikes's other instructors whom he held in the highest esteem at the University of Alabama, Thigpen's concern for his students was not limited to class hours, and didn't end at the conclusion of the course. Instead, Thigpen made himself available to students for advice about the legal profession and career opportunities, much to the benefit of the student body. Garikes, too, consulted him on matters such as career opportunities.

"He was a mentor to a lot of students," said Garikes. "He was a lawyer and instructor with the highest quality of integrity."

After he plunged into legal practice, Garikes considered himself blessed to serve for a year as clerk with then-Associate Justice Hugh Maddox of the Alabama Supreme Court. To a young lawyer just learning the ropes, Maddox made quite an impression.

"I learned from Justice Maddox what it meant to be an ethical lawyer," said Garikes. "He represented what a justice was supposed to be, and his high standards made a great impression on me just starting out. He was a tremendous mentor and writer. I was very fortunate to have gotten my start in my legal career by working with Justice Maddox."

Maddox, who retired in 2001 after 31 years on the Alabama Supreme Court, is a multifaceted man and a justice held in very high esteem. In recognition of the justice's advocacy for improving professionalism throughout the American and Alabama legal communities, in October 2008 he received the prestigious American Inns of Court's 2008 A. Sherman Christensen Award at the American Inns of Court's Celebration of Excellence, hosted by Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., at the U. S. Supreme Court.

After his tenure as Justice Maddox's clerk ended, Garikes entered private practice, working in a two-man firm in Baldwin

County with the late Young Dempsey. He left Alabama to work in a private firm in D.C. From there, he branched out into government service, becoming a government lawyer at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Department of Energy and International Trade Commission, as well as working in political campaigns.

The responsibility and challenges of representing the public in the legal arena thrilled Garikes. "As a young lawyer, you get a tremendous amount of responsibility very quickly, including litigation. You get the responsibility of representing the public with the challenges of resources. Government lawyers don't have the same resources available that major law firms have, for instance, paralegals. You get the opportunity and challenge of learning your craft very quickly while representing the public interest."

Those seeking to make a career of representing the public do well to find a niche and become an expert in it, says Garikes. "There is a great opportunity for advancement for those willing to work hard and those with the patience to stay the course. There are opportunities for career lawyers as well as those who are political appointees, which change more or less every four years."

Garikes enjoyed the opportunity to make a positive impact on the world around him by serving as a problem-solver in cases where individuals came up against difficulties. "I found the challenges of finding resolutions and solving problems tremendously enjoyable."

## Foray into Education

Garikes discovered the advertisement for a government and history teacher at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in a July Sunday edition of the *Washington Post*.

"At the time my children were enrolled in an independent school in our D.C. neighborhood of Capitol Hill," he said. "I was serving on the board of the trustees for the school (Capitol Hill Day School) and knew two important things about independent schools: In order to teach and join a faculty a candidate did not have to possess a teaching certificate. Also, a school the caliber of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes usually did not advertise positions and that it was late in the hiring season."



*Together recently were Bud Garikes, retired Alabama Supreme Court Justice Hugh Maddox and ASB Executive Director Keith Norman. Both Garikes and Norman served as law clerks for Justice Maddox.*

Intrigued, he sent a resume to the school. He received the call to interview a week later, and was soon offered a job to teach advanced placement U.S. and comparative government and ninth-grade world history.

The move didn't come without some controversy on the home front, for he had initially failed to talk over his prospective career change with his spouse.

"My wife, Margaret, a lawyer and a top lobbyist with the American Medical Association, at first did not fully endorse my move from law and government to teaching," said Garikes. His enthusiasm for education soon won her over. "She quickly saw how happy and satisfied at work I was and became my greatest fan of the career move."

He also enjoyed an unexpected bonus of becoming an educator, having more time to spend with his own children, Kerry, now a first-year architecture student at the University of Virginia and a 2008 graduate of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School, and Ryan, a junior at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School.

## Valued Skills

Garikes soon discovered the great value of his legal background in the educational area, and he found himself employing the same skills he used as an attorney on a daily basis in the

classroom to inspire the next generation to learn, grow and flourish throughout their lives.

"As a lawyer, you must be able to anticipate possible questions as part of your preparation for litigation," said Garikes. "You have to know your subject well. You must learn to be flexible and to think on your feet. You must have excellent skills in communication, both verbal and writing. All those skills I employed as a lawyer I still use, only this time I'm preparing a classroom presentation instead of a courtroom presentation."

## Moving into Administration

Garikes is now the director of the upper school at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School. "I am the equivalent of the principal of the high school," he said. "The head of the school is Joan Holden, a remarkable educator and leader."

The move into administration was not among his original goals as an educator, but it soon became a natural extension of his educational career.

"When I started teaching eight years ago, I had no desire to move into administration," Garikes said. "I loved the teaching, the kids, the classroom, the schedule, and the entire community."

An inspired, enthusiastic educator, he ambitiously sought to improve his skills rather than move up. "My original goals were

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to simply improve each year in the classroom, become involved with my students in their extracurricular activities and pursue my passion for reading history and other books,” he said.

However, as often happens, opportunities knock for those dedicated and talented at their craft, and he soon embarked upon an administrative role. “After three years an opening arose and I became chair of the history department,” said Garikes.

It wasn’t long before another opportunity presented itself, and inspired by Holden’s faith in his abilities he reached a higher level of responsibility. He is now in his fourth year as director.

“The next year the long-time upper school director left, and after a lot of thought and talks with my wife and some colleagues, I submitted my name for consideration of the upper school director slot,” he said. “Joan Holden, who had faith in me by originally by offering me a teaching job, gave me the chance to lead our upper school. She’s the woman who allowed me to change my career. She’s a remarkable leader and a remarkable educator. I continue to learn from her example on a daily basis.”

In his current position, Garikes leads the faculty of what is roughly analogous to a high school, which serves 449 of the school’s 1,124 students.

The school has benefited greatly from his late-in-life career change.

“Bud Garikes’s passion for American history and government, combined with his real-world legal experience, has translated so well into teaching and administration for St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School,” said Holden. “Students clearly feel and benefit from his career commitment and choices every day. This is someone who has achieved success in one field and then actively chosen academia as the next step. I am delighted and honored to have Bud Garikes at our school. He sets a high standard for himself and his students and is a compassionate educator.”

## Bright Students Light His Way

Through his educational career, Garikes adheres to the original vision that inspired him to change careers and help prepare America’s youth for the challenges and opportunities of the future. He found that as much as he inspires his students to reach for excellence in their pursuit of their dreams, they inspire him with their enthusiasm to learn and limitless potential to share the future in their image.

“Nothing is more important and rewarding than working with young people,” he said. “Our students are bright, good kids, and they work hard at academics, arts, community service and athletics at our school. We prepare them to continue their educations at great colleges across United States. If I can influence a young person to make good choices, to find a passion for learning, an understanding to serve and to treat others with respect, then I have done a good job as a teacher.”

Garikes is also inspired by a dedicated staff of educators who share a common goal of creating the best possible future for their students through their everyday lessons and mentoring.

“We are blessed at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School with dedicated teachers and administrators and each day we all work

toward the common vision of supporting our students,” he said. “I have often told people that since joining our school and becoming a teacher that I have not had a bad day at work and that remains true. Working with young people keeps you optimistic, keeps you laughing and can inspire you each day.” ▲▼▲



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## St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School

One of the six Episcopal Church schools in the Diocese of Virginia, St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School has a long tradition of providing an excellent college preparatory education in northern Virginia. The school began as two separate single-sex schools, St. Agnes, founded in 1924, and St. Stephen’s, founded in 1944.



Established by a group of Alexandria Episcopalians, both schools were created for students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a focus on intellectual, physical and moral development. Over the years each school established its own curriculum and developed its own rich traditions, often coming together as brother-sister schools on important academic, athletic and social occasions. Both schools instituted an honor code, which remains in place to this day.

In 1991, the two schools merged to become one co-educational Episcopal day school with one administration and two campuses. The school has grown to include 1,124 students from diverse backgrounds and a talented faculty and staff of more than 200 men and women whose aims for their students include high standards of academic and artistic achievement, moral growth and behavior, service to others, and athletic endeavor. While St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes students undergo rigorous preparation for college, the school equally promotes the good character, spiritual development and social awareness embraced by the Episcopal school tradition.

—from the St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School Web site