

Memories of a Time

When Young Men and Women Were Asked to Serve Their Country

By Murphey Rogers, a 1943 graduate of Georgia Law

The fall quarter of 1941 started with the prospect of being one of the best at the University of Georgia. The leaves were magnificent on Ag Hill overlooking Sanford Stadium. A great football team was beginning to blossom as the freshman team of 1939 had developed into a national contender. College life was never better and we were riding on cloud nine.

Then, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and a utopian college life suddenly came to a close. I will never forget President Franklin Roosevelt's speech declaring war as several of us gathered around the checkout desk of the Alexander Campbell King Law Library at the top of the curved stairway in Harold Hirsch Hall.

The mass exodus of students leaving the law school began with the winter quarter of 1942. There were no deferments for law students because service in the Judge Advocate General Corps was predictably nil. By the end of the spring quarter of 1942, only a few advance R.O.T.C. students, V7 naval officer candidates and those physically unable to serve were all that remained at the law school. Even our dean, J. Alton Hosch, was serving our country (Hosch was called into active duty, from the U.S. Army Reserve, in the early spring of 1941).

About this time, the law school at Emory University closed its daytime teaching operation and the law school at Mercer University shut its doors. I remember Emory's Dean Charles J. Hilkey taught at our law school until the end of the war. I do not recall any Mercer law professors being there before I was called into the service, but I do remember several Mercer transfer students.

The U.S. Navy took over all the dormitories, and we all lived in town. The law school was the headquarters for our daily existence. We left home early every morning and came back after the law library closed every night. We were a close knit group, who seriously tried to get as many hours of law school accreditation as possible before going to war.

Our acting dean, Henry A. Shinn, did everything possible to help us, and we had a good close relationship with all of our professors.



A recent photo of Georgia Law alumnus Murphey Rogers.

The residence requirements and the hours necessary for graduation were adjusted. If you attended college for at least one-half of a quarter and were called into the service, the law school would automatically credit you with the whole quarter's work. The number of quarters required to graduate were reduced from nine to seven and one-half. I graduated in absentia from law school in seven and one-half quarters. One quarter, I loaded up with 23 hours, and it required much study and hard work.

On June 30, 1943, I and the remaining members of my class went down to the Clarke County Courthouse and took the bar exam. At that time, there were 50 essay-type questions. The test began at 8:00 a.m. and lasted until 12:00 p.m.

My military orders directed that I report to the Navy on July 8, 1943. In August, I was notified that I passed the bar but I was not sworn in as a lawyer until July 1946.

The entering law class of 1941 was very active throughout World War II, but it also had its share of tragedies. I ran into Victor L. Duke in Chicago, IL, about three weeks before he was killed in an airplane accident in 1943. One of my very best friends, William C. (Bill) Parker Jr., was killed in action while fighting in southern France. Fred L. Belcher was captured and imprisoned by the Germans in the famous Stalag 13. I have heard that Erle Cocke Jr. narrowly escaped death from a German firing squad when a rifle misfired and he was abandoned among his fallen comrades. Arthur K. Bolton distinguished himself by being one of the first lieutenants, if not the first, to cross Germany's Rhine River during World War II. He never really recovered from a spinal wound he received while attempting to rescue one of his men who was wounded by a German sniper. Arthur never let his handicap interfere with his life and distinguished himself and our class by becoming an attorney

general for the state of Georgia. Arthur had more intestinal fortitude than anyone I ever knew.

Roughly one-third of the original 43 members of my freshman class completed law school before going into the service. Another 10 completed their legal education after the war. In total, you may be wondering how this group of law students, turned soldiers, fared as lawyers. The entering class of 1941, although handicapped by World War II, distinguished itself within the legal profession by producing the following: one White House counsel, Robert J. Lipshutz; one attorney general for the state of Georgia, Arthur K. Bolton; one Georgia state senator and state representative James B. Langford; two Superior Court judges, Robert L. Royal and William R. (Billy) Killian; and approximately 20 of the best down-to-earth, every-day lawyers who ever hung out a shingle. ■

Rogers was born in Ocilla, GA, where he has been practicing law for 57 years. He earned his bachelor's and law degrees at UGA, passed the bar and entered the U.S. military by the age of 21. His World War II service included active sea duty in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. While at UGA, he was an associate justice of the law school's Honor Council and served as president of the Demosthenian Literary Society. He is the author of a fictitious novel, *Take Us the Foxes*, which depicts law practice in South Georgia during the 1940s.

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1. Acting Dean Henry A. Shinn. He was the school's leader from 1941 to 1947, while Dean J. Alton Hosch served in World War II. Source: 1942 Pandora.
2. In 1942, students studied in the Alexander Campbell King Law Library (now the Hatton Lovejoy Courtroom). Source: 1942 Pandora.
3. The back of Hirsch Hall in 1942. Source: 1942 Pandora.
4. A 1942 postcard showing the front of Hirsch Hall.
5. A regulation Navy haircut was decreed for every pilot trainee at the U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School at UGA.
6. Physical conditioning exercise for U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School pilots on the UGA campus.