



## The 2004 Joseph Branch Professionalism Award Recipient E.D. (Ed) Gaskins, Jr.

Each year, the Joseph Branch Professionalism Award is presented to a member of the Wake County Bar Association whose ethics, integrity and service to clients, the community and the Bar mirror the standards set by the award's namesake, the late Joseph Branch, former Chief Justice of the N.C. Supreme Court.

Ironically, the 2004 recipient of the Professionalism Award has personified a lack of civility toward other lawyers, lack of respect toward local judges and rudeness to his office staff. He has been the very model of the lawyer who refuses to return telephone calls, misses deadlines, and fails to appear in court for calendared proceedings. Over and over again he has been seen by other lawyers displaying the sort of conduct that the Wake County Bar Association's Professionalism Support Initiative ("PSI") attempts to identify and prevent by positive intervention and assistance to attorneys who have problems with their practices.

This seeming contradiction makes sense only when you understand that this year's Professionalism Award winner is E.D. (Ed) Gaskins, Jr. In a video produced by the PSI and shown to bar groups throughout the state, Ed convincingly portrayed a lawyer whose behavior leads to a visit from peers who want to provide support and assistance. It is certainly ironic that Ed, whose reputation for honesty, integrity and professionalism is secure, was chosen to play the role of the attorney who has lost control of his practice. Ed's convincing video performance emanates from his commitment to spread the word about the PSI's services to all members of the Bar, even if doing so requires him to assume a role for which he is personally very ill-suited.

Ed Gaskins was born in New Bern and graduated from Walter Bickett High School in Monroe. He received a B.A. in English from Wake Forest in 1963, and a J.D. from Duke in 1966. He and his wife, Ann, have two daughters. His community activities range from involvement in school PTAs to membership on steering committees for school board referendums; and from serving on the Board of Directors of Theatre in the Park, the Triangle Interfaith Alliance, and the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce to a lay leadership role in Hayes Barton Baptist Church.

Ed's legal career has been equally impressive. Since 1990, he has been managing partner of Everett, Gaskins, Hancock & Stevens and except for the two years he served as a Captain in U.S. Army Intelligence (serving in Vietnam) he practiced as a trial lawyer from 1966 to 1990 in the firm that eventually became Adams, McCullough and Beard.

His service to our profession has been varied and full. He has been named to the Best Lawyers in America and as Boss of the Year by the Wake County Legal Secretaries Association. He is a Founding Master of the Braxton Craven Inn of Court at Duke Law School, of which he has served as President. Ed is an active member of numerous Bar Associations, having served on the professionalism committees of both the American Bar Association and of the Wake County Bar Association and as a member of the Board of Governors of the North Carolina Bar Association. But it is his dedication to Professionalism that has marked his service to his peers.

David Long, the Chair of the WCBA's Professionalism Committee, says, "Ed has been a mentor for countless lawyers – summer clerks, associates, colleagues, and fellow members of the bar – because of his absolute commitment to professionalism." Hugh Stevens, who has worked with Ed for 30 of the 36 years he has practiced law in Wake County, revealed that when he, Gerry Hancock and Ed discussed forming a partnership, Ed's initial focus was not clients, practice areas or financial terms; instead, he wanted to discuss ten principles that would govern the way the firm would practice law. Those principles are still displayed on the firm's office wall, reminding all who enter – attorneys, staff, and clients – of Ed's commitment to the highest ethical standards. The ten principles are now complemented by this Bar's acknowledgement of the importance of Ed's adherence to those principles – the 2004 Joseph Branch Professionalism Award.