

Victor H. Laws, Jr.

Salisbury-Victor H. Laws, Jr., age 97, longtime local lawyer and community leader, died at Wicomico Nursing Home on February 12, 2017 after a lengthy illness.

He is survived by his second wife, Elaine Taylor (Jones) Laws, formerly of Snow Hill, whom he married on July 6, 2002, and by two sons and daughters-in-law, Victor H. Laws, III (Jean) of Salisbury and Gerald A. Laws (Linda) of Arlington, Texas, four grandchildren, Michael, Jessica, Brian and Julia Laws, a sister, Margaret Laws Engle of Salisbury, age 105, a niece, Lydia Maud Welsh (Tom) of Salisbury, and a nephew George William Engle, Jr. (Cindy) of Denver, Colorado and their children. He is survived also by stepchildren Lucinda Outten, Constance Rue (John) of Salisbury and Douglas Jones of Snow Hill. Mr. Laws' first wife, Eunice Hastings Laws, formerly of Delmar, Delaware, died October 17, 1999 after a 51-year marriage.

Mr. Laws was born on May 8, 1919, to Victor H. Laws, Sr. and Maud Truitt Laws of Wango, a small farming community in southeastern Wicomico County. Mr. Laws published a book in 1990, "Maud and Other Family Legends," about his parents' generation and life in rural Wicomico County in days gone by.

Long active in local law practice, business and politics, he began his education at the one-room Wango elementary school, then graduated from Wicomico High School in 1935, attended Salisbury State Teachers College (now Salisbury University) for two years and transferred to University of Maryland at College Park, and its School of Law, receiving two degrees, an A.B. in 1939 and an LL.B. in 1941. After admission to the Maryland Bar, he first practiced in Salisbury in 1941-42 with the firm of Miles, Bailey & Clark and in Baltimore in 1942 with the firm of Miles & O'Brien. After three years of service in World War II, 1942-45, with the Army Signal Corps, including service in England and France, he returned to Miles & O'Brien (now Miles & Stockbridge) from 1945-57 as an associate and later partner, then in 1957 moved back to Salisbury where he practiced in association with several Salisbury lawyers including E. Dale Adkins, Jr., Charles J. Potts, John William Long, Hobart Hughes, George Bahen, John B. Long II, and Russell C. Dashiell, Jr. In 1984, Mr. Laws formed the law firm of Laws & Laws, P.A. with his son Victor and daughter-in-law Jean as his partners and continued in that practice (now known as Laws, Insley & Benson, P.A.) until his retirement in 2011 after more than 65 years of practice.

Mr. Laws was vice-president of the Maryland State Bar Association and president of the Wicomico County Bar Association and a member of the American Bar Association. In 1983 he was appointed by the Court of Appeals of Maryland as a trustee of the Clients' Security Trust Fund (now known as the Client Protection Fund),

a state-wide agency funded by assessments on all Maryland lawyers that provides reimbursement to clients who are defrauded by their lawyers. He became Chairman of the Fund in 1986 and served in that capacity until 1999. During his 16 years of service, the Fund's assets and caseload increased substantially. Fund trustees, including the Chairman, serve without pay.

In local politics, Mr. Laws was appointed City Solicitor of Salisbury by Mayor Boyd E. McLernon in 1960 and re-appointed in 1962 by Mayor Frank Morris, serving until 1966. He was first elected to public office in 1962 as a member of the Wicomico County Democratic State Central Committee, serving as its chairman until 1966. In 1974 he was elected to the Wicomico County Council, was re-elected in 1978 and 1982, retired in 1986 and again was elected to the Council in 1990, serving a total of 16 years, including terms as its vice-president and president. He was the first Council member to propose an annual county appropriation to benefit volunteer fire companies to help them buy fire-fighting equipment. Mr. Laws was an early and consistent advocate of amending the County Charter to establish a County Executive form of government, which was finally approved by the voters in 2004 and began to function in December, 2006.

During a rare hiatus from county government, Mr. Laws helped to mediate an impasse between the Circuit Court and County Council over how to expand or remodel the old Wicomico County Courthouse, which dates from 1878. The ad hoc committee's work led to the construction of the new Wicomico County Courts Building in use today.

Mr. Laws has been generous to the University of Maryland School of Law, supporting its annual fundraising efforts and also providing a gift that funded facilities for the law school's Legal Clinic. In recent years, he made major gifts to Wor-Wic Community College, the Salvation Army's West Salisbury Richard Hazel Youth Club, the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and Peninsula Regional Medical Center.

Mr. Laws was recognized for his leadership in local government and the legal community, receiving the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce Award in 2003. He also was honored by the Salisbury Advisory Council on Youth Activities. In 2011, the Maryland Bar Foundation bestowed on Mr. Laws its Legal Excellence Award for the Advancement of Public Service Responsibility.

Mr. Laws was involved, personally or professionally, in several real estate projects that changed the local landscape. These included the development of the Giant Food and Montgomery Ward shopping centers, and downtown Salisbury office buildings and the Waverly Plaza Shopping Center, including the former Royal Exchange Pub Restaurant, with his cousin Richard M. Laws as his partner. With partners and clients

such as Oscar Carey and Jim English, Mr. Laws helped create several Ocean City condominium high-rises. With other partners he developed the Riverside Pines subdivision and the Ocean Resorts Golf Course, and started the reclamation of an industrial site that became the Village Down River residential development.

On the occasion of his 90th birthday on May 8, 2009, he hosted a large celebration party at the Wicomico County Youth & Civic Center. Attendees included the Honorable Robert M. Bell, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and numerous other local judges, lawyers, politicians, clients, relatives and friends.

Mr. Laws was a longtime member, trustee, treasurer and deacon of the Salisbury Old School Baptist Church where he supervised several repair and renovation projects. But by 2006, the membership of the Church had declined and its location at Baptist Street and Route 50 was congested and suffered from a lack of access and parking. He then led the effort to sell the Salisbury church property, merge its membership with Forest Grove Old School Baptist Church near Parsonsburg, and modernize the Forest Grove church by adding an accessible entrance, spacious kitchen and dining area, and parking lot.

Mr. Laws was a member or former member of several local clubs, including Elks Lodge #817, Rotary Club of Salisbury, Ocean City Golf and Yacht Club, Green Hill Yacht & Country Club, and the Seagull Club at Salisbury University. In addition to golf, his hobbies were reading, writing, and foreign and cruise travel. He enjoyed ballroom dancing with both wives as a member of the Laurel and Salisbury Cotillions.

Friends may call at Holloway Funeral Home between 6 and 8 PM on Friday, February 17. On Saturday, February 18, services will be held at 3 PM, with visitation beginning at 2 PM, at the Forest Grove-Salisbury Old School Baptist Church, 6562 Forest Grove Rd., Parsonsburg, with Elder Elbert M. Robbins officiating. Burial at the Laws Family Cemetery in Wango will be private. Contributions may be made to the Forest Grove-Salisbury Old School Baptist Church, c/o Jean Leonard, 29140 Waller Rd., Delmar, MD 21875 or to a .

The family wishes to acknowledge the staff of Wicomico Nursing Home and the caretakers at Life Matters for their kindness and faithful service to Mr. Laws during his long illness.

Arrangements are in the care of Holloway Funeral Home, 501 Snow Hill Rd., Salisbury, MD 21804. Please visit www.hollowayfh.com to send condolences to the family.

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<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/delmarvanow/obituary.aspx?n=victor-laws&pid=184135389&fhid=7892#sthash.3Rt302iL.dpuf>