

Col. Paul Toolan



TOOLAN CONTINUES PRACTICING HIS 'PASSION'

Having watched his father spend his life excavating anthracite from the Earth for the Hudson Coal Company in Carbondale, Col. Paul Toolan, Esq. '42 understood early on what it meant to put in an honest day's work.

It's why Toolan, a few months beyond his 90th birthday, continues to practice law, preparing wills and allied documents, as well as settling estates.

"Sure, it sounds like a dull subject, but there is an awful lot to it," says Toolan, who works between 35-40 hours a week, continuing a career he began in the 1950s. "The laws are constantly changing, and I enjoy the challenge. I enjoy the research. It's not just a job, but a passion."

Challenging himself has never been an issue for Toolan.

Like so many people who lived through the Depression and World War II, Toolan's life was influenced by the many circumstances of the time.

After graduating as valedictorian at St. Rose High in Carbondale, Toolan enrolled in the first official class of The University of

Scranton in 1938. Prior to that, the institution went by the name St. Thomas College. Four years later, and six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Toolan graduated and joined the U.S. Army to fight the Axis.

"I graduated on the sixth of June, and on the seventh I got my military orders," Toolan recalls. "But it really wasn't a surprise, I knew it was going to happen."

After serving as an artillery officer in the Philippine Islands and the Pacific Southwest, and later working as a war crime investigator after the war's conclusion, he returned to Pennsylvania and enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in September of 1946. But shortly after earning his law degree, the Korean War commenced and he was deployed to the Far East.

Although his military experiences impeded the start of his career in law, Toolan explains it coincidentally made his education possible.

"If the war didn't come along, I don't know if I would have been able to afford law school," he says.

Once back stateside, Toolan immersed himself in law, opening his own practice in Philadelphia and specializing in estate planning and probate work. His office was a mainstay on the city's historic Chestnut Street until he closed shop two decades ago. He has continued to practice law since, working primarily out of his residence in suburban Philadelphia.

As his career prospered, Toolan's ties with the University grew stronger as he became actively involved in alumni events with his late wife, Jeanne, and directed his professional acquaintances to donate scholarship funds to Scranton.

He played an integral part in establishing the Frank O'Hara fund, honoring the late Scranton administrator, and the University's Golden Grads, a post-50 year reunion club. In 1992, Toolan also received an O'Hara Award commemorating his career in law.

Toolan's connection to the University remains today because of the experiences he acquired more than a half century ago.

He speaks fondly of his time at Scranton, when the institution's campus was comprised of just four modest buildings along Wyoming Avenue, and the class size was fewer than 200 students.

"The University was very close knit, and everybody knew everybody else," he recalls. "It was in itself an uplifting experience. And just a wonderful place to go to school."

Always an attentive and active student, Toolan, who was the president of the Class of 1942, holds his education from Scranton in high regard.

"The University means a lot to me, I am very proud of it," he says. "I believe the liberal arts approach gave me a broad outlook and a logical approach to a problem, and I believe that helped me in my career."

It's a career Toolan continues to build upon today.

