



Frank N. Cowan

August 15, 1936 - August 28, 2015

Resided in Chesterfield, VA

Obituary

COWAN, Frank

He was called affectionately, although somewhat formally, Mr. Cowan. He was also known as Counselor, Mentor and Hokie. Friends called him Podge. His wife, Marianne, called him Sweetie. Most proudly, he was called Dad by his 3 children and Pop by his 5 grandchildren.

Names alone cannot describe Frank N. Cowan, who passed away on August 28, 2015.

He was larger than that. What carried him in his 79 years, and what will be sustained as his legacy, will be his graciousness, his genuine charm, his integrity, strength, passion for knowledge, pursuit of excellence and commitment to serving others.

Frank Cowan entered the world in Danville, Virginia, on August 15, 1936, the first of two sons, to Howard Vern Cowan and Mary Keesee Cowan. Growing up in a loving, committed family, Frank and his brother, Vern, enjoyed a life of close friends, playing baseball in the local sandlot and learning from their parents the value of hard work, service and kindness.

Frank described his boyhood as "free-range," meaning, he had the freedom to explore and have adventures free of restraints. It was a simple time, in which you played with your friends until dark, took the bus or walked wherever you wanted to go and had the confidence and trust to find your way home.

It was this type of freedom and empowerment that set a pattern and calling for Frank. His life became rooted in the call for freedom – for himself and others. He believed in building upon his education, family values and work ethic to enable him (and all of us) to stand on his own, not to be reliant on others, to have the freedom to

choose his own life's path.

In school, Frank excelled as an athlete. His sand-lot days paid off and he played baseball for George Washington High School in Danville. The team went on to win two state championships.

Fortunately for the Richmond community, baseball was not his calling. After a stretch with the Pittsburgh Pirates organization, he attended Virginia Tech (then Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) and graduated in 1959 with a degree in Business Administration. He continued his education at the University of Richmond, T.C. Williams School of Law, and received his JD in 1962.

A remarkable 53 year law career began when he joined Emanuel Emroch's law firm. Frank often remarked how much he learned from his mentor, Manney Emroch, lessons he would carry forward as he became a partner in the law firm of Gordon, Cowan & Dodson. And, later, as founding member and Chairman of CowanGates law firm in Chesterfield County, which he started in 1977.

His love of the law, of people, of justice earned him several outstanding achievements in and out of the court room. He focused on preparation, active writing and finding the truth in the law and in people's stories. He was a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and has been recognized in several publications including: "The Best Lawyers in America"; "Virginia Business Legal Elite"; and "Virginia Super Lawyers". Most recently, he was selected to receive the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys' award for Excellence in Civil Litigation.

With all of his professional achievements, his proudest moments were spent with family, in service to others and with the VA Tech Hokies.

In 1962, he married Patsy Jennings Cowan. Patsy and Frank raised three boys: Neil, Chris and Brandon. For 28 years, their home was a welcome place, filled with laughter and love for family and friends. Mrs. Cowan passed away in 1990.

With clear blue eyes, a firm handshake and a contagious smile, Frank never met a stranger. He wanted to know you. And, you felt you knew him instantly. He was a man with infinite kindness. In his engagement with others, from store clerk, to delivery person, to opposing attorney, to judge, Frank treated people with the kind of respect rarely seen. He was a true gentleman.

He was deliberate in his messages: "The Joy is in the journey". He focused on helping people find and sustain their own success. And, in so doing, they could achieve their boldest goals. He believed in the goodness of people and the importance of freedom. And he was certain we all shared in the responsibility of service and empowerment of others.

This commitment to service propelled him to work on several boards and committees. He was on the Board of the Midlothian YMCA, was on the Planning

Commission for Chesterfield County and also as a Commissioner in Chancery for Chesterfield County. He served two terms as President of Salisbury Country Club.

He was instrumental in starting and volunteered regularly as an "Eager Beaver Reader" at Elkhart Middle School and later Westover Hills Elementary School. This effort propelled the launch of "Herma's Readers", in partnership with Frank Beamer, VA Tech's football coach and friend.

Frank served on the National MS Society Board of Trustees for the Virginia –West Virginia Chapter since 2008, and in 2013 became the Chairman of the board. In recognition of his passion and commitment to the MS Society and all of the community, the chapter renamed their most prestigious honor "The Frank N. Cowan Cup of Hope Award", to be presented annually at the MS Dinner of Champions.

An active Hokie, Frank could be seen in his VA Tech logoed golf shirt at football, basketball games and golf outings. He was a Senior Benefactor in Virginia Tech's UT Prosim Society, and recipient of the Virginia Tech Golf Team Appreciation Award, the highest honor the team can bestow—a fitting tribute to a man who relished his rounds of golf with his many Podges.

He chased knowledge and found tremendous pleasure in studying history, religion and cultural norms. He absorbed books and spent countless enjoyable hours in the pursuit of learning.

A man with limitless friends, boundless compassion and an unquenchable desire for knowledge and goodness, Frank will be missed by all who have known him.

His passing leaves a hole in the hearts of many, including his loving wife of 5 years, Marianne S. Cowan; three sons and their families, Neil Cowan, wife Maribeth and children Hunter and Grace; Chris Cowan, wife Lynn and children Ford and Brooke; and Brandon Cowan, wife Barbara and daughter Kennedy; brother, Vern Cowan, wife Sarah and children Ashly (Scott) and Amy (Pat), and their four children; and his long-time assistant, Teresa Brightwell.

A celebration will be held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at Salisbury Presbyterian Church in Midlothian, VA. The family will receive friends and relatives at a reception immediately following the service.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to either the Massey Cancer Center or the Frank N. Cowan Honors Scholarship for the Pamplin College of Business (Virginia Tech).

Services

Funeral Home

Bliley's - Central

3801 Augusta Avenue
Richmond, VA US 23230



[Map / Directions](#)

Celebration of Life

Salisbury Presbyterian Church

13621 W Salisbury Rd
Midlothian, VA US 23113



[Map / Directions](#)



Wednesday, September 9, 2015
11:00 AM