

Business Law Honoree Baldwin Looks Forward To Doing More

Ben Baldwin is the 2016 recipient of the Business Law Section's Distinguished Service Award. He has spent his entire career with Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson in Charlotte.

"I joined Robinson Bradshaw on Sept. 6, 1988, straight out of law school," Baldwin said. "I was from Asheville originally; I am a naturalized Charlottean."

Baldwin graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1984 and was an inductee of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his law degree with honors in 1988 from the UNC School of Law, where he was Order of the Coif and note and comment editor for the North Carolina Law Review.

He traces his involvement with the Business Law Section back to the early days of his legal career.

"Ever since I was aware of it I have been a member of the section," Baldwin said. "The way it works at RBH is that you rotate through the different departments your first year and settle into a practice area after that. It's been a long time, and my memory on this is fuzzy, but I'm pretty sure that either in 1989 or 1990 I joined the Business Section."

Baldwin has taken on numerous roles within the section, serving on the council, drafting the Recent Business Developments column for the newsletter, and leading various committees. He co-chaired the committee that researched and prepared the North Carolina-Delaware Corporate Law Comparison and the NC LEAP Committee, and has served as a course planner for the section's annual meeting.

Most recently, as noted in a recent edition of Lawyers Weekly, his attention has been devoted to editing and updating founding partner Russell Robinson's corporate law treatise, *Robinson on North Carolina Corporation Law*.

Baldwin had a prior commitment that precluded his attendance at this year's annual meeting to receive the award.

"This award is a very bright highlight in my career," Baldwin said. "Considering all of the terrific business lawyers across the state who do so much for the bar and give back in so many ways, this recognition is an honor that really means a lot to me. There are plenty of potential rewards in this career. The ones most people think of are pecuniary in nature, but some of the most satisfying ones, like this one, are not."



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"So, I was especially sorry I could not be there to accept the award in person. My partner Peter Buck agreed to accept in my absence, which was a win for those in attendance, since he has lots more stage presence than I have. I hope my sincere and genuine gratitude came through."

Involvement in bar activities is a given at his firm, Baldwin said, and he has benefitted from the example set by his law partners, including John Wester who is a past president of the NCBA, Bob Sink who is a past president of the State Bar, and Mark Merritt who is president-elect of the State Bar.

"Steve Lynch is a fellow corporate lawyer I work with here, and he has made huge contributions to the Business Section," Baldwin said in regard to the former section chair. "The firm has always been

really good about encouraging young people to get involved."

Collegiality and culture, he added, have been the most rewarding aspects of his career, both within the firm and within his practice area.

"I would never have predicted at the beginning that nearly 30 years on I would still be at the same firm where I started, doing pretty much the same thing as then," Baldwin said. "But what I have always liked about the corporate practice is that everybody is generally rowing in the same direction towards a common goal, that of getting a deal done and achieving all of the clients' various business objectives."

"You have to be an advocate, of course, but the setting is usually a positive one. Most days you're not spoiling for a fight or dealing with all of that adversarial tension. It is typically collaborative and upbeat."

The Business Law Section Distinguished Service Award was first presented in 2009. Previous recipients are (2009) James P. Beckwith Jr., (2010) Kenneth M. Greene, (2010) John R. Miller, (2011) Alan R. Palmiter, (2012) Mark Davidson, (2013) J. Scott Dillon, (2014) J. Norfleet Pruden and (2015) Warren P. Kean.

"I would like to underscore my gratitude to the leadership of the Business Law Section who thought enough of me to even suggest that I should win such an award," Baldwin concluded. "When I learned of the award, I was taken aback and really touched by it. But I hope it doesn't signal the end of something, and I do look forward to doing still more with the bar in the future." **NCZ**