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RESPECTED
AND DISTINGUISHED
COUNSEL

Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Focuses on the Efficient
Application of Expertise

RESPECTED AND DISTINGUISHED Counsel

When Charlotte lawyers Carlton Fleming and Russell Robinson decided to form their own law practice back in September 1960, they had clear ideas about the kind of firm they wanted. Bob Bradshaw, another attorney with similar ideals and goals, soon joined them, and Fleming Robinson & Bradshaw was born.

For all three men, both personal pride and a sense of obligation to their clients led them to make professional excellence a top priority. But they also wanted to take it one step further and build a firm in which serving the client was seen not just as an individual responsibility, but as a group responsibility where the entire resources of the firm could be brought to bear on whatever problem the client was facing.

The firm continues this approach today and has a strong culture that encourages the efficient application of expertise.

Writing the Book

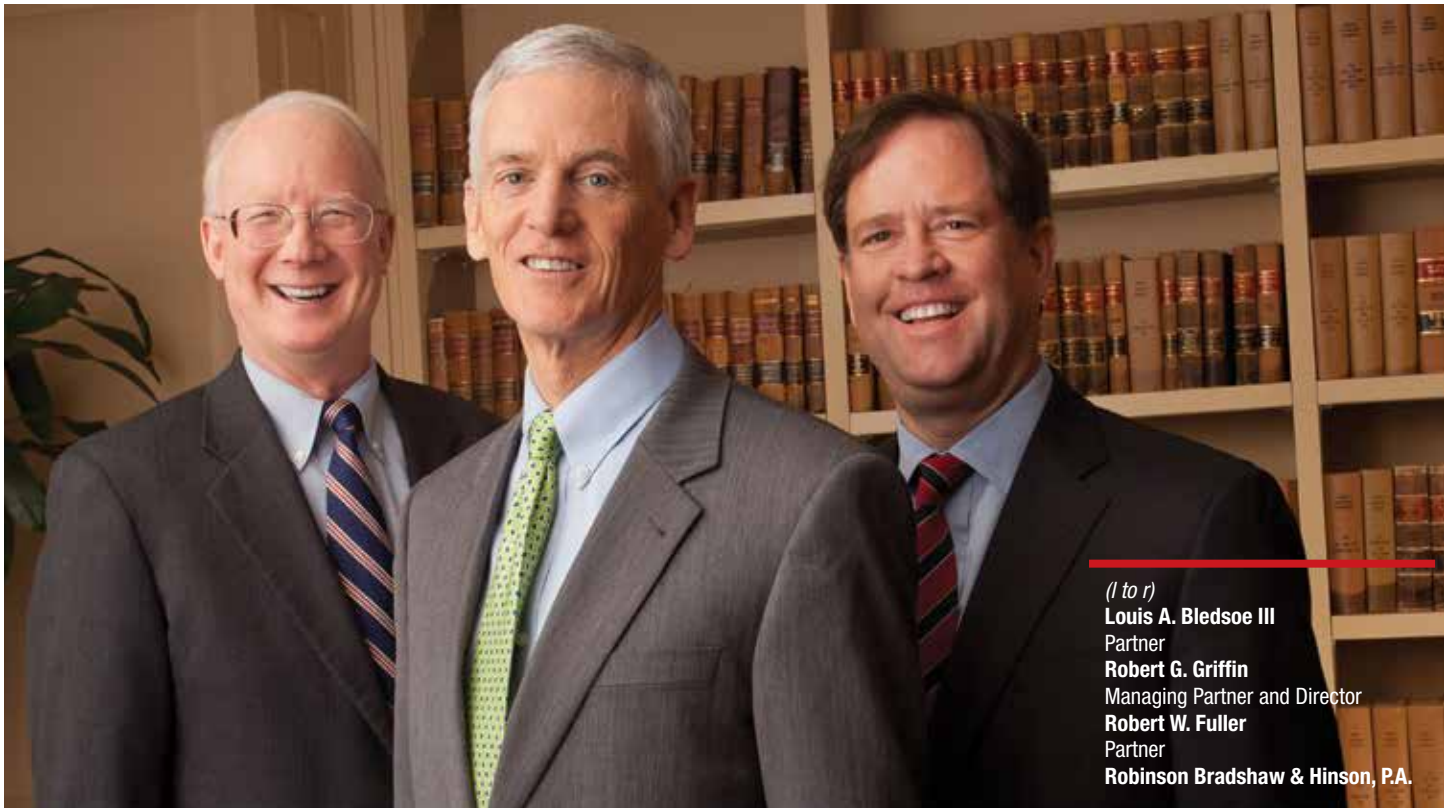
Fleming Robinson & Bradshaw began as more of a general law practice than the firm is today, but even back then, the focus was still on corporate law. In fact, you could say that Robinson “wrote the book” on North Carolina corporation law. The first edition of his book, *Robinson on North Carolina Corporation Law*, was published during the firm’s fourth year. That book helped develop his reputation as a leading authority on corporate law in the state. It also helped build the reputation of his firm as one of the region’s preeminent corporate law firms.

In 1978, Robin Hinson joined the firm after a stint as the general counsel at First Union, and the firm was renamed Fleming Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson. Thenn the fall of 1984, Fleming left to start Womble Carlyle’s Charlotte office, and the firm’s name has been Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson ever since. Many people just call them Robinson Bradshaw or RBH.

Bradshaw retired in 2000 and passed away in early 2012. Hinson passed away in 2008 after a brief illness. Robinson is still with the firm, but at age 81, he practices only occasionally, preferring to spend most of his time in community service, including serving as a trustee for the Duke Endowment.



Robinson
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(l to r)
Louis A. Bledsoe III
Partner
Robert G. Griffin
Managing Partner and Director
Robert W. Fuller
Partner
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson, P.A.

Today, RBH has over 80 partners and about 130 lawyers. Total staff exceeds 230 people. Robert Griffin is now the managing partner of the firm and practices in the areas of mergers and acquisitions, executive compensation and corporate law. He says growth over the years has been steady and gradual to get where they are today. And while growth plateaued a bit during the recent recession, they are optimistic that things will continue on an upswing.

“When I interviewed with the firm in the fall of 1977, there were 18 lawyers,” remembers Griffin. “By the time I got there the next year, the firm had grown to 23 lawyers, and people were feeling uneasy about this ‘explosive’ growth. They really liked the 18-lawyer firm and liked the way they worked with each other.

“As we talked, we realized that we didn’t really want to get bigger just to get bigger,” Griffin continues. “We were getting bigger because clients were asking us to do more stuff, and if we wanted to be able to serve our clients’ needs, we had to have more resources. That factor, and that factor alone, has really driven our growth. We’ve always felt like we’re the right size. We felt that way at 18 lawyers, and we feel that way now at 130 lawyers.”

Diverse Practice Areas

Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson has a diverse business practice, serving as counsel to both

publicly held and private corporations, individuals, municipal, county and state agencies, public utilities, health care institutions, financial institutions, tax-exempt organizations, and investment funds of various types. Because of Charlotte’s history as a banking center, it’s only natural that a significant portion of their practice involves finance, but according to Griffin, they have been somewhat less concentrated in banking than some other Charlotte law firms.

“We do a lot of corporate transactional work that is non-banking,” explains Griffin. “Mergers and acquisitions, securities transactions, and in recent years, a lot of private equity. We also do a lot of complex litigation and we have a very prominent estate planning practice.”

“We’ve really emphasized business litigation—such as mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance and governance, securities, lender liability, antitrust, employment, construction, trade practices, and intellectual property,” says Robert Fuller, a partner whose practice focuses on counseling business clients and resolution of business disputes through litigation and negotiation.

“Most of our litigators not only do litigation, but they also have substantive expertise in one of the areas I just mentioned,” Fuller continues. “The antitrust people do both antitrust litigation and antitrust counseling. The employment people do both litigation and counseling. It really helps to have

that degree of overlap because clients don’t expect you to just know how to go find the courthouse. They want you to have some substantive knowledge to bring to bear when you show up.”

One of the more unique focus areas for the firm is sports. Due to the importance of racing and NASCAR in the Charlotte region, RBH began to develop a NASCAR-focused practice as far back as 20 years ago, leading to the firm representing race teams, drivers and sponsors.

Today, the practice has expanded to more sports, particularly collegiate sports. The firm is general counsel for the Southeastern Conference and represented the NCAA in negotiating the men’s basketball television contracts with CBS and Turner in 2010 and negotiating the television contract with ESPN for all other championships in 2011.

The sports practice has been a key source of growth for the firm in recent years, as it didn’t even exist as recently as 1985. Other areas of growth include big-case litigation, intellectual property, health care, and a variety of work for investment funds and private equity interests.

“Representing private equity entities as they get formed, gather money from investors, and deploy that money is a big part of our practice today, but we did very little of that even 15 years ago,” explains Griffin. “Another growth area is health care. There are so many changes going on in health care

that are driven by both technology and legal/regulatory provisions. So we're doing a lot more work with health care providers."

"The mix has changed in another way, in that a lot of the work we do now is for really big corporations," adds Fuller. "When I first got here there were a lot of smaller corporations where we did everything for them. But now, a lot of times our relationship is with a particular group in the legal division of a big corporation where we are doing a certain type of litigation or a certain type of financing work or something like that. So it's certainly been an evolution."

As Things Change

One big change for the legal profession over the last 30 years has been the impact of technology. In the "old days," the pace of the business was not quite as fast as it is today.

"When I was a young lawyer, a client would call and ask for a document of some type, so I would spend several days looking through example documents, hand-writing changes, and thinking deeply about how we wanted the agreement to work for the client's advantage," recalls Griffin. "But now, a client will call and want that same document tomorrow morning because they know you've got so many things on your computer that you can just get it and go. Even if they appreciate the legal expertise that has to be applied to put that thing together, they still want you to produce it tomorrow morning because you can."

"Our clients' expectations have certainly evolved along with the technology," adds Louis Bledsoe, a partner who maintains a practice counseling and advising clients in all areas of employment law and other business disputes. "But I've been proud of our recognition of technology and change as an ongoing feature of the world that we're in. We can't run from it, so we've always been smart about investing in both our technology people and our technology to stay ahead of the curve."

Another change is the lessening importance of geography. More and more, technology is allowing RBH to expand its client base outside of the Carolinas through referrals and increased exposure to potential clients in other regions.

"My relationships with clients that are across the street and those that are out of state really aren't very different," admits Fuller. "They're both on the other end of an email or the other end of the phone."

But one thing that hasn't changed over the years is Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson's focus on the client.

At RBH, professional excellence is a top priority, and serving the client is seen not just as an individual responsibility, but as a group responsibility where the entire resources of the firm are brought to bear on whatever problem the client is facing.

"We have three core values," explains Griffin. "One is excellence: Just doing really good work. Second is professionalism: Putting the client's interests first. And third is teamwork: Bringing together the total resources of the firm to apply to the problem."

At RBH, compensation is not based on individual lawyers' billable hours and origination credits, and sub-groups are not set up as profit centers. Since no lawyer has a direct financial interest in any particular matter, the sole focus in staffing projects is determining which lawyers are best suited to handle the project successfully on a cost-efficient basis.

"If a client calls me about an employment matter, while I might be able to help them, I'm going to send them to someone else because there are other people who are better equipped in that area," says Fuller.

"We don't have barriers to me getting an expert involved, but you would be amazed that a lot of firms do," he continues. "We've actually picked up a couple of cases over the last 10 years where a client would call and say, 'You won't believe this, but this firm that we're using, they can't talk to their own tax department, so they are trying to do the tax research with litigators. It's really a waste, so could you get involved?'"

Both Fuller and Griffin say another effect of this approach is to make RBH a much more rewarding place to work because the attorneys become part of a well-functioning team.

This approach allows them to hire and retain top-notch lawyers who stay with the firm for the long term, avoiding the "churn" common in many large firms.

"A law firm is a vehicle that serves two purposes," concludes Griffin. "It has to be a place where clients can go to get their legal needs met. But it also has to be a successful vehicle where the lawyers can get what they're looking for. Most of us are looking for appropriate financial rewards, but we're also looking for professional satisfaction and the pleasure of being able to work on challenging and interesting matters.

"If it's not successful for the clients, it's not going to be successful for the lawyers and vice versa. We really have to keep both sides of that going to create the kind of firm that we want to be." 🌟

Robinson Bradshaw

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Principals: Robert G. Griffin, Managing Partner and Director; Stoke Caldwell, Stephen Cox, Jane Ratteree, Allen Robertson, and David Wright, Directors

Offices: Charlotte and Chapel Hill, N.C.; Rock Hill, S.C.

In Business: 53 years

Employees: 232 total

Recognition: Consistently been recognized by leading legal publications including *North Carolina Super Lawyers* (2013); *Best Lawyers in America*, including five lawyers named *Charlotte Lawyers of the Year* (2013); and named *North Carolina Firm of the Year by Benchmark Litigation* (2013). Received the North Carolina Bar Association *Large Firm Pro Bono Award* in 2004 and 2010. Named by *American Lawyer Media* as one of 2013 *Go-To Law Firms at the Top 500 Companies* for its Labor Litigation practice area.

Business: Corporate and commercial law firm with a wide-ranging business practice; serves as counsel to public and closely held enterprises operating in domestic and foreign markets, individuals, municipal, county and state agencies, public utilities, health care institutions, financial institutions, tax-exempt organizations, and investment funds of various types.

www.rbh.com



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