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by Doug Brown
For Virginia Business
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Joseph "Rick" Richmond Jr. is about as Virginia as it gets. Born and raised in Charlottesville, he left town only briefly for college at Washington and Lee University. His ties to his Charlottesville law firm of Richmond & Fishburne go back to the 1940s when his father joined the firm.



Joseph Richmond Jr.

Today Richmond, 59, is a senior partner, leading its land use and real estate practice area. He lives just outside Charlottesville, representing a wide range of clients in the region. He's also known across the state, however, in part because of the volunteer work he does for the Virginia State Bar, and for his role as a teacher in continuing education courses for lawyers.

When you talk to Richmond, he'll tell you he's blessed to be able to practice law in Charlottesville, a friendly town with a high quality of life. It's apparent that sensibility has rubbed off on his son,

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too. In October, Joseph "Walker" Richmond, a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law, turned down offers from firms in Richmond, Washington, D.C., and London to take a job in the 10-lawyer family firm.

Far from the style of a Washington legal leviathan, where fleets of lawyers toil in relative anonymity for clients they'll never know, Richmond & Fishburne prizes the relationships it has with people. "That personal nature is one of the most important, if not the most important, aspect of my practice," says Richmond. "It goes far beyond just a mere professional relationship. You really find out about these people, you develop friendships with them, and you do your best to represent them. That's the joy of practicing in a small firm in a cosmopolitan community."

Still, he's managed to move to the top of his field. Richmond is a member of the American College of Real Estate Lawyers, an elite group of about 850 lawyers in the United States, Japan, Canada and England.

In terms of cases, what Richmond finds most gratifying is "helping a young couple buy their first house or start a business and introducing them to the legal profession," he says. "If I can make the process more friendly ... and instill confidence and respect for our profession, I have accomplished one of my goals." Richmond doesn't lose sleep at night over million-dollar lawsuits. "I worry that I won't recognize or will forget the name of a client I see in a different setting shortly after meeting the client."

Colleagues say Richmond has a knack for connecting with people. "Rick is the type of guy who, when he comes into a room, nobody is a stranger to him," says Neil Kessler, a partner with Troutman Sanders in Richmond. "He will make everybody feel very comfortable, and those people who he has not met before he enters the room — when he leaves — they are friends of his. He inspires confidence. He is a solid, down-to-earth guy, very friendly, not flashy by any means but you know who he is after he's left, and you've got a lot of respect for him."

Richmond is married and has three children, one living in California, one teaching, and the other working in his firm. In his spare time, he takes his mountain bike into the hills, or goes for long rides on his road bike.

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