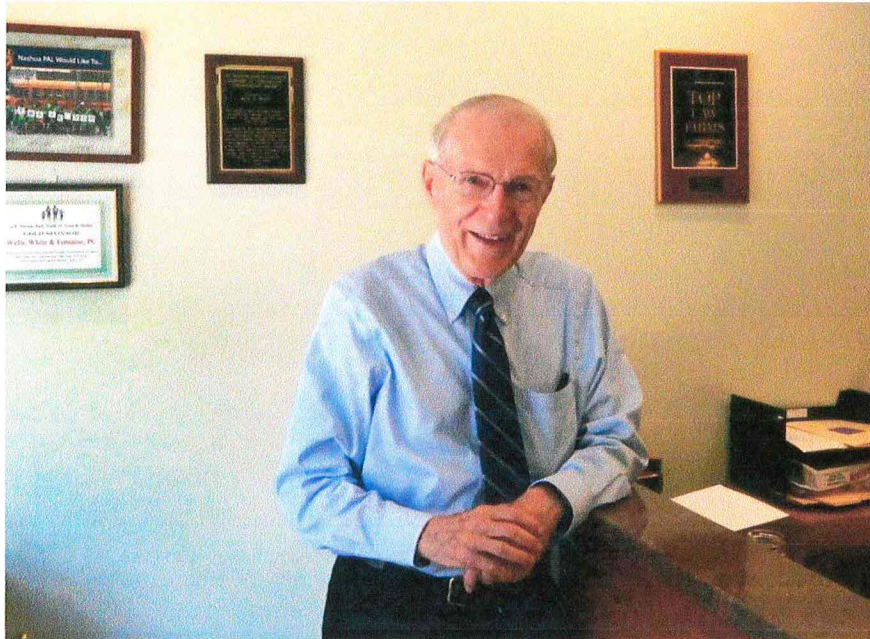


The Telegraph

Sixty years and counting: Nashua's Bob Welts keeps on running – and practicing law



Staff photo by Dean Shalhoup Bob Welts, shown in the reception area of his office in the former Blake's Ice Cream building on Factory Street, is in his 60th year of practicing law. Now 84, Welts still runs road races.

A young, aspiring lawyer from Milton, Mass. named Bob Welts was on his way to a degree at Boston College School of Law when one of his property law professors tossed out a piece of advice to the soon-to-be graduates.

Welts, perhaps Nashua's premier tennis-playing and marathon-running lawyer now coming up on his 85th birthday, remembers the moment like it was yesterday: *"He told us there are too many lawyers in Boston. He said, 'Go west,'"* Welts told me last week as we chatted in his Factory Street office.

The instructor wryly followed up his Horace Greeley-esque suggestion: *"And I don't mean you boys from Dorchester going to Framingham."*

The kid from Milton heeded that advice, with one important modification: Welts headed not directly west but north-northwest, in the direction of a little city just over the border into New Hampshire that seemed like a nice place to live, to perhaps one day raise a family, a place that could probably use the services of a fresh-faced, newly-minted barrister eager to jump into the profession feet first.

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"I saw the name Kenneth McLaughlin in an ad," Welts said, referring to another well-known city lawyer and later, district court judge who needs no introduction to longtime Nashuans.

"I interviewed with him ... I started coming up to work part time for him," Welts said, recalling that McLaughlin's office was on Elm Street at the time.

Thus was launched a career in practicing law, mostly land-use, estate and probate stuff (Welts prefers leaving the criminals to the younger men and women), that takes him up and down the stairs faster than many people half his age to retrieve one file or another or to dust off a publication that might be able to shed some light on the kind of obscure legal matter that comes up once in a blue moon.

These days it's not all that uncommon for people to continue working well past age 65 — the coveted milestone that almost always came with a gold watch and wishes for a healthy and happy retirement.

But it's always refreshing to talk with people like Bob Welts, who continues to work well into his 80s because he wants to, not because he has to. Widowed a decade ago, Welts makes sure to make plenty of time between filing paperwork and dispensing legal advice to hang out with his son and two grandchildren, he said.

And then there's Welts's other passion: Fitness and recreational competition.

For decades a dominant name in the game of tennis, Welts was instrumental in resurrecting the dormant Nashua City Tennis Tournament some 30 or 40 years ago. Part of that effort was convincing Jack Collins, then owner of the former Riverside Golf Club, which bordered the Merrimack River where Thoreau's Landing is today, to convert the property to a tennis facility.

With Riverside no longer doing as well as it once did, Collins agreed, and the concept that became the Nashua Swim and Tennis Club was born.

Apparently not busy enough, Welts also ran the former Chamber of Commerce tennis tournament over at the Sargents Avenue courts, and entered pretty much every 10K or 5K road race he could find.

He served as president of the Nashua Bar Association in the 80s, and in 2009 was presented its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

As for Welts's penchant for road races, he says his 10K and longer days are pretty much over, but he's still a regular at 5K events.

A member of the Gate City Striders since before many of its members were born, Welts has already run 11 5Ks this year and has at least two more coming up: An early-August race in Canaan and the annual Portsmouth Labor Day event.

On the topic of running road races: How many people in their 80s do you know who look forward to their next birthday? I can say I know one: Bob Welts. Goodness, I'm more than 20 years Bob's junior, and I can't remember looking forward to a birthday since I was 20 going on 21.

But he has his reasons. It has to do with the New Hampshire Senior Games, often called the Senior Olympics, in which Welts has competed for years: Upon his next birthday, Welts will be reclassified to the 85-90 age category.

"Then I won't have to compete against all those 80, 82 year old youngsters," he says with a grin.

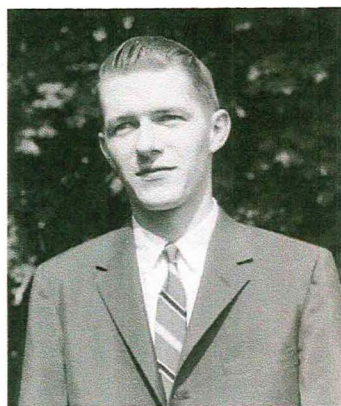
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on 60 years of practicing law!**



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