Miller & Martin Celebrates 25 Years Since Opening Atlanta Office

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It's been 25 years since five well known Atlanta business attorneys –Tom Harrold, Ugo Ippolito, Ken Carroll, Luther Curtis and Pete Glass – decided to join the Chattanooga-based law firm of Miller & Martin PLLC, thereby launching that firm's Atlanta office.

As recounted by Carroll in a book chronicling the firm's history, the lawyers' decision to depart Glass, McCullough, Sherrill, & Harrold for Miller & Martin came after Ugo Ippolito, who had handled several transactions on behalf of the Coca-Cola Company across the table from Miller & Martin attorneys, spoke highly of the Tennessee firm's legal prowess and suggested a meeting.

As Curtis recently recounted, "We all respected Ugo Ippolito's opinion because he was one tough nut of a lawyer. He wouldn't put up with anything less than perfect performance, and he was impressed with the dealings of Miller & Martin, so we decided to reach out to them."

After a meeting on a cold Saturday in Chattanooga late in 1997, Carroll recalls, "We came away from this meeting very impressed with the quality of the [Miller & Martin] partners and their broad range of legal expertise. In addition, they all seemed to be really nice people."

The 1998 partnership that ensued has borne impressive fruit, with the Atlanta office now boasting almost 40 of the firm's 120-strong team of lawyers. The rest are located at the Chattanooga headquarters as well offices in Nashville and Charlotte.

"For a quarter century, our Atlanta office has developed a reputation of highly skilled practitioners who provide great value to our clients;" said Miller & Martin's Chairman Scott Parrish. "We are proud of what we have accomplished in Atlanta and look forward to continued growth in that market."

In fact, the firm's business expertise was what initially attracted the founding Atlanta members, Carroll said recently. "They had a very sophisticated corporate firm, everything you'd find in an Atlanta corporate firm, just up in Chattanooga."

One of the key achievements of the Atlanta office was being admitted as the Southeast USA member of the World Law Group, an alliance of 61 law firms on six continents with offices in 92 countries. Harrold helped launch WLG in 1987 and brought the membership to Miller & Martin when they joined in 1998. Last year, Atlanta hosted the WLG's annual summit and continues to have a strong presence in the alliance.

Harrold hosted the 2003 Unification Conference in Atlanta to celebrate the 14th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Famed NBC-TV broadcaster Tom Brokaw was the emcee, and Former U.S. President George H.W. Bush, Former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev and Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl discussed how the Wall came down.

The Unification Conference was held at the Georgia World Congress Center with 2,500 attendees and was sponsored by the German American Chamber of Commerce. The Conference was covered by 43 TV stations and televised live in Germany and Russia. Harrold was on the board of the German Chamber and was made a lifetime honorary board member. "Because of these three great leaders, it was possible to have significant political change without a war." It was Harrold's persistence and vision that actually made the Conference happen.

"I was thrilled to pursue my international law practice at Miller & Martin, at a time when other major Atlanta firms had moved their international practices to New York and D.C.," Harrold explained.

"Our success speaks to the dedicated legal ethos that Miller & Martin has fostered over its 150-year history – and which helped persuade me and my colleagues to come aboard – and to the forward-looking, global mindset that permeates so much of the business and legal community here in Atlanta," said Harrold who, after more than 50 years practicing law, remains an active and prominent member of the firm and heads its International Practice Group.

Parrish adds it's fitting the Atlanta office's beginnings were rooted in work related to one of the city's most famous products, Coca-Cola, noting that Miller & Martin was legal counsel to some of the nation's largest bottlers of Coca-Cola for several decades. "The opening of the Atlanta office helped the entire firm continue to grow and represent clients all over the country," Parrish said.

Mike Marshall, office managing partner in Atlanta, has been afforded a particularly insightful view of the office's growth and the cultivation of the inclusive law firm culture that fosters professional growth for its members along with a close-knit camaraderie that makes them want to remain a part of the team.

“I started at Miller & Martin as a young associate shortly after the Atlanta office was founded,” said Marshall. “It’s inspiring to see our initial group of talented lawyers – who are not only my colleagues but have become dear friends and mentors – grow this office into one of the most well-respected business and commercial legal operations in the region.”

As part of the firm’s 25th anniversary celebration in Atlanta, Miller & Martin hosted food and fundraising drives for the Atlanta Community Food Bank.