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## Get to know Jackie Stone, partner at McGuireWoods

BY PAULA PETERS CHAMBERS

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Jackie Stone is an honoree in the 2019 RTD Person of the Year program.

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**J**ackie Stone knows something about good advice – both offered and received.

Thanks to a college professor's suggestion, Stone pursued a summer internship that ultimately led to a legal career at McGuireWoods. In 2019, she marks her 35th year with ties to the powerhouse law firm, from which she has established a legacy of nurturing diversity in the legal field.

How notable? One of her recruits, Jon Harmon, is now chairman of McGuireWoods – the only African American chairman of an Am Law 100 firm.

Stone has worked with local and national organizations to expose under-represented youth to the legal field and help them see themselves as future lawyers.

“I was so blessed to grow up with a father who was working hard as a lawyer and business owner, and a mother who was always present and encouraging,” Stone said. “I originally was not planning to be a lawyer, but I admired and respected what [my father] did.”

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Stone worked on Capitol Hill after earning her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia; her internship in Washington for Caterpillar Inc. touched on government affairs and surrounded her with law school graduates.

Stone attended law school at Harvard University and in 1984 served as a summer associate at McGuireWoods. She graduated the following year and joined the firm as its only African American woman lawyer; in 1994, she became the first such partner at a major law firm in Virginia.

Stone credits many at McGuireWoods with helping her get established in the office.

“There were individuals at the firm, not just lawyers, who were willing to provide guidance and help me understand what I needed to know,” Stone said. “I didn’t focus on being a pioneer; this firm was open to me.”

For decades, Stone has carried forward a message of diversity and excellence. Soon after joining the firm, she was appointed to the recruitment committee, where she looked for top talent among students who might not see themselves at a firm such as McGuireWoods. She also helped create the firm's diversity and inclusion committee.

“Different perspectives give you a broader analysis,” Stone said. “Our clients get the benefit of the diversity of legal expertise and cultural backgrounds.”

Her dedication extends beyond Virginia. Stone serves on the board of Just the Beginning – A Pipeline Organization, a national nonprofit that encourages legal careers for minority and low-income students.

George Martin, managing partner of McGuireWoods’ Richmond office, said Stone “had an impact on the firm from Day One.” He said her commitment to the firm’s hiring committee, which demands significant time outside of billable hours, has been invaluable.

“She is remarkable in her ability to attract talented people from all over,” Martin said.

Stone's interest in student development isn't limited to law. While on the board of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Stone met Markel Corp. leader Alan Kirshner, who slipped her a note in a board meeting with an idea to help low-income students. The outcome was Partnership for the Future, a college preparatory and workforce development program that, since 1994, has provided training and educational opportunities.

“Jackie egged me on,” Kirshner said. “I don’t think I would have gone as far as I did if she hadn’t encouraged me.”

“She stood tall and was loyal. Anybody with an idea can push forward, but you need people who can give you good judgment,” he said. “She was there.”

From experience, Stone knows how important a mentor can be in a person’s life.

“You need a whole team of people who can help you think through situations, share insights to help you make good decisions and introduce you to others,” she said.

“There are mutual benefits of mentoring as well. I’ve received so much in return.”

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## **IN HER WORDS: JACKIE STONE**

*partner, McGuireWoods LLP*

**Hometown:** Williamsburg

**Family:** husband B.K. Fulton, two sons

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### **What is something about you that might surprise others?**

After graduating from college and before attending law school, I spent two years working as a legislative assistant for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Two of my colleagues and I started a catering firm called Egg\*Cetera while working on Capitol Hill. The surprising part is that I am not much of a cook, but I became an expert in preparing veggie trays.

### **If you could spend a day with a historical or fictional character, who would it be?**

Growing up, I admired politician and activist Barbara Jordan. Her commanding presence and eloquent delivery made a profound impact on me and inspired me to get involved in public policy and government relations.

Among her many firsts, she made history as the first African American as well as the first woman to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. Jordan gave hope to me and others like me that we all can achieve anything through hard work, resilience and commitment.

In fact, I seriously considered attending the University of Texas, where she joined the law school faculty after retiring from the House of Representatives.

### **Tell us about a setback or disappointment and what you learned from it**

In 2017, I had a medical emergency that required surgery and time away from work. The estimated recovery time was at least four to eight weeks in the hospital, followed by six to eight months away from work. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the medical professionals and overwhelming support of family, friends and colleagues, I was able to leave the hospital after two weeks and return to work in one month.

This experience taught me the true meaning of faith, hope and love. I have a greater appreciation of the importance of having an advocate who can ask informed questions on your behalf. My husband studied and researched my condition so much that the doctors assumed *he* was a doctor. This left no question in my mind that a supportive network of caring individuals working together can achieve amazing results.

### **Describe a small moment in your life that has had a lasting impact on you**

I was invited to a meeting to discuss strategies to raise money for diverse students seeking to attend college. I was working late and had decided not to attend, but at the last minute, I changed my mind. The meeting was at the home of Jill and Monroe Harris. I had the good fortune of meeting B.K. Fulton, who later became my husband.

While I arrived late at the first meeting, I made sure to be on time for all of the subsequent meetings! As I have learned, showing up is essential to living your best life.

### **Who is your role model?**

Many special people in my life have provided invaluable guidance and set positive examples for me. In particular, my parents have been my most impactful role models.

My late father, the Honorable William T. Stone, taught me the importance of selflessness, relationships and sacrificing to help those in need. While it was not my original plan, I followed in my father's footsteps and pursued a career in the law. Achieving this lifelong dream was much more difficult for my father because he was not permitted to enroll in law school in Virginia. He attended American University Law School in Washington and returned to Virginia and his family after obtaining his law degree.

My mother, Sara C. Stone, has consistently provided an example of common sense, reliability and good judgment.

They both instilled in me a keen desire to give back and set an example for others to follow.

### **Tell us about an object you own that has great sentimental value**

My mother is a seamstress and made most of my clothes when I was growing up. The dresses she designed would rival those of today's well-known fashion designers.

One of my prized possessions is a yellow dress my mother made for one of the many weddings I participated in as a flower girl. (Frankly, I am not sure I was the most accomplished flower girl. I did not want anyone to step on the flower petals, so I usually had more petals in my basket at the end of the ceremony than I actually dropped.)

I also fondly remember the dresses she made for my dolls that matched the dresses she made for me.

### **If you had to pick a different profession or course of study, what would you choose?**

I would have been an event planner. I enjoy working on the details of planning events and finding occasions to bring people together. I am often accused of being a “supreme connector” because I look for opportunities to connect people who are looking to achieve shared goals.

### **What is something you haven’t done that you’d really like to do?**

This is a difficult question to answer. I try to live life to the fullest and approach every day with a positive outlook. My husband and I are thankful for the constant blessings we receive. We know tomorrow is not promised, and we enthusiastically await our next experiences and adventures.

I look forward to seeing our kids happy and productive. I look forward to voting for the first woman governor of Virginia. I look forward to congratulating the first female chairperson of my firm – we currently have the only African American chairman of an Am Law 100 firm.

### **What is your favorite movie, etc.?**

One of my favorite movies is "Belle," which tells the true story of a courageous biracial woman who maintained her dignity against all odds and, through her self-discovery, played an important part in our history. I had admired the beautiful story portrayed in the movie when I first saw it years ago.

More recently, I had the opportunity to meet Misan Sagay, who wrote the screenplay, while we were on a trip to Cuba. Misan shared insights about the painting that inspired her to write the untold story of a woman born to a father who was a British aristocrat and a mother from West Africa. This movie provided an example of an individual who had the courage to speak up and take a stand that ultimately would change society. The impact of a single person acting in support of their convictions cannot be underestimated.

Currently, my favorite book is one that I hope will be published in the near future. My husband is working on a novel titled "Love's Insurrection." As his unofficial editor, I have read the book several times and find the story, characters and message to be a timely and needed reminder to the world. His novel focuses on faith, hope and love. A key reminder from the book is the importance of "deeds, not words" as the true basis for strong relationships.

### **How would you spend a great day in Richmond with a close friend?**

Begin with a cup of South African coffee at Bateau, then take a Riverfront Canal Cruise to learn the history of the James River and Kanawha Canal designed by George Washington, and visit Africanne on Main for a casual lunch.

Then tour some of Richmond's unique treasures – such as the American Civil War Museum at Tredegar, the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, the Valentine, the Science Museum of Virginia and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts – followed by drinks at Kabana Rooftop. Enjoy an early dinner (including a delicious lobster pop tart) at Spoonbread Bistro in the Fan. End the day with a performance at the Dominion Energy Center, Altria Theater or Virginia Repertory Theatre.

### **If you could deliver a message to a large audience, what would it be?**

If you feel that you have fulfilled all of your dreams, you are not dreaming big enough. A critical question for financially successful people is not "What we are doing for ourselves?" – it is "What are we doing with and for each other to benefit our society as a whole?" This is what we must answer as a community, a commonwealth, a nation and a world. I am confident that if we collaborate and do more together, we will leave a legacy far greater than anyone could ever imagine.