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*A Lawyer
Is Born*



Bench-Bar & Boardroom Wrap-Up

Meet Mindy White

Super CLE

A Lawyer Is Born

By Marci McNeal

Didn't we all grow up watching and learning from our parents? I know I sure did. I spent countless hours watching my dad and grandfather prepare a daily newspaper in my small home town of just over 2,000 people. I knew at a young age what the AP wire was, how to submit a letter to the editor and the smell of printing presses—not to mention how to deliver a paper route. So it is no wonder I ended up in the journalism and public relations field. The legal community is no different—sons and daughters following in their parents legal footprints. Below is a small handful of these parent/child duos and their thoughts and stories on sharing this unique profession together.

The Welch Family

(Robert C. Welch and daughter Andrea Welch):



Bob and Andrea

Robert C. (Bob) Welch is presently engaged in the practice of criminal litigation at Welch, Martin & Albano, LLC. He practices criminal defense at the municipal, state and federal levels, and is also a prosecutor for the City of Sugar Creek and City of Blue Springs. Bob received his B.A. and J.D. degrees from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in 1965.

Andrea Welch graduated from UMKC School of Law and passed the Bar in 1998. She has been at the firm of Welch, Martin & Albano since 2002, after spending four years as an assistant prosecuting attorney for the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, where she developed and honed her trial skills. She also assists prosecuting in Sugar Creek and Blue Springs.

How did you become interested in practicing law?

Bob: One of my best friends, Bob Paden, was an Assistant Jackson County Prosecutor at the time, and he would bring me war stories about cases that he was handling, both as a state assistant prosecutor, and in his private practice, and he convinced me that the law profession suited my character and disposition.

Andrea: From what I can tell my dad influences

about everyone he encounters, so it is no wonder he influenced me. I heard about cases from the prosecution and defense side over breakfast and dinner on a regular basis.

Do you both practice law at the same law firm? What are the pros and cons?

Bob: Andrea and I both practice criminal defense and municipal defense law at the same firm and have done so for the last two years. In her case I think it was particularly good that she started her career in the prosecutor's office where her environment was not her family, so she could be in a more competitive and business environment, so that whatever success she attained, there could be no question that she earned it due to her own efforts, and not her father's.

Andrea: I am now only three offices away from my Dad, poor guy. I go in and ask him questions and run stuff by him. He really helps me be a better lawyer. It is a good feeling knowing the person that is covering for you doesn't feel inconvenienced and will handle your case the way you would if you were there.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

Bob: My family, my wife of 50 years, my kids and grandkids.

Andrea: Finally convincing my father that being an attorney is what I was put here to be.

Do you have any humorous stories to share?

Bob: Andrea wanted to be a lawyer before she could even spell the word lawyer.

Andrea: My father told me for 20 years, you don't want to be a lawyer, be a plumber—they deal with a lot less crap.

What additional thoughts or comments might you like to share?

Bob: I just want to keep reminding my daughter that the first obligation is to do the right thing by your client. By that I mean that sometimes when you do what is in your best interest, it may not be in your client's best interest. So, if she'll keep that in mind, she'll always come out on top.

Andrea: For the record, I feel very fortunate to have Robert C. Welch as my dad, mentor, friend

and partner. He is a great dad, a great lawyer and a great person. He will help anyone in any way, if he can. And if he can't help, he will pick up the phone and find someone who can. This is a man anyone would be proud to have as a father...I just got lucky!

The Fields Family

(Taylor Fields, daughter Carla Fields, son Wesley Fields and daughter Denise Fields):



Wesley, Taylor, Carla and Denise

Taylor Fields is the managing partner with the law firm of Fields & Brown in Kansas City, Missouri, where he practices primarily in the areas

of employment, labor and education law. He received a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Missouri – Columbia in 1967, and his J.D. from the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law in 1971.

Carla Fields is a partner with the law firm of Fields & Brown after joining the firm in 1995 and has maintained a diverse practice. Her primary focus has been in the area of worker's compensation defense. She received her bachelor's degree in marketing and communications from Boston College in 1992, and her J.D. from Texas Southern University School of Law in 1995.

Wesley Fields is an attorney with the law firm of Bryan Cave LLP in Kansas City. He joined the firm in 1998 and has served as general counsel to the Tax Increment Financing Commission of KC, MO for the past five years. He received his bachelor's degree in political science and African American studies in 1995 from Yale University and his J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1998.

Denise Fields is a first year law student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. She received her B.A. degree in journalism and a B.A. degree in political science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Denise has worked as a paralegal in her father's firm during the summer and will intern this summer at the Bryan Cave law firm.

How did you become interested in practicing law?

Taylor: I became interested in becoming a lawyer during the spring of my junior year in college. It was a very active period of the civil rights movement. I attended a lecture by Julian Bond, the current Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NAACP—he had just become the first African American ever elected to the Georgia Legislature and he had also just organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He emphasized the role lawyers would play in shaping the direction of the U.S. in the near and long term future...this excited me and inspired me.

Carla: I grew up around the practice—I remember going to the office with my father on Saturday mornings when I was a child. I thought he took Wesley and me because he needed our help (of course I now know that my mom was just trying to get a break from us). I would shelve books, punch holes in paper and copy whatever part of my body I could fit under the photo copy machine. I remember I would organize his files, separating correspondence from pleadings, and sorting them in date order. I was fascinated by all the exhibits.

Wesley: Although my Dad and older sister were both successful practicing attorneys at the time I made my decision to attend law school, which provides inspiration in and of itself, my decision to become a lawyer, in large part, resulted from a college course entitled, Blacks In the Law, which was taught by the only African American Connecticut State Supreme Court Justice, Flemming L. Norcott, Jr. Justice Norcott, who later became a friend and academic advisor to me, did a masterful job in chronicling the legal and political achievements made by African American attorneys. As a result, I was and remain inspired to be a social and legal change agent.

What advice would you give to parents/children who are thinking about going into practice together?

Taylor: My admonition would be to always keep in mind that the law is a highly competitive business. Therefore, the parent/child relationship should be secondary to the interests of the clients you serve.

Carla: Keep work and personal separate. When we first started working together that was hard for my father to do. I am sure the fact that I am no longer constantly asking for money has something to do with his change in dealing with me.

Wesley: My decision to not practice with my father was primarily based on my desire to develop a transaction based practice, instead of a litigation oriented practice. My advice would be that there is always external as well as self-imposed pressure to work within a successful family business, legal or otherwise. It is important that their decision be consistent with their individual goals, desires and ambitions.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession?

Taylor: The late Judge Lewis Clymer, the late attorney Elmer Jackson and the late Judge Benjamin Franklin were all very supportive of me during the early years of my practice.

Carla: There are so few African American attorneys in Kansas City in my dad's generation. When I was little, the Jackson County Bar Association would have an annual Christmas party. There were so few African American lawyers that they would fit in the family room of my parent's first house. Wes and I always found a reason to sneak into the party in our pajamas.

Wesley: Taylor Fields, Justice Flemming Norcott, Jr., Tom Van Dyke, Herb Kohn and Bob Fisher. Over the years, I can honestly say each has provided invaluable legal, political and personal advice.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Taylor: I enjoy working with young people through my church and various community organizations. I also have a strong interest in the study of African American history.

Carla: I love to travel, musicals and am very active in Beta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. where I participate in regular community service activities.

Wesley: I enjoy serving on community boards, playing softball, watching almost any athletic event on TV (except bowling), riding my motorcycle and traveling with my fiancé Tiffany.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

Taylor: The pride I feel in seeing two of my children develop as lawyers and productive contributors in the KC community, is difficult to express in words. When my youngest daughter, Denise achieved the distinction of "law review," I was a real proud dad.

Carla: My dad has such a tremendous passion for the law, he loves the practice. It is amazing when I think about the fact that when he started practicing he had no experience in the law and no experience running a business. He learned with his peers by trial and error and in a little over 30 years has managed to grow the largest African American owned law firm in Missouri.

Wesley: What makes my Dad special in terms of his practice is that when he entered the Kansas City Bar, there were very few African Americans in practice, who collectively, had very little opportunity to succeed. What continues to amaze me is his ability to navigate, grow and sustain a successful law practice for approximately 35 years, which includes the representation of several Fortune 500 companies and governmental entities. Without him and his generation of change agents, there would be little discussion of diversity today.

The McManus Family

(Jim McManus, daughter M. Bridget McManus, and son Kevin McManus):



Bridget, Jim and Kevin

James W. McManus, is a Kansas City trial and appellate attorney with 34 years of

experience in civil litigation. He is Of Counsel with the DeWitt and Zeldin, L.L.C., and represents clients in all types of cases, including personal injury claims, appeals (federal and state), commercial matters, and construction projects disputes. He graduated from the School of Law of St. Louis University.

M. Bridget McManus received her B.A. in Psychology and Philosophy from Rockhurst University, and her J.D. from Saint Louis University School of Law. Upon completion of her legal education, she served as Judicial Clerk to the Honorable Thomas C. Clark of the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri. Bridget is currently an Assistant Public Defender in the Kansas City Trial Division.

Kevin McManus received his B.A. in government in 2001 from the University of Notre Dame, and is currently attending the Saint Louis University School of Law with an anticipated J.D. date of May 2006. Kevin is a Judicial Clerk Intern for the Hon. E. Richard Weber, U.S. District Judge for Eastern Missouri.

How did you become interested in practicing law?

Jim: I was the first lawyer in my family. I became interested in law after I worked as a law clerk for a small Kansas City law firm while I was an undergraduate student at Rockhurst University.

Bridget: Yes, my Dad's experiences as a lawyer influenced me in many ways. The law and his cases were nightly dinner conversation. Deposition transcripts replaced magazines for leisure reading around the house. And, I spent many Saturday mornings at my Dad's office coloring with his highlighters and asking if it was time to go to McDonald's yet. However, when it came time to decide if I was going to go to law school, my Dad actually discouraged it. He said, "It's really hard." So, in an act of rebellion, I took the LSAT and went to law school. Now, he says it was a successful use of reverse psychology.

Kevin: My dad always told me not to be lawyer. He loved his profession but encouraged us to be independent and open to other possibilities. But I became fascinated with the legal world at a young age, as I watched him work in and out of the courtroom. I tried to avoid law school by working as an economic researcher for two years in Washington D.C., but I disliked the

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introverted and mathematical aspects of the job. I wanted to help people with their problems, not just study them. I immediately loved law school because it teaches you how to apply the law to solve real world problems. It was a perfect fit.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession?

Jim: My first two years out of law school, I was a law clerk for the late Chief-Judge William H. Becker, U.S. Western District Court, MO. This was an invaluable experience. Thomas J. Leittem, a former colleague and partner was another great mentor.

Kevin: Certainly, my father. He has so many qualities that are important in a lawyer. Lawyers, and law students, tend to take things too seriously and risk burning out before they've had a chance to shine. My dad is kind and collegial, a quick learner who can focus on what is important, and has a great sense of humor.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

Jim: Being married to my wife, Julie, for 32 years and having five great children—Bridget and Kevin; Jane will complete her M.Ed. in December, and Kathleen has one M.A. degree and will start a PhD program in September. Tim, the last child at home, just graduated from high school and will head off to college in the fall. We are finally out of high school!

What do you like to do outside of the office?

Jim: I always enjoy family vacations, fishing, and walking. I also, with my wife, Julie, am involved in numerous university alumni activities.

Bridget: I'm working on my golf game and I enjoy doing the local runs. I'm training to do a marathon later this year.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

Jim: I recall my kids coming to work with me on Saturdays along with their Ninja Turtles, GI Joes, Barbie's, and Star Wars figures. The conference room was a "war zone." I am very happy that two of my children have entered the legal profession and are doing so well. So there is a commonality that is nice to share. It is also nice that Kevin, Bridget, and I all went to the same law school. There is also a part of me that finds great satisfaction in passing on my legal knowledge to the next generation. It is like a "passing of the guard."

Bridget: My Dad dropped us off at school every day on his way to work. There were some days that he was so focused on his trial or deposition that he would head downtown and forget to drop us off.

Kevin: My dad, sister and I all graduated from SLU Law School. I will graduate 35 years after

my dad. Believe it or not—we've had a few of the same professors.

The Murphy Family (Mike Murphy and sons Mark & Timothy Murphy):



Timothy, J. Michael, and Mark

Mike Murphy has been practicing law since 1971. After attend-

ing law school at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, he served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Clay County for fifteen years. He is currently municipal Judge of Smithville, Missouri. Mike and both his sons form The Murphy Law Firm.

Mark Murphy graduated from St. Louis University Law School in 2000. He joined The Murphy Law Firm in 2000 and also had a position as a Clay County Assistant Counselor from January 2001 to January 2004. He is now lead attorney on most of The Murphy Law Firm's civil litigation (personal injury, home warranty, insurance litigation, slander, Missouri Merchandising Practices Act) and guardianship probate work.

Timothy Murphy is a graduate from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, where he was a member of the Dean's list multiple times. Before going to Law School, Tim served as an intern with the offices of Missouri Senators Bond and Ashcroft. Tim's practice areas include civil litigation and criminal defense in both Missouri and Kansas. He practices in the family law firm as well.

How did you become interested in practicing law?

Mike: My father and mother always pressed me to further my education, and my uncle was a circuit judge for 37 years. These three got me introduced to the law.

Tim: In my family, the law is almost a required profession just to understand the conversation at Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas. I have been working at my father's law office for as long as I can remember and I have always wanted to be an attorney. I remember my father working hard as I grew up, yet he still had some flexibility to leave work to go to game, or to travel, and that was something I wanted in a profession or a job. As I got older, I was surrounded with attorneys and I was struck by the professionalism and desire to help their clients. I wanted to be around people in my career with such qualities and passions.

Mark: I became interested in practicing law before I can remember. I never really considered doing anything else with my life. Much of that had to do with my father. I admired him for what he did and who he was and I wanted to be like him in a lot of respects.

What is it like all working at the same firm?

Mike: The three of us practice together. Sometimes one of us can irritate another. However, we know the family members will pull their weight and be straightforward.

Tim: The pros are that the individuals you work with want you to succeed beyond billable hours and the bottom dollar, yet those things are still important, and trust is never an issue. I also get to work with two consummate professionals who are very good at their profession.

Mark: There are a tremendous amount of pros, and very little cons. For me personally, the pros are that my father took a special interest in what I did and how I was doing it. He was able to give me advice, and had not only a monetary interest in how I was performing, but he took the time to make sure that I was developing professionally and personally. Any time you can enjoy success professionally and attribute that and share that with your brother or your father, it makes it very special.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

Mike: My marriage to my wife for 33 years, and raising our four children are my proudest accomplishments.

Tim: I have started a new family with my wife, Ashley, and my son, Michael, and they are the two best things I have ever been a part of.

Mark: My finest accomplishment in my personal life would have to be marrying my wife, Meghan on April 30 of this year.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession or someone you looked up to?

Mike: My father, who always liked to help the underdog, and my mother, who was strong on education. My uncle, Jim Rooney and godfather, who gave me wonderful advice and shared fascinating stories.

Tim: My father and my uncles were obvious mentors, as well as Martin Maxwell and Judge James Welch.

Mark: Among by mentors were my father, Clay County Circuit Judge James E. Welsh, and St. Louis attorneys John Simon and Jeff Lowe who taught me so much during the three years I worked for those two attorneys.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

Mike: My attorney sons, and all my children—are exceptional as to their integrity, their work ethic, their courtesy, humor, and their appealing personalities. I am proud to work with them and be associated with them.

Mark: One of things that I used to pride myself on was to be the first to work and last to leave. One day on the way to work, I was sitting at a stop light in January, after a small snowfall. In my rearview mirror I see a vehicle traveling and it looks like it's not going to be able to stop. The

car slams into me. I get out of the vehicle and the other driver gets out of the vehicle, and it is my father, who has just rear-ended me trying to beat me to work. Lucky for him I was not hurt. That type of lawsuit could have split up our firm for good.

The Tippin Family

(James Tippin and daughter Dana Cutler):



Dana and James

James Tippin is the founder of the law firm James W. Tippin & Associates in 1976, and primarily focuses on insurance defense. He graduated from the UMKC School of Law in 1973.

Dana Tippin

Cutler is a partner in James W. Tippin & Associates and her principal area of practice is also insurance defense. She received her B.A. from Spelman College and her J.D. from the UMKC School of Law.

What are the pros to working in the same law office?

James: The pros are significant: there are not any office politics (smile). Family has to create an environment where all of the persons in the firm feel that they are vital and an important part of the team.

Dana: I don't know of any real cons, I guess I could make some up! The pros are that I have a supportive network and I don't have to worry about back-biting or hidden agendas w/my father and my husband Keith (who also practices at the firm).

What is the proudest accomplishment in your career?

James: Having a daughter and son-in-law that are respected members of the legal community.

Dana: Building a firm that I can potentially pass down to my sons—that has, overall, a decent reputation in and out of the courtroom.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

James: Having a faith-based family.

Dana: My relationship with God; my marriage; my friendship with my parents; and my children—in that order.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession or someone you looked up to?

James: I did not have mentors. But I did look up to Hon. Lewis Clymer and Hon. Harold Holliday, Sr.

Dana: My father; Judge Fernando Gaitan, Judge Lewis Clymer, and there are some current sitting judges at the circuit level.

What do you like to do outside of the office?

James: Travel with family, church related activities, Bar functions, service for not-for-profits, reading, and exercise.

Dana: I am active in my church, Second Baptist Church. I sing in the choir, teach a Bible Study class to young adults, and co-direct the youth group activities among other things. Keith and I enjoy movies, dinner (in or out), hanging out with friends and travel. We travel a couple of times of year with my parents and our three boys for family fun, too.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

James: During a personal injury case my daughter and I were working on, we were using lots of slides to discuss the case. I needed to go back to a slide we had just recently used and asked Dana to go back to it. She couldn't seem to find that slide, until one juror yelled out "Dana... it is four slides back." Needless to say most in the courtroom got a chuckle from the juror. So I commented that I would have to fire Dana and hire that juror...in which Dana quickly responded "If you do...my momma won't like it!" It all happened so fast—but the entire courtroom including the plaintiff, were now laughing.

Dana: In my efforts to take on more management responsibility, I decided the firm should use these really expensive binder systems for trial. No one else agreed, but JT, my father, said go ahead and see how it works...it was a disaster, but he never said, "I told you so," or anything like that. But what I learned is to listen to him a little more closely to see why he is opposed to my "innovations" because there are some inefficiencies or "old-fashioned" things that are too important to change.

The Wirken Family

(Jim Wirken, son Chris Wirken and daughter Erika Wirken):



Erika, Jim and Chris

litigation: Business litigation, Bank litigation, Tort litigation, Family and Criminal Law. He received his J.D. from St. Louis University in 1970.

Christopher Wirken works with his dad at The Wirken Law Group, P.C. He received his J.D. from the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law in 2000, and his B.A. in psychology from the University of Kansas in 1995.

Erika Wirken is the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and Coordinator of the Drug Abatement

Response Team for the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

How did you become interested in the legal profession?

Jim: I was in college in the late 1960's. I flunked the physical to go in to the military and so I was stuck having to go to work or to go to graduate school once I got out of college. "Business" was not in favor in the late 60's, so some type of graduate school seemed the better choice. A master's in English, which was my major, did not make much sense, an MBA made even less sense, and it appeared to me that the broadest area I could possibly go in to was "law." I had switched my major from pre-med to English in college because it seemed to be the broadest topic that I could become involved with, and attending law school seemed to be a good way to continue that broad approach to what I would eventually end up doing for a career. As they say "the rest is history!"

Chris: After observing my father, I thought that the practice of law would be both interesting and rewarding (personally and financially). However, after observing the pressures and demands of the practice, I thought I should take a couple years after college to "look around" before going to law school. I recognized that in working with my father, I'd get a very unique and extensive education in law, beyond textbooks and classrooms, which was not readily available to most, even if the family dynamic would occasionally wear upon me.

Erika: The fact that my dad is a lawyer was very influential in my wanting to become an attorney. Some of my earliest memories are from going to work with my dad and spending hours in his law library. The fact that my dad was an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Jackson County was very influential as well. His sense of justice was instilled in me at a very early age.

What advice would you give to parents and children who practice together?

Jim: The best advice I can give to parents and children who practice together is to keep a sense of humor. Don't take yourselves too seriously. Remember that your role as a parent and a child is only one role and it does not have to be a compelling role when you practice together. The role of mentor, colleague and friend is probably way more important than that of parent and child. When you are away from the office, the role of parent and child can become more preeminent, but even then, there is still the role of mentor, colleague and friend to be considered.

Chris: I strongly encourage families to work together (even if the dynamics can sometimes be quite frustrating). After all, why work with strangers and build relationships with them when you can use the same time to focus on closer established relationships. Assuming that you have a generally positive relationship with your

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family, the conflicts that you face with family at work should not be any different from any other problems with co-workers, except, with family, I believe that you can communicate more effectively and frankly (and, when needed, recover more quickly) when you know and love those you work with.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

Jim: Marrying my wife, having six unbelievably awesome and diverse children and one grandson that lives with us.

Erika: My proudest accomplishment so far in my personal life is being an active participant in my family member's lives. I take interest in what each of them is doing and try my best to be invested in whatever it is that they have going on. In a family like ours, where everyone is constantly growing and changing, I like being a person that they can rely on.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession?

Jim: I have told people that I come from the Harry Morris school of billing, the Larry Bold school of negotiation, and the Harlan Stamper school of humanity. One of the people I looked up to the most with regard to courtroom decorum and how to conduct yourself as a trial attorney and an advocate was Judge Paul Varde-man. My intellectual hero in the law has been Dean Jeffrey Berman of the University of Missouri Kansas City School of Law. I also need to mention Bobbie Lou Nailling. She started as the Executive Director of the KCMBA the same year I entered practice—she is one of three people in my life I have called mother (my biological mom, my mother-in-law and Bobbie!)

What do you like to do outside of the office?

Jim: My family likes to travel, do projects and sail. We like to eat together, drink together and party together. Most of my activities outside of the office deal with teaching. I am a fanatic about sailing and will be around water every chance I get.

Chris: I like to relax with my wife, work on the house & yard, cook & eat, play/coach ice hockey, sail, volunteer with my neighborhood association and the American Royal BBQ.

Erika: Our family travels together a lot which I enjoy. We also like to go sailing together. We are all very excited about my Dad's new boat and can't wait to try it out. Other than spending time with family, I like to travel, read, cook, watch rugby and spend time with friends.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

Jim: Being in the audience before the Supreme

Court of the State, and having your child sworn in to become a member of the same bar that you are a member of is quite an experience. Knowing that your children have chosen to be involved in a profession that deals with the rule of law and justice is quite a feeling for a parent. I am reminded of a line from a song from the Sound of Music: "somewhere in my life or childhood I must have done something good!" Both of my children who are attorneys are not only involved in their careers as practicing lawyers, but are involved in their community and in their profes-sion.

Erika: When I was very little my dad used to teach Trial Advocacy at UMKC School of Law as an adjunct. I remember my dad taking me to class in the UMKC Courtroom for Trial Ad class, which sadly looks about the same now as it did in the early 80s. After the class had done their closing arguments, my dad gave them his critique and then asked for me to do the same. I had no fear telling the law students which of them I liked and some of whom I thought were boring. I had a flash back to that moment when I walked into the UMKC Courtroom for my first day of Law School orientation, nearly twenty years later.

The Bernard Family (James H. Bernard and son James Bernard, Jr.):



James Sr. (sitting) and James Jr.

James H. Bernard has been a member of the firm of Slagle, Bernard & Gorman, P.C. for his entire legal career of more than 50 years. He presently practices law full time in trust and estate work, primarily planning, drafting and administering

of complex estate plans, estates, and serving as trustee or co-trustee of numerous trusts. James received his L.L.B. from the University of Kansas School of Law and his B.A. from the University of Kansas—and was admitted to practice in Missouri in 1948.

James Bernard, Jr. is Vice-President of Slagle, Bernard & Gorman. He practices primarily in real estate, estate planning and not-for-profit law. James Jr. received his undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas in 1973 and his law degree from Creighton University School of Law in 1976.

How did you become interested in the legal profession?

James: My great grandfather was a lawyer and judge in Richmond, MO. in the 1860s-80s, and I was interested as a child and, when on military service had a job involving working with a lawyer on a team. After World War II, I was able to enter Harvard Law School on the GI Bill.

James Jr.: I suppose "growing up" around a law-

yer exposed me to the practice. I could see how much my father enjoyed his work and its challenges, and I thought it would interest me, too.

How is working together at the same firm?

James: When we started my son was assigned to a segment of the firm which did not involve me (at my request), but I found that my clients tended to ask for him if I wasn't available. We now work together on a number of matters.

James Jr.: The pros include opportunity for a different kind of relationship beyond parent/child—one of law partners, peers. This is a lot different relationship than one that exists while the child is a student and growing up.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your career?

James: Survival in the same firm for more than 53 years.

Who were your mentors when entering the profession?

James: C.E. Lombardi, our senior partner and a true scholar.

James Jr.: My mentors were the senior partners at the firm. Each one helped in my development as a lawyer, not just in legal ability, but in other important areas such as courtesy, civility and trustworthiness – traits unfortunately not shown by all lawyers.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

James: I like to travel, attend cultural events, and volunteer.

James Jr.: My family loves to travel. I also like to volunteer on nonprofit boards in the community.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

James Jr.: My father truly loves the practice of law and working with and helping clients. It's his passion. He's been coming into the office daily for more years than I've been alive (I'm 53) and his dedication hasn't diminished one bit—although we were able to recently convince him to not come in to the office every Sunday!

The Edgar Family (John M. Edgar and sons John F. Edgar & David Edgar):



David, John M. and John F.

John M. Edgar is Managing Partner of Edgar Law Firm LLC. He has engaged in the practice of law for over 37 years based in Kansas City, Missouri. John has been engaged

exclusively in commercial trial practice in the federal and state courts of Missouri and Kansas and various other states.

John F. Edgar obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kansas and his J.D. degree from the University of Missouri - Kansas City. John has focused his practice on representing plaintiffs for his entire career. To that end, he represents injured parties consumer class actions, environmental contamination matters, and commercial litigation. Both John and his brother David work at the Edgar Law Firm with their father.

What are the benefits to working at the same law firm with your family?

John M.: Both of my sons practice with me in our own firm. As someone put it to me, "I am living the dream." Having the opportunity to practice with my sons is a blend of the best of the practice of law and the best of family.

John F.: Both my brother, David, and I practice with our father at the Edgar Law Firm. In my opinion, the biggest pro is the trust and honesty shared between the family members.

What advice would you give to parents/children who are thinking about practicing together?

John M.: My advice – be prepared to transition your relationship from parent/child to peer to peer. The family relationship will simply enhance your ability to function as peers.

John F.: Don't talk about business every single minute of every single day. And, when you are with other family members outside the practice, give it a break.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your career?

John M.: The co-founding with my sons of a successful law firm.

John F.: The formation of Edgar Law Firm LLC. It was something we have talked about since my brother and I were in grade school.

What is the proudest accomplishment in your personal life?

John M.: The achievement of success in raising two sons who have in turn achieved success in

their lives.

John F.: The birth of my daughters, Isabella and Emma.

What do you like to do outside of the office?

John M.: I like to spend time with my family, traveling and fishing.

John F.: I enjoy spending time with my family. But, I also enjoy playing golf when I get the time.

Do you have any comments or stories you would like to share?

John F.: After we began practicing together, my father actually went to a document production one day. In the course of the day, he went on 2-4 snack runs, spent at least two hours on the phone, constantly asked everyone else if "they came across anything good," and only went through about 50 documents. Needless to say, that was the last document production he attended.



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