

Fall 2023

Paradigm™

President's Podium:

The 'pursuit of happiness'
drives our continued
desire to do good

Autumn wonders

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The Primerus Paradigm™

Fall 2023



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A season ablaze with the best that nature's bounty can offer

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Every lawyer in Primerus™ shares a commitment to a set of common values known as the Six Pillars:

- Integrity
- Excellent Work Product
- Reasonable Fees
- Continuing Legal Education
- Civility
- Community Service

For a full description of these values, please visit primerus.com



About Our Cover

Splashes of color add to the appeal of autumn, a time of year that is celebrated in various ways in countries around the globe.

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Autumn

A season ablaze
with the best that
nature's bounty
can offer

For those with a love for alliteration, fall is a heart-warming season full of fun, food, football, and festivals, all of which intersect each autumn beginning under the gaze of the Harvest Moon in late September.

Celebrating the seasonal joys of autumn, of course, begins to pick up steam across the Northern Hemisphere when the trees begin to change colors, offering a visually pleasing palette of reds, yellows, and oranges that frame the fall harvest in a dazzling way.

Fall souls are further nourished by an array of festivals around the globe, including the Mid-Autumn Festival in China, Halloween in a growing number of countries worldwide, and All Saints Day in Guatemala and a host of other nations.

Here's a taste of several treats to come. 🍂

High Flying

Giant Kite Festival provides colorful lift to All Saints Day

By Tom Kirvan



Ana Isabel Maaz
Associate
Jurisconsulti Abogados y Notarios



Cristina Lara Vargas
Associate
Jurisconsulti Abogados y Notarios

In Guatemala, the most populous country in Central America, the November 1st Day of the Dead observance also is viewed and celebrated in a more positive light – All Saints Day.

In whatever form, the Guatemalan holiday is as colorful – and spiritually meaningful – as they come, highlighted by the Sumpango Giant Kite Festival that literally serves as a feast for the

eyes for the thousands who gather at the annual celebration.

For two young Guatemalan attorneys, Ana Isabel Maaz and Cristina Lara Vargas, the event is seen as a sacred tradition that melds families and communities together in memorializing the departed, symbolically representing a union of the deceased with the land of the living.

Associates with Jurisconsulti Abogados y Notarios in Guatemala City, Maaz and Lara

Vargas say that the Giant Kite Festival has become an international attraction that draws tourists from around the world who marvel at the color, size, and creativity of each design.

“The kites are works of art, and tell cultural and family stories,” says Maaz. “It is believed that the kites are an element of communication between our world and the spiritual one, which is why it attracts many visitors, both Guatemalan and foreign.”

Lara Vargas adds that the practice of flying the kites during the holiday celebration dates back to ancient times and is observed by various religious sects as a means of communicating with the beyond.

“Planning for the festival is a year-long effort that involves various communities,” Lara Vargas says. “It is a very time-consuming process to design and then create the kites.”

According to a capsule summary provided by festival promoters, the kite-building process can take up to 40 days, “the first day marked by the village’s unmarried men heading out to the coast at 4 a.m. to laboriously collect bamboo for the kite frames.”

Of special interest, festival promoters note, “every part of the kite is made using nature’s bounty – the glue is a mixture of yucca flower, lemon peel, and water, and ropes are made of the maguey plant (the

plant that also brings us tequila), and the tails are made from woven cloth.”

In finished form, the kites are known as “barriletes gigantes,” and because of their size, they “don’t actually fly, though you must look up to the sky to see them,” promoters indicate. “Participants along the sidelines make smaller kites to fly overhead.”

The Guatemalan holiday festivities also are marked by a colorful culinary



Giant kites, otherwise known in Guatemala as “barriletes gigantes,” are eye-catching symbols of the fall festival of All Saints Day.

expression, according to attorneys Maaz and Lara Vargas. The menu mainstay on November 1 is the “fiambre,” a salad dish that can include a wide assortment of ingredients, some of which may not necessarily be in harmony with each other.

The salad, Maaz and Lara Vargas point out, is served chilled and generally contains dozens of items, including sausages and cold cuts, eggs, corn, onions, beets, olives, chicken, radishes, and even sardines. And oftentimes much more.

“It is an acquired taste,” says Maaz with a chuckle, noting that it could even be considered by some as the piece de resistance of the holiday.

It also may well be the Guatemalan answer to the American fruitcake, a storied December creation that traditionally has evoked a love-hate relationship across the U.S.

For those with tastebuds that run afoul of the fiambre, Lara Vargas says there is an appealing alternative to the Guatemalan feast.

“If you are not in the mood for it, we can always order pizza,” Lara Vargas says with a smile.

Maaz, 25, and Lara Vargas, 24, are both graduates of Francisco Marroquin University in the capital city of Guatemala.

“In Guatemala, once you graduate high school, you begin to study for your law degree instead of attending college and then going to law school,” Maaz explains. “Therefore, after five years of classes and one year to study for the equivalent of the bar exam in Guatemala (we actually

have two exams), I’m proud to say that I’m a lawyer.”

Maaz joined Jurisconsulti in 2021, and specializes in commercial and civil law, focusing on the “organization of corporate and asset structures.”

And yet, it is not her sole focus.

“My family is very important to me,” she readily admits. “My mother is a pharmaceutical chemist, and my father is a lawyer who happens to also be a chemical engineer. While attending university for an engineering scholarship, he also studied law as it was his true passion. Even though he only graduated from engineering at the

time, about 10 years ago he resumed his law studies and finished his degree.

“Nowadays, he works as a prosecuting attorney at the Guatemalan Public Prosecutors’ Ministry,” Maaz relates. “However, this wasn’t the reason I decided to study law. I just really loved the idea of being a lawyer and being able to help those in need.”

Lara Vargas is the first lawyer in her family, and specializes in private law, “currently developing my skill set in arbitration law, commercial law, corporate and family assets structures.”

Like Maaz, Lara Vargas says “my family and friends are incredibly important to me,” noting that she is the youngest member of a family of five.

“My father is an entrepreneur and businessman, and my mother is an odontologist,” Lara Vargas says. “My two sisters are industrial engineers and are currently very successful in their chosen fields. I’m a very social and outgoing person, and absolutely love spending time with my parents and sisters and my friends, who I consider my chosen family.”



The fiambre represents a colorful collection of ingredients that is a taste-tempting delight each autumn in Guatemala.

Bewitching Time

Colors, costumes add to the allure of autumn

By Tom Kirvan

Fall foliage is in full splendor across northern Michigan throughout October, framing the month in a rainbow of colors.

In her role as Director of Marketing for Primerus, 32-year-old Paige Neirman is accustomed to wearing many hats while juggling responsibilities with the organization's weekly newsletter and magazine publications, its various social media programs, and its recently revamped website.

At times, it can be an all-encompassing and all-consuming job that can leave little room for outside interests, except for a couple of notable exceptions that converge for her each autumn.

The spectacular splash of fall colors in Neirman's native northern Michigan and the donning of an equally colorful assortment of costumes that she has worn in celebration of Halloween.

Paired together, the two fall rituals are seasonal highlights that delight leaf-lovers like Neirman throughout North America as well as those who revel in the Halloween tradition of trick-or-treating while decked out in creative costumery.

Count Neirman among the most devout of fall worshippers, a time of year when she can satisfy her lifelong love of photography with a whimsical desire to make an annual fashion statement come Halloween evening on October 31st.

Neirman, who holds a pair of bachelor's degrees from Grand Valley State University, grew up in Traverse City, a popular resort city where cherry orchards and vineyards line the hillsides and the nearby Old Mission Peninsula splits the watery wonders of Grand Traverse Bay.

For years, the area's beauty was something that Neirman took for granted, until she moved away to attend college and suddenly began to



Paige Neirman
Director of Marketing
Int'l Society of Primerus Law Firms



An avid photographer, Paige Neirman captured an explosion of bright yellow and orange leaves on a sugar maple tree in northern Michigan.

fully appreciate the magnificence of her hometown surroundings.

"I was born and raised in a place where a lot of people go to vacation," Neirman says, noting that the area triples in size during the summer months as tourists flock to the most populous city in northern Michigan. "I grew up on a peninsula on a peninsula. As you drive out Old Mission peninsula toward my parents' road, you come to a crest over a hill and can see for

miles. Miles of beautiful blue waters, green grass, cherry and apple trees, and vineyards.

"In the fall when the leaves change, you can see all the reds, oranges, and yellows," she says in painting a word picture. "Growing up, I wanted so badly to get out of the small city, but now I go back as often as I can."

And for good reason, as the region that Michiganders affectionately label as "Up North," ranks as one of the country's premier places to visit in the fall, when a

dazzling array of hardwood trees turn color in a showy display that can last much of October.

As the curtain falls on the Midwest color season, another autumn show begins an abbreviated run that is just as captivating.

Actually, she notes, Halloween activities and preparations begin in early October, as retailers, orchards, and restaurants do their best to capitalize on the money-making opportunities that go hand-in-hand with the holiday that originally was known as "All Hallows' Evening."

Halloween, however it is framed, has long been a holiday fixture in the Neirman family that includes Paige, her parents Denae and Tom, and her older sister Perri Lindquist and her husband Dirk.

"I have loved Halloween since I was little," says Neirman. "When I was growing up my mom made all of my costumes



In a 2020 Halloween costume, Paige Neirman draws a striking resemblance to Morticia Addams, the matriarch of the fictional Addams Family that was first popularized on television in the 1960s.



Black cats and Halloween pumpkins go hand in hand, as Paige Neirman's feline Binx would readily acknowledge. Binx is named after Thackery Binx, the immortal black cat from the Disney hit movie "Hocus Pocus."

and as an adult, I have made all but one of my costumes. I think in college I bought one once. I've always been on the creative side and always liked the spooky side of Halloween."

Which explains her fascination with all things Harry Potter, from books, movies, and the characters that populate the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It is also why she was drawn to the all-black cats when she went to the shelter to adopt a kitten. Neirman has two black cats, Toothless "Toothy" and Binx.

In Halloween garb, Neirman has portrayed the likes of Cleopatra, Minnie Mouse, Snow White, a vampire, and a koala. She even has taken on the persona of two members of the Addams Family, Wednesday and Morticia, while even grudgingly agreeing to replicate the look of another famous family – the Kardashians.

Admittedly, it was her least favorite costume get-up, although for the sake of two friends in 2011, she swallowed her disdain and agreed to be part of the three-sister clan of self-promoters.

Neirman, who could fashion herself as the ultimate Halloween team player, also has gone the group route as a piece of candy.

"I lived in a duplex with eight girls (including myself), and we all made our dresses and dressed up as different colored Skittles," she says. "I was yellow."

For a friend's bachelorette party, Neirman took on a masculine appearance.

"We did a Michael party, where we all dressed up as different Michaels," Neirman recalls of the soiree in which her friend's fiancé was feted. "I was Michael Scott, specifically 'Prison Mike' of 'The Office.'"

Fittingly, Neirman put a special stamp on her love for the popular October holiday while pursuing a degree in creative writing at Grand Valley.

"In college, a group of my friends all dressed up as different holidays," she remembers. "I was Halloween." 🍂



Paige Neirman has long displayed a special talent for pumpkin carving, depicting such characters as Simba from "The Lion King," Jack Skellington from "A Nightmare Before Christmas," and the Cheshire Cat from "Alice in Wonderland."

Moonbeam

Mid-Autumn Festival in China adds luster to annual harvest

By Brian Cox

Once a year, under the gaze of a full moon, thousands upon thousands of red, decorative lanterns hang like a glowing canopy over city streets throughout China.

Traditionally made of paper and lit with candles, the festive lanterns symbolically light a path leading families to gather together and to mark the way toward prosperity and good fortune.

The ubiquitous lanterns are an iconic image of the Mid-Autumn Festival, a Chinese holiday that has been celebrated for more than 3,000 years. It originated as a period to give thanks for the harvest and to encourage the return of the harvest-giving light in the coming year.

Attorney Dominic Wai, who grew up in Hong Kong and is now a partner at ONC Lawyers in the city of 7.4 million people, compares the Mid-Autumn Festival to Thanksgiving in the United States. He says the holiday, which also is known as the Moon Festival or the Mooncake Festival, is second in popularity only to the Chinese New Year. It is held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, when the Moon is believed to be at its brightest and fullest.

The Moon is said to remind people of their hometowns and loved ones, says Wai.

The festival — which this year falls on September 29 — is a joyous celebration with family reunions, moon-gazing activities, parades, lanterns and lots of mooncakes, which are small, round pastries filled with savory or sweet fillings such as salted duck eggs, lotus seed paste, fruit, or meat. Other popular festival foods include apples, pears, peaches, grapes, pomegranates, melons, oranges, pomelos, and tangyuan, a ball-shaped dessert dumpling.



Dominic Wai
Partner
ONC Lawyers



A full moon rises over the Mid-Autumn Festival

“Everything is round to represent the Moon,” explains Wai, who will spend the holiday having dinner with his wife, Anita, his parents, and other family.

In Chinese culture, a round shape represents completeness and reunion. The sharing and eating of mooncakes among family members signifies the completeness and unity of families. In the runup to the festival, local markets are flooded with beautifully decorated mooncake gift boxes that come in an array of shapes and sizes.

Wai says the day before the start of the festival is known as Welcoming Day and the day following the festival is Farewell Day.

Across the country, people celebrate the holiday with candlelight concerts, lion and dragon dances, and calligraphy exhibitions. In Beijing, evening boat rides to gaze at the Moon are popular. It’s also a romantic night for couples, who sit on hilltops, riverbanks, and park benches to observe the shining Moon.

One of the origin stories for the holiday centers around a myth about a renowned archer named Hou Yi, who shot down nine of ten suns that were in the sky, saving the world from over-heating. For his amazing feat, he was awarded an elixir of immortality, but he didn’t want to live forever without his beloved wife, Chang’e, so he gave it to her for safekeeping. When one of Hou Yi’s apprentices attempted to steal the elixir for himself, Chang’e drank it to prevent its theft. She then flew into the sky and became the spirit of the moon

in order to stay as close as possible to her husband. The festival recalls her sacrifice.

Wai says his law firm’s offices will be closed for the holiday, although many businesses will remain open to serve the many celebrants and their families.

Wai joined ONC Lawyers’ litigation and dispute resolution practice in 2016 after 20 years with the international law firm Baker & McKenzie. His practice focuses on advising clients on matters relating to anti-corruption, white-collar crime, law enforcement, and regulatory and compliance matters in Hong Kong, including advice on anti-money laundering.

“It’s interesting because there are so many types of cases and stories,” says Wai. “Each case is a different story and some of these stories are stranger than fiction. It’s also very challenging. Sometimes it’s very difficult. If you are able to resolve

these issues and help clients, it gives you satisfaction.”

Before joining the legal profession, Wai worked in the banking sector for a few years after earning his diploma at Hong Polytechnic University. It didn’t take long for him to realize he “didn’t really like banking,” and so he accepted a job with the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) before deciding to go to law school.


“I’ve always been interested in law and justice,” he says. “Working at the ICAC helped me in knowing more about the criminal aspects of corruption and related criminal law.”

He met his wife, Anita, in law school. She is a real estate attorney.

“That is the other reason I am so happy I went back to study law,” he says with a laugh.

Wai is the author of the “Butterworths Hong Kong Anti-Money Laundering Handbook,” which is a detailed reference work on the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance. The AMLO outlines statutory requirements relating to customer due diligence and record-keeping for financial institutions and certain non-financial businesses and profession.

Almost 10 years ago, Wai joined the board of Ronald McDonald House Charities — Hong Kong. The charity provides a home service for sick children and their families. His participation with the organization has transformed his understanding on the importance of volunteerism.

“It’s a good way to give back to society,” he says. “To make things happen, we need to work with each other in the community and in the world.” 



Dominic Wai and his wife Anita, a real estate attorney.

President's Podium

John C. Buchanan



The 'pursuit of happiness' drives our continued desire to do good

By most accounts, they are the most cherished words in the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of 1776 that was primarily crafted by Thomas Jefferson, a future two-term president of the United States.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

That last phrase, dealing with the ever-elusive concept of happiness, actually was first penned by English philosopher John Locke and was borrowed by Jefferson to illustrate a budding nation's collective desire to enjoy freedom to its fullest extent.

Aristotle, of ancient Greek philosophy fame, underscored its importance centuries earlier, writing that "happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim of human existence."

Through whichever lens happiness is viewed, it is best framed in a broader sense rather than in strictly individual terms, offering all citizens the opportunity to flourish and to experience the joy of success and respect.

Such a perspective dovetails neatly with the Six-Pillar principles of Primerus, which have served as our guideposts for the past three decades, a time when the concepts of honesty and integrity have come under

repeated attack by those bent on sowing the seeds of democracy's demise.

Over the past year, the Six Pillars have given rise to plans for an independently operated Primerus foundation, which we believe has the potential to do a world of good in addressing some of society's most pressing political, economic, and environmental problems.

At the heart of Primerus is an unyielding commitment to the time-honored qualities of honesty, integrity, value, competence, civility, and community service. A belief in those standards has been instrumental in propelling our growth on a global scale, serving as our moral compass in all matters applying to conscience and courage.

As a roadmap, the Six Pillars can change the course of our country, steering us away from the twin forces of political depravity and dishonesty that continue to stir distrust and chaos in our system of government.

On the world stage, they can help counter the likes of unhinged dictators in Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, where their yearning for military conflict has spiraled into the very real possibility of a cataclysmic nuclear attack.

With that as a sobering backdrop – made all the more tragic by the continuing war in Ukraine, we stand at a political crossroads, a global juncture demanding that we make a sizeable degree of investment and commitment for the public good, reshaping the prevailing narrative in a positive direction that can bring a sense of clarity and commitment to the task of problem-solving.

In the legal community, we began marshalling those forces for the greater good in 1992 when we created

"we stand at a political crossroads, a global juncture demanding that we make a sizeable degree of investment and commitment for the public good"



Primerus. Back then, our original focus was to highlight the important role that lawyers play in upholding the rule of law and in peacefully resolving conflict. We set out to restore honor and dignity to the profession, and to help rebuild the public's trust in lawyers and the judicial system.

Last year, upon our 30th anniversary, we began the work of forming a foundation with a broader mission in mind. Its central purpose is to elevate the public service profession in an effort to promote global peace and understanding. We can do this by first identifying and then supporting political candidates who embody the highest qualities of character and capability, and will serve as true fiduciaries to those they are privileged to represent. Accordingly, they also must embrace the fundamental concepts of freedom, liberty, justice, and equal opportunity for all.

Our goal, quite succinctly, is to "change the world in the nick of time," a mission made more urgent by the war in Ukraine, the devastating effects of climate change, and a disturbing rise in white supremacy and political extremism.

Our mission is not framed in a political debate. It is much more basic than that, hinging on those longing to live in a world full of promise and with a thirst for true happiness. **P**

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President

Elite Company

Olympian displayed her mettle in back-to-back Summer Games

By Tom Kirvan

Litigation counsel Sada Bâby, who holds degrees from Yale University and the University of Michigan Law School, has been an attorney with Krevolin & Horst since 2019.

It was the summer of 1996 when Sada Jacobson Bâby may have harbored her first Olympic dream.

She was just a 13-year-old girl then, living in Atlanta, Ga. with her parents and two sisters, totally caught up in the excitement of the city playing host to the XXIII Summer Olympiad in what was billed as the first privately-funded Olympic Games.

"I can vividly remember that my dad's fencing coach at Yale stayed at our house during the Olympics and gave him a fencing lesson in our driveway for old-time sake," said Bâby with a smile. "It was a special time to live in Atlanta and to experience the buzz of the Olympic spirit."

Eight years later in Athens, Greece, the ancestral home of the modern Olympics, Bâby would taste the Olympics for real, winning a bronze medal in the Individual Sabre event for women fencers.

But that memorable feat was just for openers, as at the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, Bâby would cap her competitive career by going one better, winning a pair of medals, including an individual silver in sabre and a team bronze.



Sada Bâby
Litigation Counsel
Krevolin & Horst, LLC

A litigation attorney with Krevolin & Horst, LLC in Atlanta, Bâby enjoyed a fencing career that ranked with the best female athletes in the combat sport, which has been a fixture at the Olympics since the first modern Games were held in 1896.

In addition to earning three Olympic medals, Bâby is a two-time world champion in the team fencing competition, while also winning the 2003 gold medal in women's sabre at the 2003 Pan American Games held in the Dominican Republic.

For all of her competitive accomplishments, Bâby was rightfully inducted into the United States Fencing Hall of Fame in 2016, an achievement that elevated her to the rarefied air of the elite athletes in the sport that features the three disciplines of the foil, the epee, and the sabre.

"When I reflect upon my fencing career, more than anything I think about all the incredible things that it has given me, particularly the opportunity to travel the world, to meet people from all over the world, and to be fortunate enough to compete in two Olympics," said Bâby a native of Rochester, Minn. who grew up in Atlanta. "Winning medals was a bonus, especially considering how competitive the sport was back then and remains now."

She can thank her father, Dr. David Jacobson, for sparking her interest in fencing, a sport that traditionally has labored in the shadows of more spectator-friendly athletic pursuits.

An endocrinologist in Atlanta, Dr. Jacobson was drawn to the sport somewhat by chance when he was a student at Yale University, according to his daughter.

“He was a student at Yale and was literally wandering around the gym one day when he crossed paths with a man (Henry Harutunian) who was the new fencing coach,” Bâby related. “The coach recruited my dad on the spot since he was in the process of building a team and needed bodies more than anything at that time.”

Her father quickly displayed a talent for the sport, eventually earning All-America honors at the Ivy League school and a spot on the 1974 U.S. National Fencing Team in the sabre competition.

When Jacobson and his wife Tina, who also fenced competitively, began raising their three daughters, there could be little doubt that the sword-fighting sport would become a family affair.

“Coach Harutunian told my dad about a fencing program in Atlanta and that led him to begin training there,” Bâby recalled. “Before long, we all got sucked into the sport as my parents saw it as something we could enjoy as a family. Eventually, my mom traveled everywhere with us, taking my sisters and me to competitions all over the country.”

Her younger sisters, Emily Edwards and Jackie Bell, also proved adept at the sport.

Emily, a Columbia University grad who earned a law degree and an MBA from Georgia State University, also was a member of the 2004 U.S. Olympic Fencing Team and was the 2005 NCAA champion in the sabre event and a four-time All-American.

Jackie, also a Columbia grad who earned an MBA from Northwestern University, was a three-time All-American in college for the Lions.

“To have each of us competing at such a high level was pretty amazing,” Bâby said of her family’s fencing fame. “It certainly cemented our bond as sisters.”

Bâby was 15 years old when she began fencing competitively, taking her athletic and academic talents to Yale in 2000.

“I started as a biology major there, but eventually found that I did much better in my history classes,” said Bâby, who earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Morse College at Yale in 2006. “I wasn’t quite sure what I wanted to do after I was done with my fencing career, but my parents thought I had the analytical and advocacy skills to do well in law school.”

But before she would enroll in law school at the University of Michigan in 2008, Bâby trained her primary focus on prepping for the Olympics, first in Athens and then in Beijing. The 2004 Summer Games in the Greek capital was the first time that women were able to compete in the sabre, which for years had been considered to be “too aggressive” an event for females.

“Like a number of other sports, fencing has had its share of sexist hurdles to

overcome and not allowing women to compete in sabre was one of them,” she lamented. “The Women’s Sabre event was in its early days when I started competing, which in a sense leveled the field for me coming into the sport for the first time as a high-schooler. Everyone was starting from square one and no one had the benefit of a head start.”

Bâby rose to No. 1 in the world rankings in 2004, earning a place on the medal stand with a bronze-winning performance in Athens. She and teammate Mariel Zagunis, who won the gold, became the first American women to be awarded Olympic medals in fencing.

“It was a thrill to win that medal, just as it was to take part in the Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium,” said Bâby, whose sister Emily also competed in the Athens Games. “It was an experience that I will never forget, especially the privilege of representing my country.”

In Beijing four years later, Bâby was part of a star-studded American team that swept the medals in women’s sabre competition. Bâby took the second-place silver medal, falling in the finals to Zagunis. Their teammate Becca Ward captured the bronze.

Adding to the glow of the American sweep, former President George H.W. Bush, a Yale alum, was on hand for the medal ceremony as the Star-Spangled Banner rang through the Olympic Green Center in Beijing.

Within days of the capstone to her fencing career, Bâby was off to Ann Arbor to begin her studies at the U-M Law School, traditionally ranked among the top law schools in the nation. Her time there, where she graduated with honors while serving as Executive Note Editor of the Michigan Law Review, would set the stage




A two-time Olympian, Sada Bâby has two sons, Henry (10) and Jack (7), both of whom enjoy competing in fencing.

for a successful legal career that eventually took her to Krevolin & Horst.

“During the interview process, I think I talked with every attorney here at the time, which gave me the feeling that this would be a great place to continue my legal career,” she said.

As a seasoned litigator, Bâby represents both clients and defendants in a variety of complex business litigation matters involving contracts, business torts, shareholder disputes, construction disputes, and more.

Despite her busy work schedule, Bâby makes it a point to carve out plenty of time for her two sons, Henry and Jack, a pair of up-and-coming fencing competitors.

“I do my best to be more of a mom than a coach,” she said with a grin. 

Cost of Olympics can turn a dream into a nightmare

By Tom Kirvan



According to Japanese reports, the final cost of staging the 2021 Summer Olympics in Tokyo was a staggering \$13 billion, more than twice what was originally forecast. That initial estimate, of course, was eclipsed in about as fast a time as Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt covered the 100 meters during his heyday.

Tokyo's pain may well have been felt in Chicago had the Windy City prevailed in the Olympic bidding in 2009. It was the U.S. choice to host the 2016 Summer Games and surprisingly was eliminated in the first round of voting despite personal pitches from such Chicagoans as President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and TV and movie star Oprah Winfrey. Tokyo

and Madrid also were in the running to host the event that seemingly has been marred by unexpected troubles since the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Summer Olympics in Munich.

While Chicago can collectively wonder what might have been if it had been chosen as the 2016 host, Detroit must have harbored similar thoughts in 1968

when Mexico City was the site of the Summer Games.

Detroit, thanks to the tireless efforts of a University of Michigan product, was a finalist for the 1964 and 1968 Olympics. After finishing a distant second to Tokyo as the 1964 Olympic host, Detroit was considered the favorite for the 1968 Summer Games when the voting rolled around in the fall of 1963.

Its competition included Lyon, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City, and while Detroit lacked some of the beauty and glamour of the other cities, Olympic observers reportedly were impressed with the existing athletic venues and the community/business support for the 1968 bid.

The man behind the Detroit effort was a native son, Frederick Matthaei, who formed the Detroit Olympic Committee in 1936, the year that the Summer Games would become a hideous propagandist tool of Nazi Germany.

A product of Detroit Western High School, Matthaei was born in 1892, the son of German immigrants. Following high school, he briefly attended Michigan State University before transferring to U-M, where his name will be etched forever among the school's most influential and generous alumni.

As a youth, Matthaei worked as a grocery delivery boy at his family's general store in Detroit and briefly served as an accountant following graduation from the U-M. He eventually built a fortune as the founder of American Metal Products Co., an auto supplier based in the Motor City.

He would use his wealth to fund a number of philanthropic causes, particularly at the U-M where he donated large tracts of land that would become home on the east side of Ann Arbor to Radrick

Farms Golf Course and Matthaei Botanical Gardens. He also made sizeable donations to Wayne State University, which named an athletic complex after him in 1965, and was instrumental in funding the construction of the former Cobo Hall along the Detroit River.

But as an avid sportsman and a former part owner of the Detroit Lions, Matthaei had a lifelong interest in bringing the Olympics to his home city, and reportedly spent heavily to make his dream become a reality. A veteran of the U.S. Navy during World War I, Matthaei personified the Olympic spirit, which values participation over winning.


In 1936, as a second world war loomed with the rise of fascism, Matthaei formed the Detroit Olympic Committee and served as its chairman until 1964, overseeing repeated bids by the city to host the Summer Games.

He envisioned a Detroit Olympics that also could possibly draw upon athletic sites in Ann Arbor and Windsor, adding spice to a bid that would feature the construction of a 110,000-seat stadium at the State Fairgrounds. The new complex would complement the use of existing facilities such as Tiger Stadium, the University of Detroit's Memorial Building (now known as Calihan Hall), and pools at Rouge Park and Wayne State University. The rowing and sailing events would be staged on the

Detroit River near Belle Isle, showcasing the beauty of an international waterway bordering two North American countries.

The city's bid was bolstered by several political heavyweights, as then President John F. Kennedy and Michigan Governor George Romney threw their support behind the effort with JFK telling the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that Detroit would give "the warmest and most cordial welcome in the U.S."

But in the fall of 1963, just weeks before a presidential assassination would rock the nation, the IOC snuffed out dreams of an Olympic flame in Detroit, voting 30-14 to award the bid to long-shot Mexico City. It was a stunning setback for Detroit, which two years later would make another attempt to secure the Summer Games, the 1972 version that would be awarded to Munich.

For Matthaei, it was his final Olympic blow, ending his hopes of encircling the city in the five Olympic rings that symbolically bind a world together. Several years later, the city of his birth would erupt in flames, the site of riots that would claim 43 lives and send Detroit into a downward spiral. 



The Fist is a monument to Joe Louis, the famed Detroit boxer.

Conflict Resolution

Stakes are ever high for noted Charleston estate, trust attorney

By Tom Kirvan

South Carolina attorney Frank Blanchard will be among the first to debunk any notion that life in the world of estate and probate law is dull and uneventful.

In fact, when the time comes to put a bow on his legal career, Blanchard may very well be in position to write a compelling best-seller, recounting some of the choice cases he has handled for the Charleston-based firm of Rosen Hagood, a member of Primerus since 2004.

Money – especially the kind that reaches the rarefied air of seven, eight, and nine figures – has a way of spicing up any legal proceeding, Blanchard has discovered. And Charleston, one of the most historic and charming cities in the South, has become

somewhat of a magnet for high-profile legal dramas entangling wealthy families that can splinter apart when millions of dollars are at stake.

Take a case that Blanchard, with other law partners in the firm, began to handle in 2013 involving the estate plans of former E.F. Hutton president Keith Wellin, a Grand Rapids native who reportedly amassed much of his fortune through a series of shrewd stock investments, including in a Nebraska-based conglomerate called Berkshire Hathaway.

“He bought thousands of Berkshire Hathaway Class A shares in the 1970s for a couple hundred dollars a share that last I looked are now valued at more than \$500,000 a share,” said Blanchard.

With a reported net worth north of \$300 million, Wellin had settled in the historic district of downtown Charleston at the time with his fourth wife, whose motives were viewed somewhat suspiciously by her husband’s three children from his first marriage, according to Blanchard.

“The children despised their stepmother from the very outset, which probably was reciprocated as the relationship evolved,” said Blanchard.

In an effort to head off any further family discord, Wellin made the decision in January 2013 – a year before his death – to give his wife and each of his children an early estate present: \$40 million in cash, to be split evenly among the four.



Frank Blanchard
Partner
Rosen Hagood

His generosity, Blanchard indicated, came at a considerable cost in terms of capital gains and associated gift taxes, a financial reckoning that would impact each of the recipients as time would tell.

“Mr. Wellin sold highly appreciated investments to make the gifts in cash,” Blanchard explained. “He later asserted in court filings that his son, who had his power of attorney, had arranged for him to make the gifts even though Mr. Wellin had previously declined to do so and despite his accountant advising his son against the gifts because of the resulting tax burden he (Wellin) would incur to make them in cash.”

What then unfolded was a major falling out between father and children, resulting in a multi-front legal battle that took more than six years to resolve, a dispute that may have hastened Wellin’s death in September 2014 at age 88, said Blanchard.

“In June of 2013, just months after Mr. Wellin gave each of his children \$10 million, they responded to their father’s resulting liquidity crisis by taking actions that appeared to be designed to bankrupt him and leave him unable to fulfill his

testamentary bequests to his fourth wife,” Blanchard explained.

“As you can imagine, that litigation was particularly contentious . . . and the case didn’t finally settle until April 2020,” Blanchard added, noting that he and his law partners were involved in more than 110 depositions – most of the all-day variety – over the duration of the case. “There were several big law firms involved on the other side and it was evident their clients had given them a blank check and they unleashed ‘scorched earth’ litigation.”

The case grew even more complicated following Wellin’s death, as his children challenged the validity of his will and trust, which had been revised several times over the years including in response to the events in the summer of 2013, according to Blanchard.

“In the end, a global settlement was reached on the eve of a trial involving the will contest with his children receiving lots of money, his widow received lots of money, and everything was worked out,” said

Blanchard, who had to navigate through the murky legal waters of South Dakota trust law before a merciful end was reached in the case.

“Even though Mr. Wellin never had any ties to South Dakota or owned any property in the state, his trust was formed under South Dakota law,” Blanchard indicated. “As an effort to attract business to the state, South Dakota became a trust-friendly jurisdiction, much like Delaware is to corporations.”

During the COVID year of 2020, Blanchard encountered another unusual case involving an elderly woman in Hilton Head, S.C., who had no children but had befriended a younger man who she likened to the son she never had.

“She had known the man since he was an infant and had been friends with his mother,” Blanchard said. “Her will left her entire estate to him.” But then a young lady – who lived on the same street as the elderly woman



In a keepsake photo from early in his legal career, Frank Blanchard is pictured with Morris Rosen, the late founder of the Rosen Hagood law firm in Charleston.



An avid fan of the Boston Red Sox, Frank Blanchard and his son William struck a pose outside venerable Fenway Park during a long-awaited trip to the historic ballpark.

and had become increasingly involved in the lady's life around the same time she moved to an assisted living facility – somehow inserted herself into the estate planning process, Blanchard said.

"This young lady convinced the elderly woman that the young man had been lying to her for years," stated Blanchard. "She drove the woman from the assisted living facility to a FedEx office with a new will, a one-page document the young lady had drafted for the woman without lawyer involvement.

"The elderly woman then signed the new will in front of two FedEx employees while sitting in the passenger seat of the young lady's car in the FedEx parking lot

because she was too weak to go inside. The young man had no clue about the new will until after the lady passed away," explained Blanchard.

In the revised will, Blanchard's client was effectively cut out of the sizeable estate, which under the new document named the elderly woman's gardener and a pet helper's charity as the primary beneficiaries.

The new will, not surprisingly, was challenged upon the death of the elderly woman with Blanchard leading the legal charge for the plaintiff. The case eventually was settled in mediation, but not before the young woman tried to thwart Blanchard's attempt to subpoena her phone and

e-mail records, contending that she had "dropped her phone in the river, not just once, but twice," he said with a laugh.

"You can't make up this sort of stuff," he said of the legal shenanigans that some people try to pull when big money is on the line.

A native of Sullivan's Island near the entrance to Charleston Harbor, Blanchard was raised in the small town of Harleyville, S.C., a place he likened to the fictional Mayberry in the beloved 1960s sitcom "The Andy Griffith Show."

"It was a place where everyone knew everyone," said Blanchard, who was a three-sport letterwinner in high school.

He also was a standout student, graduating as the valedictorian of his high school class.

"What it doesn't say on my bio is that there were less than 20 students in my graduating class," Blanchard said with a hearty laugh.

Blanchard took his academic talents to Furman University in Greenville, S.C., a private liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 2,300 students. He initially intended to pursue a degree in engineering, but soon discovered that a heavy load of math and science courses wasn't to his intellectual liking.

Somewhat fortuitously, he found his footing by taking a law class during his sophomore year, sparking an interest in the subject that would lead to his decision to attend the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1989.

An early interest in criminal law waned following a summer stint working for the warden of a maximum-security men's prison in Ridgeville, S.C., a job

spent interviewing inmates who had filed complaints that ranged from silly to serious.

The following summer, Blanchard landed a clerkship with Rosen Hagood, a firm of 12 attorneys now in its 76th year of operation. It has been his home since he graduated with honors from law school in 1992 and is a place where he was mentored by the firm's late founder Morris D. Rosen, who served as Corporation Counsel for the City of Charleston and was instrumental in helping the city integrate public facilities during the turbulent times of the early 1960s.

Blanchard said he also counts former managing partner Richard S. Rosen, the son of the firm's founder, among his key mentors, calling him one of the top trial lawyers in South Carolina before he retired several years ago.

"I've had the privilege of learning from many gifted lawyers here over the years," said Blanchard, crediting them for much of his development as one of the region's most respected and highly regarded probate and estate attorneys.

The firm boasts of its "extraordinarily deep roots in South Carolina and in Charleston," and is proud that three of its partners have served as president of the South Carolina Bar Association.

"This state is our home, and we know it well," the firm proclaims on its website. "Whether you're negotiating a contract, dealing with business litigation, or seeking compensation for a personal injury, we're who you want on your side. We get things done here."

In individual terms, the same can be said of Blanchard, whose late father Daniel spent his career in civil service with the U.S. Navy after earning his degree from The Citadel.

The oldest of three sons, Blanchard said his mother, Louise, now lives in Harleyville, the hamlet where she spent more than 20 years as its town clerk.


"She knew everything and everybody," Blanchard said of her commanding local presence while clerk.

"We didn't get away with much," he chuckled on behalf of his younger brothers, Bruce and Chris.

Blanchard and his wife Laura have two children of their own, 11-year-old Daniel and 7-year-old William. A sixth-grader, Daniel has displayed interests in art and computer games, while William is showing early promise as a basketball and soccer player. Both boys are involved in Scouting, where their father volunteers as a den leader.

Laura, a University of North Carolina alumna, has spent her career in corporate communications and now works for OneWorld Health, a nonprofit based in Charleston that is dedicated to providing "quality, affordable health care to the underserved" in Third World nations.

Her work periodically takes her to countries in Central America, including Honduras, where the entire Blanchard family spent a week in June on a "philanthropic trip," said Blanchard.

"We definitely realized how fortunate we are and all the little things that we take for granted," said Blanchard of the experience setting up mobile medical clinics for the impoverished. "We wanted to expose the boys to the other side. I think they got to see some things that will impact them in a positive way." 



The Blanchard family – Frank, Laura, and their sons Daniel and William – gathered for a group photo with OneWorld Health supporters who assisted with the opening of medical clinic in Honduras last June.

A Vietnam vet recalls a series of close calls and his sense of duty

By Tom Kirvan



Joel Collins
Partner
Collins & Lacy, P.C.

When Joel Collins earned his degree in English from Clemson University in 1965, U.S. military involvement in Vietnam was just beginning to heat up, a fact that would soon weigh heavily on the minds of every able-bodied male between the ages of 18 to 26.

As a land grant school, Clemson at the time mandated two years of ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) service to obtain a degree. Collins easily fulfilled that requirement at the South Carolina college, tacking on two more years of ROTC service to graduate as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Fortunately for him, and thousands of other draft-eligible males, Collins qualified for a student deferment, which allowed him to go to law school for the next three

years at the University of South Carolina without running the risk of being sent to Vietnam where he would face a very uncertain future as military casualties began to mount.

"It was a scary time to be a male in that age bracket, as most everyone was sweating bullets about being drafted," said Collins, who in his last semester of law school was awarded a coveted transfer to the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps.

"If I had remained in the Infantry branch of the Army instead of the JAG Corps, I doubt if I would have made it home from Vietnam alive," surmised Collins, one of the founding partners of Collins & Lacy, P.C., a defense litigation firm in Columbia, S.C.

Collins began his JAG service at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., arriving late one cold

winter night after driving from South Carolina in a sporty 1965 Ford Mustang that was a college graduation gift from his parents. He immediately discovered that Kansas was a world away from his native Palmetto State deep in the heart of Dixie.

"I was this scrawny southern boy freezing to death and on a military base a thousand miles from home where a statue and a building were named for Yankee Civil War heroes," Collins recalled of his sense of amazement. "It was fair to call this culture shock. I had to adjust. The first thing I needed to do the next day was buy an overcoat and a scarf."

He began work the next day in the Staff Judge Advocate's office, where his arrival had been eagerly awaited by his future legal colleagues.



American military involvement in Vietnam served as a political flashpoint in the 1960s and '70s.

"It turns out every lawyer in the SJA office was anticipating my arrival," Collins said. "They selected cases that they would transfer to me. Needless to say, they selected the worst cases they had. I did not know any better and was eager to actually begin practicing law. My experience at the JAG School had boosted my confidence because there I was interacting and studying with lawyers from all over the country. I was especially proud of how much better prepared I seemed to be with the rules of evidence, having had a wonderful evidence professor at the USC School of Law."

Months later, in July 1969, just days after astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon, Collins marked his own milestone, becoming a father when his son Joel III was born.

Within weeks of his son's birth, however, Collins would receive orders to report for duty in war-torn Vietnam. It was not the kind of news designed to warm the heart of a new father. He later learned that his reassignment to Vietnam was virtually assured when he was interviewed while attending JAG School in Charlottesville, Va. in preparation for his duties at Fort Leavenworth.

"I was asked then what would I do if I received orders to go to Vietnam," Collins recalled. "I remember answering by saying, 'I feel it is my duty to go wherever the U.S. Army needs me.' Little did I know at the time, but that was the answer they were looking for."

Before being shipped to Vietnam, Collins was able to return home to see his wife, newborn son, and his parents in what

would be an emotional visit capped by a farewell at the airport in Charlotte, N.C.

"I boarded a jet and while it was taxiing down the runway on takeoff, I had tears in my eyes," he said. "I really feared that I would never see them again."

His angst was mitigated somewhat when he arrived in Hawaii for a brief layover en route to Vietnam.

"When I walked off the airplane and into that terminal, my eyes were immediately drawn to a tall handsome lieutenant colonel in full dress uniform," Collins related.

It was his brother-in-law, Lt. Col. George "Buck" Anderson, who was stationed in Hawaii at Scofield Barracks.



A Vietnam War-era cargo plane, similar to the one Collins boarded for his arrival in Vietnam.



Collins and his daughter, attorney Christy Collins Rogers, are pictured with South Carolina Circuit Judge Clifton Newman at a reception.

"How Buck knew which flight I would be on, I will never know," said Collins. "But I told people that he looked 10 feet tall and strong as a brick wall that night in Hawaii. I always loved Buck, but I loved him more after this well-planned visit. I think he knew how much I needed that visit."

After another layover in Guam, Collins then flew to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in South Vietnam, where he would begin yet another long journey up the coast making stops at various airfields. The last stop that night was in Chu Lai near the city of Da Nang, headquarters of the 23rd Infantry Division to which he had been assigned. It was the largest infantry division ever assembled by the U.S. Army with more than 30,000 soldiers, according to Collins.

Upon landing during a heavy rainstorm, Collins and all others aboard the giant C130 transport aircraft received a less than welcoming reception.

"When the plane came to a lurching halt, the large loading ramp at the rear of the fuselage opened and slammed on the runway," Collins indicated. "Behind the plane was a soldier wearing a poncho, a combat helmet, and carrying an M-16 rifle. He motioned and yelled for us to grab our duffel bags and follow him. The airfield was under rocket attack.

"I remember running as fast as I could for about 200 to 300 yards to the opening of a bunker. We quickly entered the bunker while hearing an occasional explosion.

Inside the bunker, water had puddled about 6 to 8 inches deep."

If he wasn't so frightened, Collins might have been tempted to utter, "Good evening, Vietnam," an early take on an irreverent 1987 hit movie starring Robin Williams. But as Collins had just discovered, life in a warzone was no laughing matter.

In addition to frequent attacks by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, those stationed on the base had to deal with rats, monkeys, deadly snakes, and large lizards, akin to a "tiny version of a Tyrannosaurus Rex," Collins noted.

And despite all that, Collins had a job to do – trying a slew of cases, either as a defense or prosecuting attorney under particularly difficult circumstances.

“One time when we were trying a court martial . . . in a large tent, a rocket slammed to earth not far away and caused the tent to completely collapse on top of us,” he said. “We had to crawl out from under it. The tent was then re-erected and we resumed the trial. As I recall, that case was against a soldier who was charged with the crime of sleeping on guard duty.

The Army could not tolerate sleeping on guard duty and therefore made it a court martial offense. Everybody understood.”

What many did not understand, however, was that soldiers had the lawful right to disobey an order from a command officer. Collins drove home that point in the aftermath of the infamous My Lai massacre in which as many as 500 unarmed villagers were slaughtered by U.S. soldiers in the hamlet on March 16, 1968. The brutality of the carnage fueled anti-war sentiment

in the U.S. and sparked a firestorm of international outrage.

“I started off my classes on the law of warfare with replacement troops by asking them what they would do if their company or platoon commander told them to fire on and kill innocent women and children rounded up in a village,” Collins related. “Amazingly, the majority of them, by a show of hands, said they would obey the order.

“I then proceeded to explain this was an unlawful order. I told them they were not obligated to obey an unlawful order regardless of the rank of the officer issuing the order. I told them it was their duty to disobey such an order.”

For his service in Vietnam, Collins was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

“Those medals mean a lot to me, but they do not change my later formed strong opinion that this war was a huge mistake for our country,” he declared.

More than four decades later, Collins would have another reckoning with his military service when he returned to Vietnam, this time accompanied by his two sons.

“My sons Joel and Drew talked me into going back to Vietnam in 2013,” Collins said. “For years I told them I would not go back there. But I finally relented and agreed. I am glad they talked me into this trip because it was enjoyable, memorable, and cathartic.”

Particularly so during a surprise dinner arranged by his son Joel, a noted travel photographer, and a Vietnamese travel agent, Le Thu Thuong, otherwise known as “Tracy.” It took place in Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam during the war, and the home of the notorious “Hanoi



The crush of civilian casualties fueled anti-war sentiment in the U.S. and Europe during the Vietnam conflict. Image courtesy of Associated Press.

Hilton,” where countless American POWs were held.

On hand for the dinner gathering were Collins, his two sons, Tracy, and her father, Le Tat Tu, who had served as a North Vietnamese officer during the war.

“He was very friendly and smiled the entire time,” Collins said of his former enemy. “He showed us his identification card, which was a source of great pride. As a veteran, he needed only to show this

card for free transportation, free admission, and many other benefits. He is, after all, a veteran of the army which defeated the world’s mightiest military force – the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.”

During that dinner, the two former warriors formed a common bond.

“At the end of this memorable dinner party, Le Tat Tu stood and held out his arms to me,” Collins vividly recalled. “We embraced as if we were related to one another. In a

way, I believe we are related, having both lived through that wartime experience. For me, it was a year. For him, it was about 10 years. After we hugged, he said to me through his daughter, ‘I needed that.’ I replied, ‘I needed it, too.’ What a powerful memory!”



In 2013, Joel Collins returned to Vietnam with his two sons, Joel III and Drew, in what would be a trip for the ages.

A close shave with the law

Scheduled witnesses helped trim an Army edict by a hair

By Tom Kirvan

As far as expert witnesses go, U.S. Army Colonel Pete Dawkins was the ultimate, a sure-fire winner who was a defense attorney's dream.

Dawkins to this day remains the only cadet in the history of the United States Military Academy at West Point to serve as Brigade Commander, president of his class, captain of the football team, and a "Star Man," signifying his status as a top 5 percent

student who also graduated first in his class.

A star running back during his days at West Point, Dawkins was a first team All-America selection, winning the Heisman Trophy in 1958 while leading the Black Knights to an 8-0-1 record and a No. 3 national ranking. For good measure, he also was named a Rhodes Scholar, embarking on a 3-year course of study at the University of Oxford and proving that his academic brilliance

easily matched his accomplishments on the gridiron.

A man with an impeccable reputation, Dawkins spent the next 24 years as a highly-decorated officer in the Army, serving two tours of duty in Vietnam before retiring from the military as a general to pursue a successful career in the world of finance.

In addition to his many leadership duties while working at the Pentagon, Dawkins spearheaded a little-known

effort to rewrite the Army's regulation on hair length for soldiers, attempting to liberalize an age-old requirement that they have "white walls" or tightly cropped hair on the sides and back of the head.

"This was a time when there was way more emphasis on haircut rule enforcement than Col. Dawkins thought was reasonable," recalled attorney Joel Collins, who was an Army JAG officer at West Point after spending a year in Vietnam. "A soldier could be overweight, out of shape, and a slouch, but he might be OK as long as he kept his hair really short. Col. Dawkins wanted to help the U.S. Army correct this problem and modernize its standards."

His efforts were brought to light by legendary Sports Illustrated writer Frank DeFord, who highlighted it in an article about Dawkins in the popular weekly magazine. The article caught the eye of Collins, who was about to be drawn into a legal squabble involving Specialist 4th Class Christianson.

Christianson would soon come knocking at the door of the JAG Corps, where Collins was working as a do-it-all attorney at West Point. The Spec 4 had been flagged by an Army sergeant for violating the haircut regulation and was unceremoniously pulled off a funeral detail because of his allegedly shaggy look.

By that time during his service in the JAG Corps, Collins acknowledged that he had developed a reputation as a lawyer "who would buck the system and advocate for his clients." Christianson reportedly knew of this and specifically asked for Collins to represent him in the legal dispute.

"I stepped out of my office and went down the hall where we kept the Army regulations," Collins recalled of his initial meeting with Christianson. "The new regulation had photographs of acceptable hairstyles and hair lengths. There was a Caucasian with brown straight hair, an African-American with tight curly hair, another Caucasian with curly blonde hair and others. These photographs of the front, sides, and rear of each head depicted soldiers with hair considerably longer than Spec 4 Christianson had the day we met. But these photographs were specifically incorporated into the regulation as lawful hairstyles."

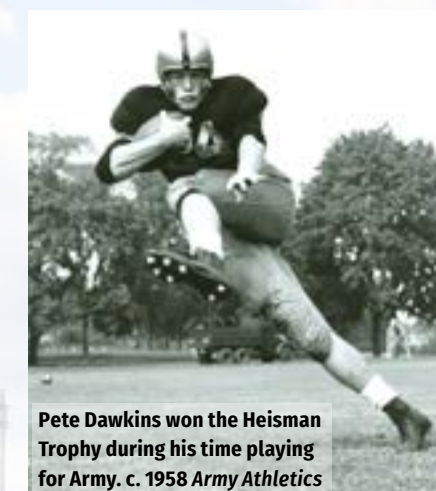
Now facing the possibility of a court martial proceeding, where he could be discharged from the Army or be jailed for up to six months, Christianson stood his ground, withstanding a "chewing out" that the Army sergeant gave him for challenging the haircut regulation.

"As I continued reading the haircut regulation, I noted it clearly required poster-size versions of the photographs to be displayed on all unit bulletin boards and in all barbershops on all Army installations," Collins indicated.

"My barber acknowledged knowing about these posters," Collins said. "He told me the USMA Commandant, General Sam S. Walker, had instructed them not to display the posters. The Commandant sternly told the barbers, 'Minimum standards do not apply at the United States Military Academy.'"

Among the witnesses that Collins was prepared to call at the court proceeding was the Commandant.

"Summarizing his expected testimony, I stated, 'The Commandant is expected to admit that it was he rather than Spec 4




Pete Dawkins won the Heisman Trophy during his time playing for Army, c. 1958 Army Athletics

Christianson who knowingly violated the Army haircut regulation."

To make matters worse for the prosecution, Collins also was going to call Colonel Pete Dawkins as his expert witness, based upon the fact that Dawkins was the prime mover behind the less stringent haircut regulation.

"I knew this would cause jaws to drop," said Collins with a sense of defiance.

It did, while also forcing the prosecution to drop all charges against Christianson in a legal about-face that perhaps only Collins saw coming.

"I knew the naming of the Commandant and Colonel Dawkins as witnesses would make the leadership of the Academy furious with me," Collins explained. "But I had a client to represent who had been wrongly accused and stood the chance of being labeled a criminal, stripped of rank, and sent to jail for as long as six months. In my mind, my duty was never in doubt. I was sure the same decisions would be made by any lawyer who understands his responsibility to his client." 

San Francisco attorney helps clients provide customers and employees with safer workplaces and premises

By Brian Cox



John Dahlberg
Partner
Dillingham Murphy LLP

John Dahlberg knows how to handle trouble — particularly the kinds of trouble that plague employers, retailers, and shopping centers across the country.

The San Francisco attorney helps clients deal with a range of security and law enforcement issues, and he has an effective solution to a vexing problem that many retailers have long concluded was intractable: people who are violent, threatening, or disorderly.

Shopping centers and tenant stores increasingly contend with disruptive behavior from people who loiter or trespass around the businesses' property. Some may beg, use drugs, yell, or fight with each other. Some harass, threaten or batter customers or employees. Dahlberg believes that the prevalent sentiment among store owners and security managers is that calling the police is always futile. That's where Dahlberg helps. He knows that conclusion is false because the police will enforce court orders to keep these offenders away from the workplace, stores, and shopping centers.

"If you have a loss prevention person who works for a big retailer, all they ever hear and experience is that when they call the police to deal with a situation, nothing happens," says Dahlberg, a partner with Dillingham & Murphy, LLP. "There is a great need that business owners have to preserve order but few of them know what they can do or how to do it with police assistance."

What Dahlberg encourages his clients to do is to get immediate civil restraining orders against anyone who is violent, disorderly, or a habitual nuisance. Business owners may initially assume a restraining order will not be enforced, but that is where they are wrong, says Dahlberg. In fact, police will arrest for violations, even in California. In fact, officers love these orders because they

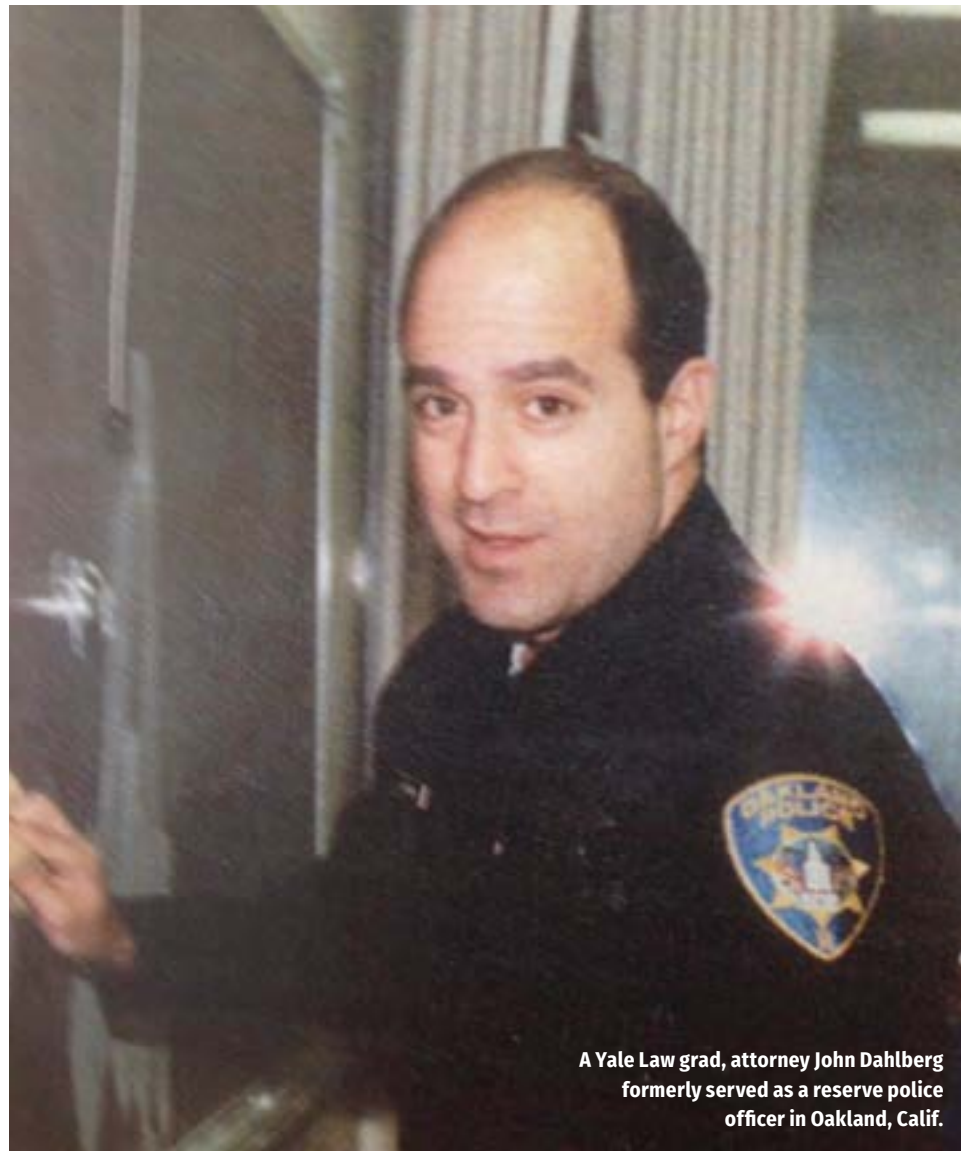
give the officer a tool to keep order and protect the community.

"In California, a restraining order has a very high priority with the courts and the police, especially if there's violence," he explains. "It's a technique that works really well, and unfortunately very few businesses and private security staffers know that. The vast majority of retailers in California never use this technique."

Dahlberg recently published an article in Loss Prevention Magazine that outlines when and how businesses should go about getting a restraining order to protect their employees, customers, and businesses. "Restraining Orders: The Secret Weapon of California Retailers" explains why restraining orders work even if police will not arrest offenders for mere trespassing. Restraining Orders: The Secret Weapon of California Retailers (losspreventionmedia.com)

"Court restraining orders are usually issued within 24 hours of court application. My experience is that people tend to obey restraining orders once they are served," says Dahlberg, who has successfully handled thousands of these issues for California shopping centers and retailers over the course of his career. "Many restrained persons have experience in jail or prison, and they avoid police contact, as can happen if they violate the orders."

In addition, police will arrest someone who is violating a restraining order — not because they are trespassing, but because violating a court order is the crime known as "contempt of court" which Dahlberg says has "much higher purchase" with police, prosecutors, and the courts. The arrest is uncomplicated because the officer needs only to confirm that the offender was served with the order and is in the prohibited area.



A Yale Law grad, attorney John Dahlberg formerly served as a reserve police officer in Oakland, Calif.

Restraining orders come in different varieties, according to Dahlberg. An anti-trespass or anti-nuisance restraining order is most often used by shopping centers or apartment communities to curtail non-violent but disruptive loitering and disorderly behavior. An employer can also get a special workplace violence restraining order, which protects an employee from threats, violence, harassment, or stalking.

“These two tools clear out a lot of bad conduct at commercial and residential premises if you use them,” says Dahlberg, who offers clients a 24-hour number to call if they want to request a restraining

order. In addition, he trains clients how to deal effectively and properly with these problems without the police or the courts in many situations, such as dealing with aggressive charity solicitors and petition circulators.

A native San Franciscan, Dahlberg was raised in the city. His father was a waiter and his mother a juvenile probation officer. He fondly recalls growing up in a city that was physically beautiful, tolerant, full of eccentrics, and safe.

“I could ride the city busses and the trolley lines anywhere when I was 7 or 8 and no one ever bothered me,” he recalls. “We

played outside all the time. Kids of my generation were under strict honor codes to be outside to play from the first sparkle of light to maybe half an hour after the last. We were expected to be out of the house, and we happily complied.”

Because of his argumentative nature as a child, Dahlberg says his parents dubbed him “the public defender” at an early age.

“I must have always had some kind of legal direction,” he says.

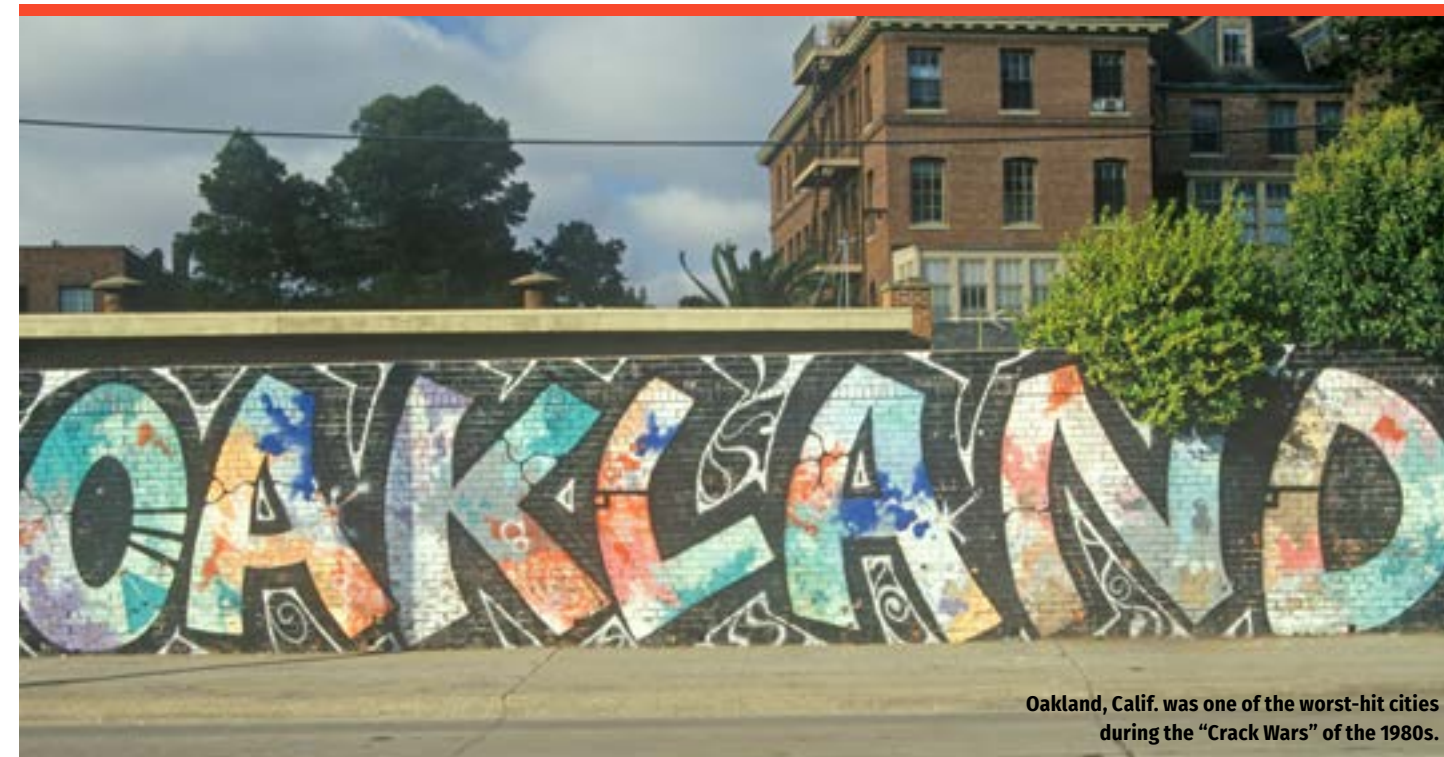
After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1975, Dahlberg got into Yale Law School, “a place for potentially troublesome and highly verbal people lacking high math skills to aggregate” and where the promise of reliably bad weather and good pizza was fulfilled. Neither he nor his friends took themselves too seriously.

“A lot of us were trying on pomposity to see if it fit us,” he says. “And for some of us it stuck and for some it didn’t.”

While earning his law degree from Yale, Dahlberg recalls late nights watching old movies and eating hot pastrami sandwiches with his classmates. He also attempted to apply to the local police department as a part-time police officer to make some money, but the Dean forbade such extracurricular activity.

A summer clerkship at Pillsbury, Madison and Sutro — an international law firm that traces its founding to 1874 — led to his working at the firm after graduation in 1978. At Pillsbury, Dahlberg became friends with Bill Murphy and Bill Dillingham. When “the two Bills” left to start their own firm in 1982, Dahlberg followed them two years later to help build and grow the firm.

“We were hustling for business,” he says. “When you’re a young lawyer, you’re often



Oakland, Calif. was one of the worst-hit cities during the “Crack Wars” of the 1980s.

dealing with young businesspeople. We grew up with many young businesses, but we were also very fortunate to represent very well-known established clients.”

Nearly four decades later, Dahlberg says it is the close personal bonds that exist between the attorneys, as well as their clients, that have ensured the firm’s growth and success.

“We work tiny cases and large cases. Matters that are over in 40 days and class actions. We do everything,” says Dahlberg, who enjoys the challenge of communicating with a jury and takes pride in being prepared to address a judge’s questions in a precise and pointed fashion.

Dahlberg attributes his skill at interviewing people to his years of experience as an Oakland reserve police officer.

“Police officers are usually better at figuring out what happened than lawyers are,” says Dahlberg. “Lawyers walk into a situation with a bond to their client, which means they have an innate confirmation bias. We tend to look for things that

support our client. We tend not to listen as closely to things that don’t. Cops are immune to the charms of clients. They are equally skeptical of everything unless they can find objective corroboration and, even then, they’re not satisfied. Police officers are better at finding the facts and they often ask open-ended questions to do that.”

For almost 10 years during the height of the “crack wars,” Dahlberg spent one or two nights a week on patrol. “Oakland was so broke, they did not relegate us to a lesser role – we dealt with every kind of call, often as the primary officer.”

His time as an officer taught Dahlberg how to be patient with people’s foibles and how to be respectful. “Good street cops, I observed, were very good at talking to people in all different kinds of situations,” he says. “They could calm them or let the extremely excited person vent. They could reassure the person who was suffering. They used humor when they could. Respect was key – everyone of age was Sir or Ma’am, you did not antagonize people in front of their families, and if you were inside a person’s home, you remembered that fact.”

He says he joined the police department out of a desire to give something back to the community and as part of a legacy from his father, who served in World War II, and his great-grandfather, who fought in the Spanish-American War one year after immigrating from Armenia.

“I think my generation was raised with a sense of obligation for what we had received,” he concludes.

As a police officer, Dahlberg found satisfaction in doing his part to bring peace and order to the communities on his beats. He sees the immediate use of restraining orders as providing a similar service to retailers and business centers.

“When people use violence, trespass, or create nuisances or annoy customers, we have to get them off the property and protect customers and employees,” he says. “It’s essential that we have ways to restore and maintain order.”

At your service

Attorneys stress the benefits, importance of the Sixth Pillar

By Tom Kirvan



It may be the last but it is assuredly not the least of the Six Pillars of Primerus, according to two attorneys who are determined to elevate the importance of community service in the minds of those belonging to the international alliance of law firms.

Now in its 31st year, Primerus has grown from a local collection of respected law firms to now a global society of “The World’s Finest Law Firms” spread across more than 40 countries due in large part to its commitment to the Six Pillars. They are at the heart of the Primerus promise to promote the concepts of Integrity, Excellent Work Product, Reasonable Fees, Continuing Legal Education, Civility, and Community Service.

“The Six Pillars are the backbone of the organization and collectively they gave rise to the first Primerus trademark, ‘Good People Who Happen to Be Good Lawyers,’” said John Pearce, a longtime attorney with Gordon Arata in New Orleans, La.. “Part of being a ‘good lawyer’ is the responsibility of giving back to the community in a meaningful way, which we want to

emphasize as our Global Day of Service approaches in December.”

Pearce and attorney Tim Sullivan, of Ogden Sullivan Stover & Saar in Tampa, Fla., are helping spearhead efforts to promote the Global Day of Service program while also encouraging greater participation in community service activities year-round.

“There are so many benefits to being involved in community service projects, not only personally, but also for your firm,” said Sullivan, who is a believer in the time-honored expression that “we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Sullivan and Pearce are members of the Primerus Community Service Board, a panel formed in 2017 that now includes Chair Mark Warzecha of Widerman Malek in Melbourne, Fla. and Melissa Demorest LeDuc of the Demorest Law Firm in Royal Oak, Mich.

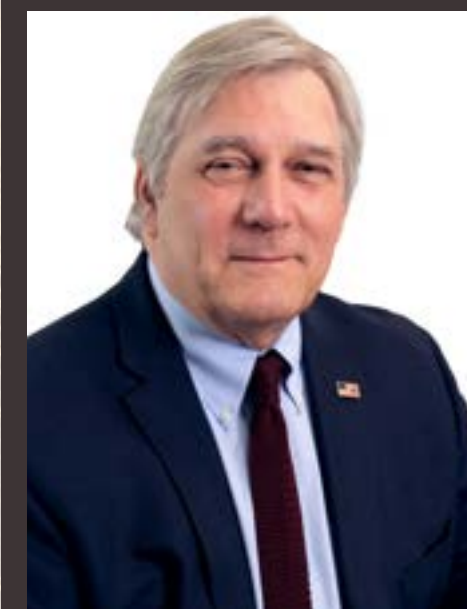
The push to make community service a Primerus priority actually began during the 2015 Global Conference in Amsterdam

when “a small group of members met to discuss ramping up the importance” of it in the eyes of the total membership, Pearce indicated.

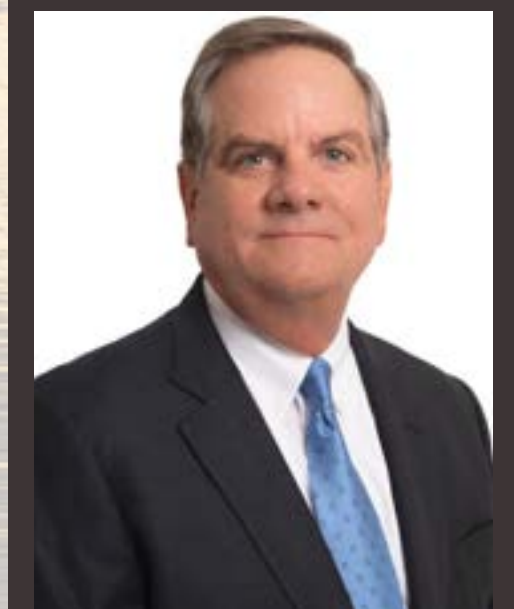
“The initial focus was on identifying and reporting on the myriad local and regional community service activities of Primerus member firms,” Pearce said. “However, as more firms from other countries joined Primerus, the informal, ad hoc committee . . . recognized that the global reach of Primerus represented an opportunity to demonstrate the collective community service on a worldwide basis.”

With that goal in mind, each major conference and convocation that Primerus holds each year begins with a giving heart and an outreach effort, as those in attendance gather to pack food boxes for the needy, to pick up litter along beaches, or to make their charitable presence known in some other significant and inspirational way, Pearce and Sullivan noted.

Attorneys John Pearce and Tim Sullivan are members of the Primerus Community Service Board.



John Pearce
Partner
Gordon Arata



Tim Sullivan
Partner
Ogden Sullivan Stover & Saar, P.A.

When Sullivan's firm celebrated its 25th anniversary, it did so with a special flair, marking each month of the milestone year with a community service initiative that was highlighted by a "Cut for the Cure" project.

"We wanted to showcase that in our 25 years of existence, we have been doing good work in the community, but also good works," said Sullivan at the time of the silver anniversary observance.

Among the fund-raising projects the firm helped sponsor was the Tampa Bay Jig, a barbecue competition to benefit NephCure Kidney International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to finding a cure for a debilitating kidney disease.

The following month, firm employees collected food for needy families in the community through the auspices of Metropolitan Ministries. In addition, the

firm donated 25 turkeys for Thanksgiving dinners, thereby brightening the holiday for selected families in need.

In December of that year, firm employees continued to show their generosity by buying gifts for needy children through the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. In January, the firm conducted a job skills presentation for members of Dress for Success – an organization which promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support, and career development tools to help them succeed in work and in life.

When spring rolled around in March, the firm decided it was time to cut to the chase, participating in an annual fund-raiser for the Pediatric Cancer Foundation. The "Cut for the Cure Charity Challenge" took giving to a different level for six attorneys with the firm, each of whom agreed to have

their heads shaved as a definitive show of support for children afflicted with the sometimes-fatal disease.

"Each year, over 160,000 children are diagnosed with cancer worldwide," Sullivan wrote in a letter soliciting donations for the cause. "In the United States, childhood cancer is the number one disease killer of children. Based on these statistics, I felt like I had to do something to raise awareness for those precious children battling cancer."

While acknowledging that his shaved head was not necessarily a "good look," Sullivan said the buzz cut did help raise considerable dough for the Pediatric Cancer Foundation while also gaining the firm plenty of positive press in the Tampa Bay community.

Boosting a firm's community profile is just one of the byproducts of a devotion

Sunset over the Tchefuncte River near Cantium headquarters in Covington, LA.

to community service, Pearce indicated, noting that it also can bolster employee morale and enhance client connections.

"Being involved in charitable projects and pro bono activities have a way of bringing everyone together for a good cause," said Pearce. "It also is noticed in the community and by members of the judiciary, who appreciate that we are committed to a consistent program of community service."

In addition, the goodwill generated by such efforts invariably catches the eye of clients, noted Pearce, who relayed a message sent by one of Gordon Arata's corporate colleagues, Cantium, an independent oil and gas company headquartered in Louisiana.

"At Cantium, we think it's important to give back to the communities in which we work and live. We value outside counsel who support our community service activities and prioritize helping others," the endorsement message said.


Attorneys from Gordon Arata, Pearce indicated, periodically visit homeless shelters to offer free legal advice, particularly to veterans who have fallen on hard times after leaving the military. The firm also has encouraged its young lawyers to gain courtroom experience by handling criminal cases on a pro bono basis.

"It's a wonderful learning tool, as local Public Defender Offices are crying out for help," Pearce said of the pro bono opportunities that can pay dividends on a

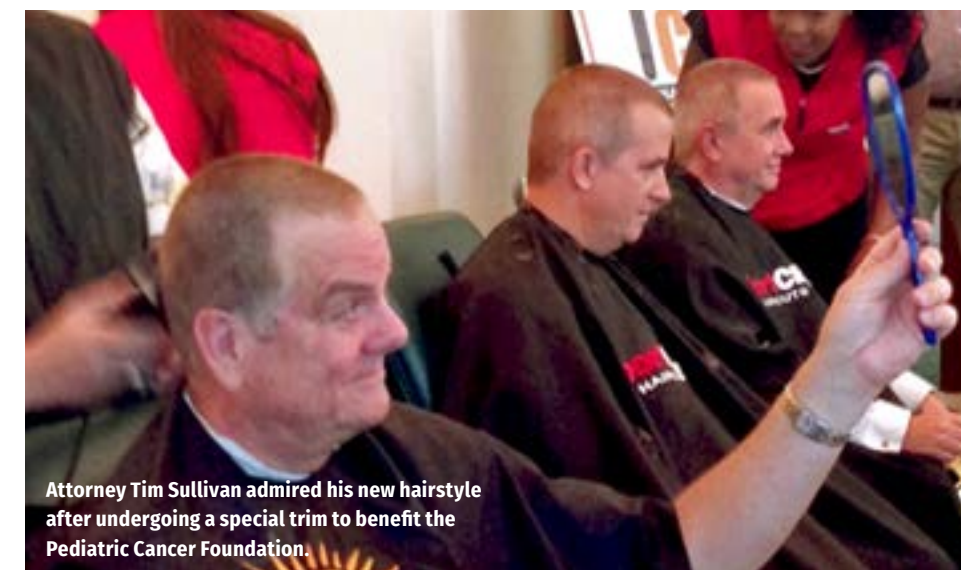
personal and professional development level. "And judges take notice that attorneys are volunteering their time for a worthy cause."

Sullivan and Pearce are hopeful that the annual Primerus Global Day of Service, traditionally held around December 5, will inspire member firms and attorneys to "unite to help those less fortunate in our individual communities to work towards a healthy global community."

"In a broader sense, we also believe it will be important that each member firm designate a liaison to report on its community service projects and efforts, which will help Primerus as a whole encourage all such respective community service activities," said Pearce, noting how it can help build a positive culture for firms.

"Primerus defines its community service obligation as: Law, in its purest sense, is community service," Pearce stated. "The law, fundamentally, exists to hold communities together. Primerus members pledge themselves to numerous community service endeavors, including pro bono services for those who cannot afford legal counsel." 

A young cancer survivor gave a thumb's up to six brave legal souls who agreed to buzz cuts as a show of solidarity for pediatric cancer patients. Among the attorneys with the Tampa firm of Ogden Sullivan Stover & Saar who went nearly bald was Tim Sullivan (second from right), a proud supporter of the fund-raising event that benefitted the Pediatric Cancer Foundation.



Attorney Tim Sullivan admired his new hairstyle after undergoing a special trim to benefit the Pediatric Cancer Foundation.

Cameroon attorney aims to make the most of series of 'growth' opportunities

By Tom Kirvan



It has been a career of firsts for Neneng Yannick, founder and managing partner of the Neneng Law Office in Douala, Cameroon, the most populous city in the Central African Region that is home to more than 200 linguistic groups aside from the principal languages of French and English.

The first member of his family to become a lawyer, Yannick also broke legal ground when he launched his own firm in January 2022, quickly growing it to a now five-attorney boutique law office focused on all aspects of business, corporate, and finance and investment law in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) that includes Cameroon, Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea.

In February 2023, Yannick took another important legal step when his law office became the first Cameroon firm to be invited to join Primerus, the international society of law firms that is extending its reach across the African continent. The invitation was a watershed moment for Yannick and his firm, which features bilingual capabilities in its cross-border and international legal practice.

"Becoming a member of Primerus will help equip our lawyers with the tools and opportunities for professional growth and leadership," said Yannick, who has been a practicing attorney for the past four years after earning his degree from the Nigerian Law School, where he was active in the debate, tutorial, and lecture societies of the prestigious African legal institution.

Yannick became aware of the benefits of Primerus not long after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic began to lessen in early 2022.

"During the two years when most governments and institutions were in lockdown, we saw the importance of technology which we began to leverage and take advantage of in our law practice," said Yannick, who earned his undergraduate degree in law from the University of Buea in Cameroon. "Technology has been at the forefront of our practice from the beginning and when I came across Primerus, I made the decision to go beyond my comfort zone and to see the importance of becoming involved."

To that end, Yannick plans to attend the Primerus Global Conference in Versailles, France in late October, hoping to use it as a springboard to greater involvement with the international alliance of law firms in the years to come.

"Our practice focuses on business, corporate, and investment law, which has earned us strategic collaboration within several practice groups of Primerus, such as the International Outside Corporate Counsel Practice Group, the International Practice Committee, and the International Transactional Services," said Yannick, who served as a paralegal in a corporate law firm for a couple of years before attending law school in the neighboring country of Nigeria.



Neneng Yannick
Founder and Managing Partner
Neneng Law Office

For Cameroonians interested in pursuing a legal career, the most logical option is to attend Nigerian Law School, which has a reciprocal arrangement for graduates to join the Nigerian Bar Association and the Cameroon Bar Association, according to Yannick.

Upon his return from the Nigerian Law School, Yannick practiced for three years as a corporate attorney with a prominent business and corporate law firm in the heart of Douala before creating his own law office.

It was in law school where Yannick forged relationships with each member of his

current firm, developing a level of trust that has been their bond since the Neneng Law Office opened.

“We have been with each other as friends since law school and now as attorney colleagues,” Yannick said, noting that the legal team he has assembled “is conversant with the law” in both French and English and “can handle transactions” on a “wide range” of legal issues.

One of six children, Yannick grew up in the English-speaking region of Cameroon, a country of nearly 30 million residents where French is the dominant language. His father was a communication officer

in the Cameroon special military corps, “The Gendarmerie,” before retiring, while his mother taught computer knowledge classes at the high school level.

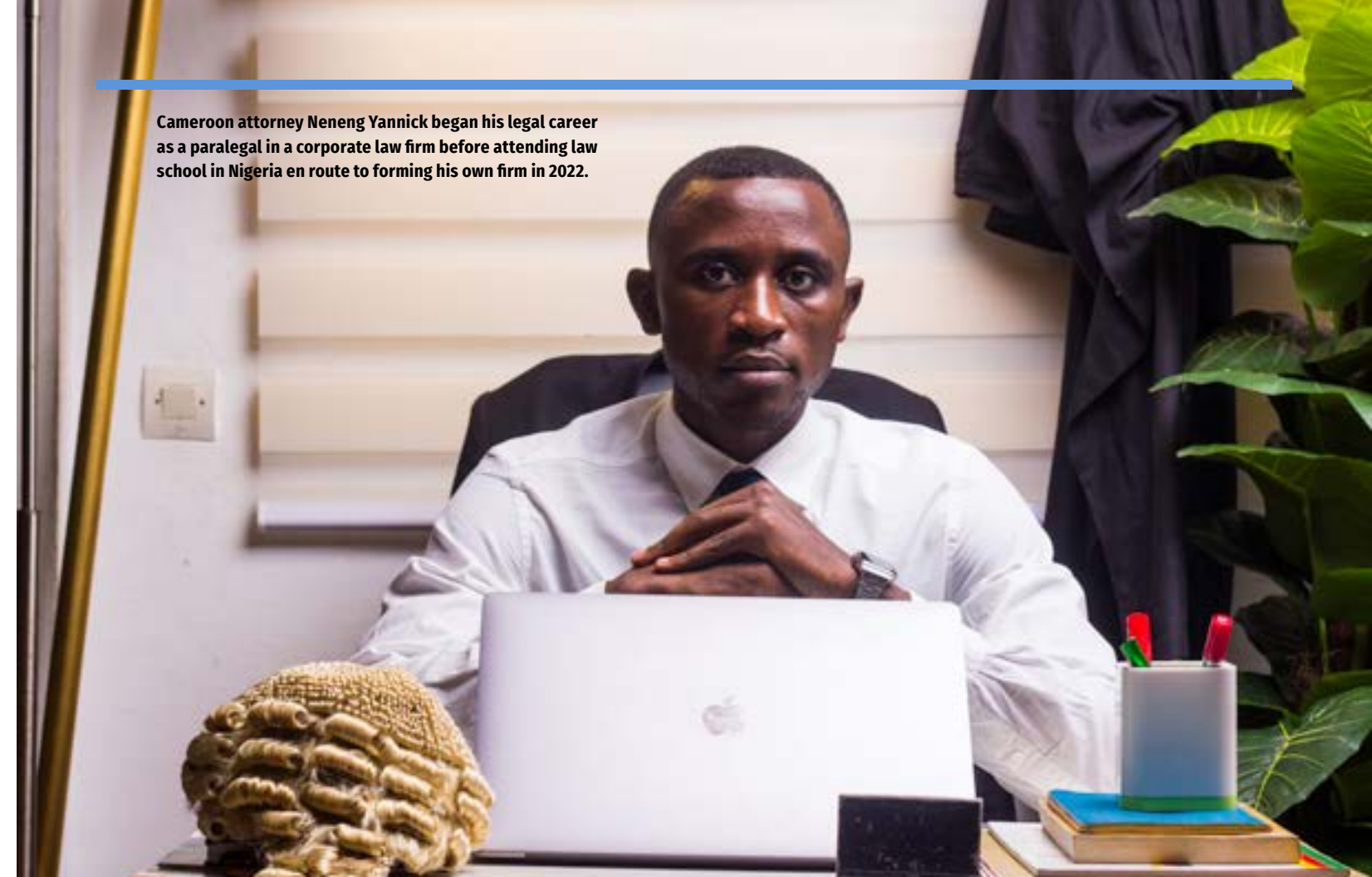
“Because of my mother’s job, I was always interested in learning about computer knowledge at a tender age and have been able to leverage technology in my career,” Yannick related.

With a lifelong interest in music and sports, Yannick initially hoped to become either a professional musician or the next basketball star from Cameroon but changed his career focus at the encouragement of his oldest cousin,



Upon graduating from law school in 2018, Neneng Yannick shared the proud moment with his aunt and mother in a treasured family photo.

Cameroon attorney Neneng Yannick began his legal career as a paralegal in a corporate law firm before attending law school in Nigeria en route to forming his own firm in 2022.



Ghun Felix Mburi, an attorney and member of the Cameroon Bar Association.

“His influence and encouragement as a lawyer gave me the drive and the motivation to apply and to attend law school, which I think has been my proudest career move when I look back at my journey,” Yannick reflected.

Possessing a strong spiritual faith, Yannick also has strong ties to his three brothers and two sisters, ranging in age from 13 to 34.

In 2016 when there was political unrest in the English-speaking sections of Cameroon, Yannick’s parents decided to move from their native region for safety reasons after violence broke out following a series of protests and strikes called by the Anglophone minority. The protests began as a sit-down strike initiated by a coalition of lawyers, teachers, and

students objecting to being politically and economically marginalized by the Francophone majority, according to Yannick.

Less than two months after the protests began, a government crackdown resulted in the deaths of two demonstrators and the arrests of more than 100 protesters in the Northwest part of the country, eventually spreading to the Southwest where in December 2016, violent clashes claimed the lives of four people.


“It was a difficult time in Cameroon, especially for those of us who grew up in the two English-speaking regions of the country,” said Yannick, who indicated that the political situation has stabilized in recent years as the government has worked to address minority concerns.

The conflict came at a time when Yannick was working as a clerk for a bailiff firm, where he learned the legal ropes by

typing documents, preparing court processes, and handling an array of other filing matters.

“Working as an office clerk also gave me the opportunity to meet and network with legal practitioners who often came by the firm for our services,” he indicated.

His work there also instilled in him an early appreciation for the vital role that lawyers play in a civilized society.

“There is an old saying where I come from that ‘every lawyer is a politician,’ which I believe underlines the importance of using the rule of law to settle disputes peacefully,” Yannick said. 

Cameroon

An African country known for its geological diversity

Located at the junction of western and central Africa, Cameroon sports an ethnically diverse population of about 30 million people. Triangular in shape, the country is widely known as “Africa in miniature,” based upon its geological, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

French and English are the official languages of the country, due to the fact that Cameroon was colonized at various points in its history by France

and Great Britain. In total, however, more than 232 other languages are spoken in the country that is bordered on the southwest by the Gulf of Guinea that leads into the Atlantic Ocean. It also shares borders with the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Nigeria.

One of 54 countries on the continent of Africa, Cameroon boasts of some of the world’s most fertile lands, particularly in the southern region of the country


where pineapple, papaya, cotton, and cocoa beans are grown as cash crops. The northern region of Cameroon is mostly desert plain, while mountainous terrain dominates the middle section. Every climate and ecological system are represented in the country that is among the wettest places on Earth. The country is home to more than 400 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, and some 1,000 species of butterflies.

The capital city of Yaoundé has a population of 4.8 million and is the second largest in the country to the port city of Douala, which serves as the economic hub with its shipping, tourism, and financial ties.

The nation’s highest peak is Mount Cameroon, an active volcano that stands at 13,250 feet. The volcano last erupted in 2000 and is located near the Gulf of Guinea on the southwest coast. Waza National Park, located in the

northernmost region of Cameroon, is a must-see for wildlife lovers, who can gaze upon lions, giraffes, hippos, elephants, cheetahs, antelope, and gazelles.

The country also is well known for its native styles of music, particularly makossa and bikutsi, and for its highly competitive soccer team with stars like Samuel Eto’o, who have regularly led the national team into World Cup action. Accordingly, soccer is the country’s most popular sport, while basketball also has

developed a passionate following. Joel Embiid, the star center of the Philadelphia 76ers who was recently named Most Valuable Player in the NBA, grew up in Cameroon, playing both volleyball and soccer before turning his immense talents to the basketball court. 

CAMEROON

Peace – Work – Fatherland



Chair of Nordic-Baltic firm relishes array of challenges that span the business world

By Tom Kirvan

For those in the international legal field, a look into the future brings with it a mixture of excitement and unpredictability, as law firms from around the world do their best to embrace the almost daily changes in the information marketplace that has been marked over the past year by the enhanced development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Finnish attorney Ville Salonen, chairman of Magnusson International, is intrigued by the opportunities – and challenges – presented by the opening of yet another

new digital frontier, choosing to view it as a potentially transformative tool that may alter the business universe in a positive way.

“If artificial intelligence systems can deliver factual information reliably, it has the potential to make all of us more productive and efficient,” said Salonen, whose practice focuses on cross border complex commercial and transaction matters in the mining, real estate, technology, life science, media, and sports law sectors.

Salonen’s willingness to embrace the elements of change also can be viewed in his increased interest in the field of ESG, the environmental, social, and governance framework used to assess an organization’s business practices and performance on various sustainability and ethical issues.

His knowledge in that area was on display last spring when he spoke on the subject at the Primerus Business Law Institute International Summit in New York City, discussing how the practice of ESG provides a way to

measure business risks and opportunities in those increasingly important fields. His speech centered on the legal “reporting requirements” across the European Union (EU), an economic and political coalition of 27 nations that Finland joined in 1995. In a different sense, it also served as a way to introduce himself and Magnusson to the world of Primerus, which the law firm joined in March 2023.

Salonen said that over the past two decades, the ESG movement has “grown from a corporate social responsibility initiative” launched by the United Nations

into a global phenomenon with “trillions of dollars in assets” under management.

In addition to his responsibilities as chair of Magnusson International, Salonen doubles as co-head of the law firm’s Tampere office, which is located in his native region that is the second most populous urban area in Finland. Located approximately 200 kilometers north of the Finnish capital of Helsinki, Tampere is a popular region dotted with lakes and nature trails that is home to a number of high-tech companies, according to Salonen.

Chairman of Magnusson International since January 2022, attorney Ville Salonen is a graduate of a Leadership in Law Firms program at Harvard Law School. Salonen has a brother, Olli, and two step-brothers, Jari and Jukka.



Ville Salonen
Chairman
Magnusson International



The high school graduation of his daughter Milla (center) in June was celebrated by Ville Salonen and his wife Maiju along with their son Topi and daughter Lotta.

“Both of them were very entrepreneurial, so that’s probably where I learned my entrepreneurial background,” Salonen related, noting that his mother was viewed as a “pioneer” among Finnish women for running her own successful business in the 1980s and ‘90s.

His younger brother, Olli, is an officer in the Finnish Army and has served with UN forces in Lebanon and NATO troops in Iraq.

“In Finland, we have compulsory military service at age 18 that can last for six months to a year,” Salonen indicated. “My brother, who is six years younger than me, has stayed in the army for his career.”

Mandatory military service for able-bodied males has been a Finnish fact-of-life since World War II, according to Salonen, and the nation’s combat readiness has taken on greater significance in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

“We have 1,200 kilometers of common border with Russia, and until a few years ago you could take a 3-1/2-hour train ride

from Helsinki to St. Petersburg,” Salonen said. “It was very easy and convenient to go there and there were a lot of economic ties, but that obviously changed after the invasion into Ukraine. We, as Finns, have always known that Russia is there . . . and that we need to be strong militarily.”

After completing his own military service following high school, Salonen enrolled in the University of Helsinki by virtue of posting exceptional scores on its entrance exams. While he was an award-winning math student in high school and is the son of two engineers, Salonen elected to chart his career path in the legal profession, becoming the “first academic” in his family.

His early educational experience was enriched as a high school exchange student in Canada, spending a school year in a small city in northern Ontario, joking that he was destined for the cold weather locale “because he was a Finn.” He lived with a family of German heritage, and said the year abroad was an “eye-opening experience” that sharpened his English-speaking skills and helped him develop a

greater appreciation for the benefits of multi-culturalism.

Upon graduation from law school in 1999, Salonen landed a job as an associate with the Ulla-Riitta Harju law firm in Helsinki, becoming a partner in 2003. A few years later, he left the firm to become the in-house counsel for the Talentor Group, a start-up company that offered executive search and recruitment solutions for corporations across the European Continent.

With two young daughters at the time, Salonen and his wife, Maiju, then moved back to the Tampere region to be closer to the children’s grandparents, a move that coincided with his decision to start his own law firm. He headed his own firm for seven years, working on behalf of a number of clients he had developed legal relationships with over the course of his career as an attorney.

Then, somewhat serendipitously in 2017, Salonen received a call from a head-hunter who notified him that

Magnusson was looking in the Tampere area for an attorney with international experience to open an office there. In effect, it was a call that was heaven sent, offering Salonen an opportunity to parlay his international experience and connections while building a team of talented legal specialists that now numbers eight.

The firm handles a comprehensive range of legal services in the commercial and corporate sectors, including mergers and acquisitions, data protection, immigration, dispute resolution, employment, energy, intellectual property, ESG, and much more, according to Salonen. Magnusson, he said, pledges that “each of our offices has its own service area expertise that can be accessed by any other office in our network, so once a client has begun working with one of our offices, they will have access to the knowledge base and services of all.”

Salonen and his wife met during the last day of high school in 1992, and recently celebrated their silver wedding anniversary, a July 4th date that has personal and international significance, he said.

“The July 4th wedding date means that somewhere in the world each year someone is having a party for us,” Salonen said with a laugh, undoubtedly noting that the occasion is replete with fireworks.

His wife has a doctoral degree in biology from the University of Helsinki, writing her thesis on the ecological impact of the decline of pike in the Baltic Sea. After a career in scientific research, she now teaches science and other subjects at the grammar school level. Like Salonen, she is the first academic in her family.

The couple has three children, daughters Lotta (22) and Milla (20), and a son

Topi (11), who someday hopes to be a “professional football (soccer) player,” a career choice that will help him launch “his own restaurant,” according to his father.

If those plans work out, Salonen will gladly be his son’s legal counsel, a role that he has deftly played for the Football Association of Finland from 2014-20, first as its vice president of the Tampere district and then as a member of its board of directors. Salonen’s volunteer responsibilities helped satisfy his lifelong passion for the sport, while also coming with a benefit of their own.

“I got a few free tickets to the games,” said Salonen of the football quid pro quo. **P**



In his spare time, Ville Salonen relishes the opportunity to coach youth soccer, a sport he has had a passion for since he was a boy.

Precedent setting case rates as a high-water mark for attorney

By Tom Kirvan

Early in his legal career, Ville Salonen made what many observers might term an environmental impact statement, the kind that is certain to echo for generations to come in his native country of Finland.

It centered around a Finnish state-owned company's plans to build an artificial lake to generate hydro-electric power. The project was slated for a site in the Lapland region, an area in the northern

part of Finland where several prominent national parks and popular winter resorts are located, according to Salonen. It is known as the "Vuotos Case" and revolved around the proposed construction of a reservoir and dam on the upper course of the Kemijoki River in Finland in 1992. The environmental dispute pitted the company against a NGO (non-governmental organization) that aligned itself with efforts to preserve an environmentally sensitive Lapland region where wildlife abounds.

The NGO, Symbioosi ry, included a group of biology students from the University of Helsinki who took an ingenious approach to ensure their legal standing in the case, Salonen indicated.

"They bought a 10-meter by 10-meter piece of land where the reservoir was to be built," said Salonen, noting that their minimal financial investment afforded them the opportunity to go toe-to-toe with the state-owned company from a legal standpoint.

With Salonen's legal assistance, the group then rounded up support from the scientific community in Finland, "creating a movement" of environmentalists nationwide in opposition to the project.

"We were able to gather all of the scientists in the field to give us support," said Salonen, who indicated that the experts were more inclined to become involved in the case because the student group requested the help.

"I could not have done it as an individual lawyer because they would have wanted 50,000 Euros for their work," Salonen explained. "Back then, everyone was helping us."

The case eventually made its way to the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland, where the high court ruled in favor of the NGO, deciding that the planned project would have run afoul of the European Union's nature security legislation.

Salonen wrote the final appellate brief on a pro bono basis, spending six days of his paternity leave crafting the legal argument after his first daughter was born in 2001.

"I did so with my wife's consent, of course, as she is really into preserving the environment as well," said Salonen, noting that the Vuotos ruling established a major environmental "precedent" and is viewed as a "watermark decision" by the Finnish Supreme Administrative Court.


The legal triumph aligns neatly with Salonen's lifelong love of the outdoors, where he and his family spend much of their leisure time.

An avid runner and walker, Salonen is a veteran of four marathons, completing the grueling 26.2-mile tests of endurance in Stockholm, Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Helsinki.

He now is more apt to be spotted walking, reducing his carbon footprint by eschewing cab rides in favor of an invigorating stroll from various major airports to cities where he has travelled.

In Berlin, for example, he made a 32-kilometer trek from the airport to his downtown destination, utilizing the walk as valuable time to listen to podcasts and to soak up the sights and sounds of the German capital city.

When he landed at Boston's Logan Airport last year on his way to attend a leadership program at Harvard University, Salonen had to take a bus part way before making a 10-kilometer walk to the campus in Cambridge. It was a snap, he said, especially since he wasn't carrying much in the way of baggage.

"I travel light," he said with a smile. "I just take a backpack." 

A summer view of The Pyha-Luosto National Park in Lapland, Finland.

Global Boiling Point*1

Taiwan Member Aims to Shift World's Approach to Climate Change

By Brian Cox

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated in August 2023 “the era of global warming has ended and the era of global boiling has arrived”.

Nick Chen doesn't mince words when explaining why Pamir Law Group is creating a revolutionary new climate resilience practice.

“There is no issue more important to life on earth than how to respond to climate challenges,” he says.

As the managing partner of Pamir Law Group, an international law and business consulting firm with offices in Shanghai and Taipei, the firm has invested tremendous time and resources to position the firm at the forefront of this evolving global crisis. Nick participated in the first Earth Day in

1970, visited the Amazon in the 1980s and lost his home to Super Storm Sandy in 2012 as a climate victim. The investment of time and resources has now started and continues for everyone.

Building on the global efforts of 15,000 scientists, governments, and the UN, Pamir is focused on the existential threat facing not only Taiwan but also facing the planet. The firm has combined

the expertise of legal and consulting professionals, environmental engineers, and young people (under 30 years old, the real climate stakeholders) from 14 different jurisdictions, over the last three years to develop a comprehensive framework for government regulators, banks, institutional investors, and companies to measure and improve their responses to climate crisis that centers on sustainable rule of law and standardized compliance systems.

Since Bretton Woods at the end of World War II, according to Chen, the world economic and financial system has been set up to maximize profit rather than to balance the interests of all stakeholders, even at the cost of destroying the planet's ecosystems.

“For 80 years, carbon emissions have been classified as ‘an externality,’” says Chen. “Paying to decarbonize has been deemed inconsistent with maximizing profit.”

The direct consequence of maximizing profit is that regulators, banks, institutional investors, and companies have been destroying the environment with massive emissions, Chen contends. He argues that the failure of regulators to enforce sustainable legal frameworks or guardrails that drive international best practice standard operating procedures and global standards to deploy capital by responsible investment and lending to push decarbonization or energy transition has placed financial gain over long-term sustainability.

Such negligence and “dirty math,” he says, has caused immeasurable cumulative damage over the last eight decades and can no longer be tolerated by the next generation; decarbonization and energy transition are long overdue and pre-requisites for life on earth.

The existing global economic system has failed to change the behavior of corporations, lenders, and investors in the sustainable direction, explains Chen, in

Attorney Nick Chen is a firm believer in the need to address the challenges posed by climate change.

blunt, colorful language, and what the world needs now is to apply a unified global standard and system of behavior to monitor, measure, benchmark, and report on comprehensive sustainability criteria with incentives and penalties to enforce changed behavior.

“We need enforceable, implementable and operable global sustainable standards, regulatory systems, legal frameworks and guardrails that mandate best practices behavior for all stakeholders,” he says. “What we need around the world is a standard that everyone is following.”

Currently, there is no unified world standard to monitor, measure, report progress, or benchmark sustainability. Environmental, social and governance (“ESG”) investment and Equator Principles/IFC lending currently deploys capital to maximize profits and nothing else. Therefore, says Chen, self-serving conflict of interest standards, incomplete criteria and greenwashing are used to

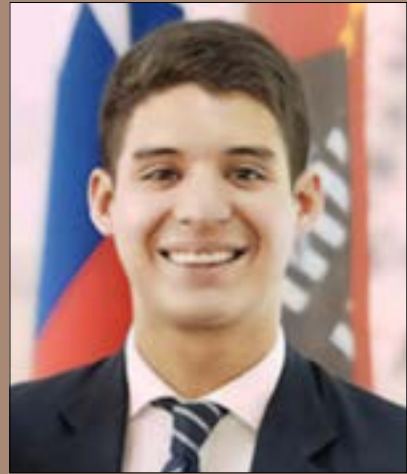
*1 The U.N. warns ‘an era of global boiling’ has started. What does that mean? (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/07/29/un-what-is-global-boiling/>)

* Era of global boiling has arrived, says UN chief as July set to be hottest month on record <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/jul/27/scientists-july-world-hottest-month-record-climate-temperatures>

² Equator Compliant Climate Destruction: How Banks Finance Fossil Fuels Under the Equator Principles (https://www.banktrack.org/download/equator_compliant_climate_destruction_how_banks_finance_fossil_fuels_under_the_equator_principles/211118_equatorcompliantclimatedestruction.pdf)

Banking on Climate Chaos: 2021 Fossil Fuel Finance Report: (<https://www.bankingonclimatechaos.org/>)

Private Equity Funds, Sensing Profit in Tumult, Are Propping Up Oil (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/climate/private-equity-funds-oil-gas-fossil-fuels.html>)



Jose Mario Ponce
Consultant
Pamir Law Group

defraud regulators and stakeholders especially when reporting compliance with current ESG and Equator Principles standards. The world needs to transform and re-set old rule of law and systems based on maximizing profit to balancing all stakeholder interests, including environmental needs, measured by decarbonization. Chen has tasked his team with devising such a standard which will be used as a benchmark for corporations, lenders, investors, and government regulators around the world, starting in Taiwan.

Led by Jose Mario Ponce, a young trilingual environmental engineer from Honduras who joined the firm in 2019, Pamir's team reviewed ESG and sustainability criteria from 12 global stock exchanges, 11 disclosure frameworks, Equator Principles and IFC Performance Standards interpretations and methodologies from 22 global banks. They also reviewed more than 65 international standards, agreements, and protocols and more than 90 supply chain criteria from Apple and other global supply chains.

From this process, the highest common denominators across these existing standards became the baseline for the "Dharma Codex."

The Dharma Codex is a set of all-encompassing sustainability criteria that helps all stakeholders reallocate priorities, resources, and capital. In total, the Dharma Codex is composed of 640 comprehensive sustainability criteria for all regulators to apply and mandate regulated entities (banks/lenders, insurers/insured, institutional investors/invested companies and supply chain companies) to properly monitor, measure, and report on comprehensive sustainability criteria (with incentives and penalties to enforce changed behavior) and drive systematic decarbonization and energy transition.

"The Dharma Codex is designed to cause the re-deployment of capital (lending and investment) to drive decarbonization and energy transition (completely replacing fossil fuels with zero-carbon energy) in Taiwan and globally" said Jose Mario Ponce.

Declaring that the first challenge to combating climate change is overcoming ignorance, Chen and his team have developed training courses on the Dharma Codex for sustainability teams at regulatory agencies, banks, investment groups, governments, law firms, and companies, including directors, officers (executive, legal and financial) and supervisors. This is a tool/resource for international institutions that can impact sustainability and resiliency change on a global scale.

"We have to change investment and lending and corporate operational behavior, but we have to change it on a global level," Ponce says. "That means how companies operate, that means how banks lend money to companies, that means the standard by which one invests in companies."

Chen is intent on convincing organizations that by taking steps to become more sustainable, they can improve their financial performance, attract and retain talent, reduce their



Nicholas Chen
Managing Partner
Pamir Law Group

risk, enhance their innovation, and increase their access to capital.

With a reputation as a world-class adviser of companies, investors, banks, and governments, Chen has a history of being at the center of seismic shifts in the global economy.

Starting in the early 1980s, Chen began to help international companies/supply chains set up businesses across China. In the 1990s, Chen helped hundreds of companies/supply chains from Taiwan to set up shop in Suzhou, a Chinese city near Shanghai. The city became one of the largest clusters of Taiwanese manufacturing in China and was at the vanguard of China's transformation into an export giant supplying the entire world.

A first-generation American, Chen was born and raised in New York City. He traces his interest in law to a grand uncle in China who went to study at the University of Michigan Law School in the early 1900s before returning to Shanghai to sit on the International Settlement's governing municipal council. Chen saw how law and legal systems protect the future, for people and societies.

After graduating from Yale, he received a JD from NYU School of Law, where he worked at the UN as a direct foreign investment specialist on North South initiatives. Later he joined the only U.S. law firm with offices in black sub-Saharan Africa in Washington DC and then moved to NYC to practice corporate finance at Kaye Scholer. In 1989, he joined Baker & McKenzie's Taipei office, where he would make partner. Over the next 15 years, he opened the Asia practices of two global US firms before establishing the Pamir Law Group in 2004.

Chen says the firm employs the Judaic concept of "Tikkun Olam," which means, "heal the world."

"We are about making a difference," he says, "not just maximizing profit."

One significant difference Chen now wants to effect is the adoption of regulatory standards that combat "greenwashing," which occurs when a company attempts to market itself as friendly to the environment when in practice it has done little to minimize its environmental impact.

Most greenwashing is a form of "paying-to-pollute," which encompasses practices such as using carbon credits, carbon offsets, carbon taxes, carbon sequestration, and other mechanisms that do not reduce emissions at the source or replace fossil fuels with zero-carbon energy sources.

Chen caustically describes greenwashing as companies, banks, and investors claiming they love hugging pandas and trees without having to prove they hug pandas and trees. What he wants is regulators to require claimants to "show the hug, the tree and the panda."

Taiwan's government must cause change in Taiwan, according to Chen. If the government does not move quickly toward decarbonization, the entire jurisdiction's

economy is at risk. Virtually all of Taiwan's exporting enterprises/supply chains including tech giants Apple, Google, Amazon, and Meta increasingly face challenges of manufacturing under tightening sustainability requirements. Since Taiwan cannot meet renewable energy needs, companies and their supply chains will eventually be forced to leave Taiwan in search of zero-carbon energy. Chen says if Taiwan has any hope of remaining globally competitive, it must decarbonize and complete energy transition.

"What Taiwan needs is legislation that changes the behavior of how money is deployed," says Chen. "Our first milestone is to try to change Taiwan. If Taiwan regulators can catch the opportunity and take the initiative, this can make Taiwan into a first mover jurisdiction, a worldwide catalyst, and a global model jurisdiction for the world to follow."

While the U.S. is seeking to cooperate with China on environmental matters, Chen says the irony is that there is an opportunity for Taiwan and the U.S. to cooperate. The bigger irony is while Taiwan is not part of the UN and global environmental movement, it might become the jurisdiction that the world's nations follow to decarbonize.

The vision is nothing short of transforming the world. Chen sees his efforts to change the global institutional mentality about the need for decarbonization as the fight of his life – even, perhaps, the fight of all our lives.

"Is there a more important client?" he asks. "It's life on earth."

Double-take

Zambia firm's managing partner overcame a series of challenges

By Tom Kirvan

The son of a lawyer, Sugzo Dzekedzeke was in law school at the University of Zambia in 2001 when he was dealt a double personal blow.

His father, Ostoph, died unexpectedly of a heart attack at age 56. Three months later, his mother would succumb to cancer.

Suddenly, he felt rudderless, overcome with sadness over the loss of the two most influential people in his life.

"I easily could have stopped and lost my way," Dzekedzeke said of the profound personal setbacks he suffered.

Instead, the then 22-year-old Zambia native somehow found his footing, displaying a renewed sense of determination to complete his law school studies and to eventually join the Lusaka law firm that his father founded in 1988.

In large part, it fulfilled a destiny that his father encouraged in somewhat subtle ways.

"He never pushed me in a direct way to become a lawyer, but he did discourage me from pursuing other things that he believed wouldn't be good in the long term," said Dzekedzeke, who had been accepted into a business school program before his law school acceptance letter came. "I applied at the same time to business school and law school, and I obviously ended up in the law and have never regretted it for a single day."

After completing his three-year Bachelor of Laws program at the University of Zambia, Dzekedzeke was then required to spend the next year serving a legal apprenticeship under the guidance of an attorney while studying for the rigorous bar exam. Fittingly, he worked at the firm



Sugzo Dzekedzeke
Partner
Dzekedzeke & Company

his father founded, learning at the right hand of the managing partner.

“My father’s partner was my supervisor, which helped in my development,” said Dzekedzeke, who earned his college degree from the University of Zambia, the country’s largest and oldest educational institution.

His tutelage also helped Dzekedzeke pass all 11 parts of the bar exam, a test so demanding that it has just a 5 percent passage rate.

“The bar exam is very difficult to pass, so I felt especially proud because of what I went through during law school,” he related.

Now, 18 years into a successful legal career, Dzekedzeke serves as the managing partner of a multi-practice litigation firm that his father founded 35 years ago. The firm has “evolved into providing services in the areas of dispute resolution,

corporate and commercial law, banking and finance, the law of credit and security, intellectual property and conveyancing, and much more,” said Dzekedzeke. Its legal roster includes seven practicing attorneys and three other law school grads who are serving their apprenticeships while studying for the bar exam.

“We are a jack-of-all-trades law firm that can handle pretty much everything involving litigation – criminal law, divorce, immigration cases, intellectual property matters, and business disputes,” he indicated. “You name it, we do it.”

The need to offer a diversified legal practice is driven by the market in Zambia, where “it is too risky to specialize in just one or two practice areas,” according to Dzekedzeke.

“We do a lot of litigation,” he said, noting that upward of 80 percent of the cases the firm handles involve courtroom appearances.

One of six children, Dzekedzeke grew up in a family where education was valued, due in large part to his father’s career as a lawyer and his mother’s role as a schoolteacher.

“She taught all grades in primary school and was the anchor of our family,” Dzekedzeke said of his mother, whom he described as a “steadying influence” on her children.

Dzekedzeke’s siblings include an older brother who holds a Ph.D. and is a health care/population consultant, an IT specialist, an artisan, and a marketing executive. His late sister served in a human resources capacity before passing away in 2015.

Married for 18 years, Dzekedzeke and his wife, Sheba, have two children, Senza and Koko. Their son, who is an avid chess player, is in 10th grade and may follow in his father’s legal footsteps as he “thinks like a lawyer,” according to his dad.

Sugzo Dzekedzeke and his wife, Sheba, with their two children, Koko and Senza.



Sun Share Tower is a skyscraper in Lusaka, Zambia. It is the country’s second tallest building. On the right is the Radisson Blue convention center.



The same could be said for the couple’s daughter, a competitive swimmer who already has expressed her desire to be a judge someday.

“I’m hoping she will,” said her father.

Dzekedzeke’s wife earned her college degree in sociology and works for an organization dedicated to empowering youths throughout Zambia.

“She also is an artist and has written two books of poetry,” Dzekedzeke said proudly of his spouse.

While he was raised in an English-speaking household, Dzekedzeke also is fluent in Nyanja, a Bantu language reportedly


spoken by more than 15 million people in southern Africa.

His mastery of two languages coupled with his legal skills figure to serve him well as his firm charts its course as one of the newest members of Primerus.

“We became a member earlier this year and we are looking forward to becoming involved in its programs,” said Dzekedzeke, who is one of an estimated 1,900 attorneys in his native country.

The number of attorneys in Zambia is expected to grow over the next decade as educational opportunities expand for students in the country of some 20 million residents, according to Dzekedzeke.

“There are a lot more universities now in Zambia than there were just 10 years ago,” he indicated of the growth pattern that has resumed following the pandemic of 2020-21.

“COVID was a difficult and scary time for all of us in the legal profession, but by working remotely and by relying on technology, we were able to survive and now to move forward,” said Dzekedzeke. 

Zambia

A resource-rich country at crossroads of Central, Southern, and Eastern Africa

Home to Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, Zambia is a country formerly known as Northern Rhodesia that became independent of Great Britain in 1964, ending 73 years of British rule.

A nation of more than 20 million people, Zambia is neighbored by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Tanzania to the northeast, Malawi to

the east, Mozambique to the southeast, Zimbabwe and Botswana to the south, Namibia to the southwest, and Angola to the west. The capital city of Lusaka is located in the south-central part of the nation and is the most populous city (3.3 million) while also serving as the fast-developing country's commercial hub.

English is the official language of Zambia, while recognized regional languages include Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga,

and Tumbuka. Christianity is the principal religion.

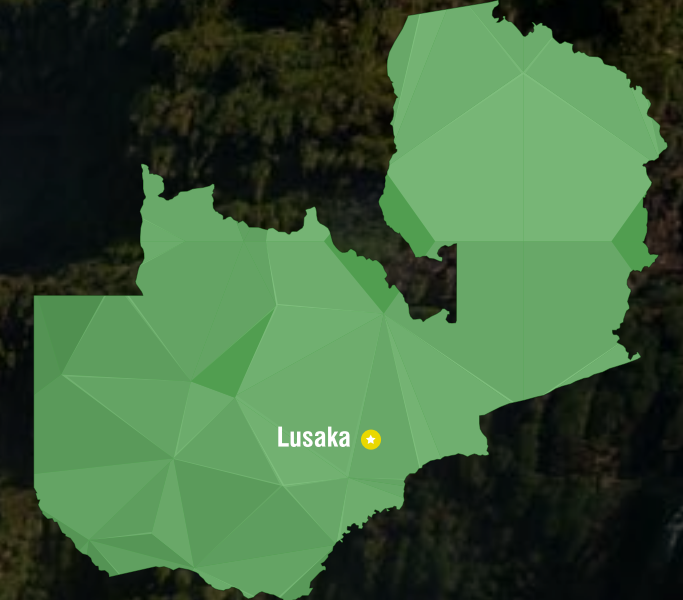
Zambia is one of the top copper producers in the world and boasts other abundant natural resources and minerals that have fueled its economy for more than a century.

Tourism also contributes mightily to Zambia's good fortune, as it is known as "the land of the legendary walking

One of the most spectacular tourist destinations in the world, Victoria Falls is located on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is roughly twice the height of Niagara Falls in North America and more than twice the width.

ZAMBIA

Democracy – Constitutionalism



safari, Victoria Falls, the wild Zambezi River, abundant wildlife, and untamed wilderness," according to the Zambia Tourism Council. In addition, "the Great Rift Valley, which runs from the Lower Zambezi River in southern Zambia to the headwaters of the Nile in Egypt, is known to be one of the cradles of the human race, and Zambia's present population lives on lands that have been inhabited by their forebears for eons."

Not surprisingly, Victoria Falls is the nation's number one tourist attraction, and is statistically speaking the largest waterfall in the world, combining the height (360 feet) and width (1-plus mile) together to form the largest single sheet of flowing water. The falls were named by British explorer Dr. David Livingstone, who in 1855 labeled them in honor of Queen Victoria, describing their beauty as "scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."

Soccer is the nation's most popular sport, while rugby, boxing, cricket, and basketball also enjoy strong followings. Zambia also produced the first Black African – Madalitso Muthiya – to play in the U.S. Open golf tournament, one of the four major events on the professional tour.

Storied Relationships

In-house clients cement lasting bonds with Primerus law firms

By Tom Kirvan



Amy Cisrow-Peterson
Assistant General Counsel
Rack Room Shoes
Charlotte, North Carolina



Peter Barr
General Counsel
Rack Room Shoes
Charlotte, North Carolina



Rodolfo "Rudy" Rivera
Chief International Counsel
Fidelity National Financial
Jacksonville, Florida

There are assorted legal stories to be told that aptly illustrate the bond that various Primerus law firms have developed with a range of in-house counsel clients across the nation.

One involved a "dire" situation related to class action litigation, while another revolved around complicated disputes concerning compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that had quickly turned into a multi-state legal headache.

Yet another dealt with the legal ramifications of foregoing rent payments in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, while a fourth example involved a "major bankruptcy adversarial proceeding" that required the deft touch of an attorney with intimate knowledge of federal judicial proceedings.

In each instance, a positive legal outcome was achieved and an ongoing client relationship ensued.

Take, for example, the time that the New Orleans firm of Degan, Blanchard & Nash, PLC was summoned to help the in-house counsel team of Peter Barr and Amy Cisrow-Peterson of Rack Room Shoes with a particularly nettlesome legal matter.

"Several years ago, we sat down with Sid Degan in what was frankly a dire situation," explained Barr and Cisrow-Peterson, the General Counsel and Assistant General Counsel, respectively, of the major footwear retailer based in Charlotte, N.C. "We had just realized that the firm that we had entrusted with a major piece of litigation was not adequately representing us . . . At the same time, we began to recognize how large our potential exposure was. It was a trying time. These were two class actions that would eventually be joined, one in Louisiana. That and having known Sid through Primerus for several years and

knowing his calm, assured presence, brought us to him and his firm.

"Sid put together a small but mighty team of his lawyers," Barr and Cisrow-Peterson indicated. "Ultimately, we designated Degan, Blanchard & Nash as lead counsel, working together with a much larger firm with offices local to the other jurisdiction involved. Sid, Jena Smith, and Keith Kornman understood the intricacies of the technology involved, but also listened to us as to the cultural and personal factors involved and supported us as we negotiated a favorable settlement.

"The ability to listen and understand who your client is, along with understanding the risks of the case, and staying calm in the face of an exceedingly large – albeit unfair – potential exposure, is another example of Primerus attorneys communicating and bringing a strategic perspective based on all the factors involved, including the ones 'outside' the case," they added.

Barr, a University of Kansas School of Law alum who has served as general counsel of Rack Room Shoes for the past 22 years, and Cisrow-Peterson, a Capital University Law School grad who has been the company's assistant general counsel for the last 18 years, also relied on Degan, Blanchard & Nash, PLC for critical legal advice during the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

"This experience (involving the class action case), along with many favorable experiences with Primerus firms across the country, led us to choose Degan, Blanchard as our coordinating counsel, when during the first days of the pandemic, we weighed the possibility of foregoing rent payments and thereby the possibility of defending actions brought by our landlords across the country," Barr and Cisrow-Peterson related. "Ultimately,

we determined that the wiser course was to pay rent. But it was Primerus attorneys that we reached out to when facing the possibility of perhaps hundreds of individual lawsuits nationwide.”

Rack Room’s legal connection to Primerus also has involved the Alabama law firm of Christian & Small, which is based in the state’s largest city of Birmingham.

“Sharon Stuart and her associate Kendall Finn at Christian & Small LLP in Birmingham represented us in several ADA disputes regarding our stores in several different states,” said Barr and Cisrow-Peterson. “Their representation was a textbook example of excellent communication as a strategic legal partner. Sharon and Kendall worked directly with

our litigation managing in-house counsel and our head of store construction to develop an overview of the stores at issue and the specific ADA issues. Sharon coordinated with one expert ADA specialist to inspect and evaluate each of the stores involved. She and Kendall traveled with the expert to the other stores in other states, so that the information derived from the inspections was consistent across the various stores.

“As a result of the information garnered from the inspections and from our store construction department, not only were our Primerus counsel able to negotiate excellent settlements, but Sharon and Kendall looked at the cases, the inspections, and the additional information about the stores,

which information was not directly relevant to the case – such as the dates of construction – from a strategic perspective,” Barr and Cisrow-Peterson noted. “They were able to identify patterns as to when stores were built and what the different store eras faced in ADA issues. Further, they worked with us to adjust terminologies and descriptions of our store and fixture buildouts to help avoid running afoul of ADA requirements.”

Rudy Rivera, who heads the legal team for Florida-based Fidelity National Financial, has many stories to share about his involvement with Primerus, particularly as he helped build the company’s international operations.



“I use Primerus to expand my network,” Rivera said. “One of the reasons I go to Primerus events is to meet lawyers. The best way to evaluate a lawyer is in a social setting. You get to know somebody; you get a feel for them as a person and as a lawyer.


“Ironically, there have been several occasions where I attended an event and shortly after that event, I retained a Primerus lawyer I met at the event,” he noted. “One example was a meeting in Miami. I fired the lawyer working on a litigation matter and retained Jorge Cubillo, Felipe Chapula’s partner (at Cacheaux Cavazos & Newton). We set up

a call a week or two after the event and retained Jorge Cubillo.”

The Chief International Counsel for Fidelity National Financial, Rivera said that he works hard to “develop strategic relationships” with all outside law firms.

“A law firm needs to be more than just a vendor,” said Rivera, a graduate of Ohio Northern University who earned his juris doctor from St. Louis University School of Law. “Every matter necessitates a strategic partnership. I need to know that the firm has my company’s best interest and I work diligently to see what they need.”

In particular, Rivera recalled a New York case that involved a high-stakes bankruptcy matter.

“On a major bankruptcy adversarial proceeding in New York, I retained a Primerus member as a local counsel,” said Rivera, who has served on the board of the Association of Corporate Counsel. “I was impressed by his relationship with the judges. He was and is always available, and usually returns a call within an hour. He was able to provide the lay of the land, which was extremely useful in the matter.” 

Built-in protection

IP cases serve as trademark for noted Florida litigator

By Tom Kirvan

To a degree, Florida attorney Mark Warzecha is in the police business, advising a growing list of clients on the importance of “staying a step ahead” of illegal profiteers who lurk in the shadowy world of patent and trademark infringement.

Warzecha – now in his 29th year as an attorney and 13th year with the Melbourne IP firm of Widerman Malek, P.L. – prefers to take the proactive approach in protecting

trademark and copyright assets, framing the concept in easily understandable terms.

“It really comes down to this,” said Warzecha. “You can either pay me now for advice you might not think you’ll need, or you can pay much more later when a problem arises and you are on the verge of being involved in litigation. The stakes suddenly get much higher when you’re headed to court.”

Keeping clients out of court can be a 24/7 job for Warzecha, who spends approximately 70 percent of his legal time on intellectual property litigation matters.

“In recent years, my IP practice has become more and more focused on litigation issues while still maintaining a large transactional docket,” said Warzecha, explaining the constant threat that businesses and individuals face from those who intentionally or

unintentionally engage in infringement activities. “I stress over and over again the need to be vigilant and to never let your guard down, which is why I like to be involved early on when a business or organization is developing a new idea that could have trademark potential.”

As such, Warzecha can serve in the role of a plaintiff or defense counsel, obtaining or preventing verdicts or settlements involving millions of dollars.

“You want to make sure that if you develop a product or service that proves to be successful, that you take the necessary legal steps to protect it,” he indicated. “You certainly don’t want to one day open a letter informing you that you’re in violation of an existing trademark and are being ordered to cease and desist the manufacture or sale of your product or service. That’s when you have gone from a position of strength to one of weakness that could jeopardize your business

altogether. You don’t want to be put in a doomsday type scenario.”

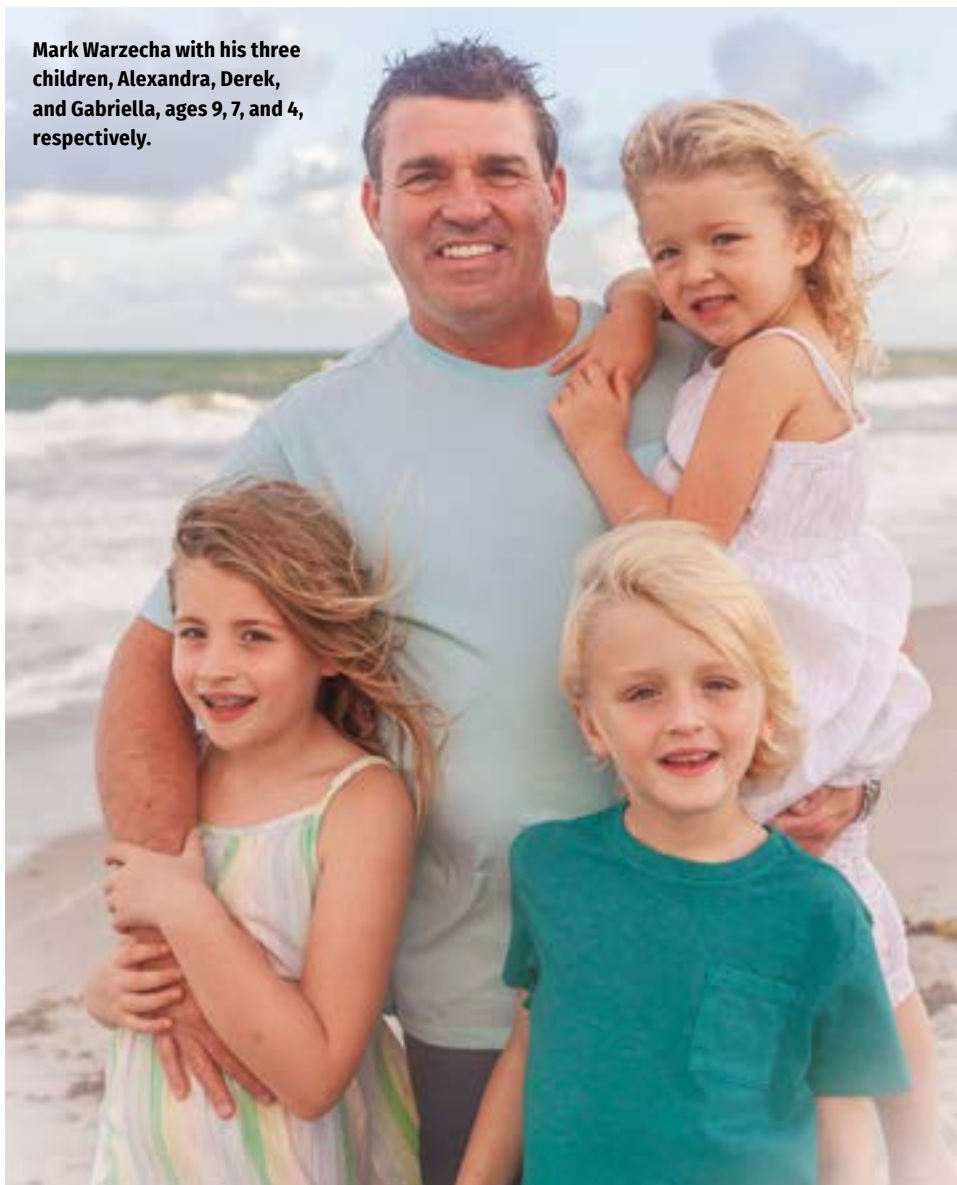
With a nationwide practice, Warzecha appears principally in the federal courts, and relishes the opportunity to appear before judges who are “smart and well-prepared.”

Said Warzecha: “I really enjoy the back-and-forth with judges and find it intellectually stimulating to present



Mark Warzecha
Director, Intellectual Property
Litigation Department
Widerman Malek, P.L.

Mark Warzecha with his three children, Alexandra, Derek, and Gabriella, ages 9, 7, and 4, respectively.



arguments to those who are inquisitive and have open legal minds.”

Although his firm works in the broad area of patents, copyrights, and trade secrets, Warzecha says trademark cases hold a special fascination for him.

A native of New Jersey, Warzecha inherited a mechanical aptitude and strong work ethic from his father, who spent 35 years working as a foreman for giant automaker General Motors before retiring.

“We were a typical middle class family living in New Jersey,” said the 53-year-old

Warzecha. “I had a wonderful upbringing with my older brother and younger sister, playing sports and enjoying my friends. My parents (Judy and Walter) are salt of the earth and recently moved to Florida. My mom was the do-it-all homemaker and my dad loved his job helping run the line and building cars for GM.”

Following high school, Warzecha became the first person in his family to attend college, eventually earning a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University in the New York City suburb of Piscataway, N.J.

“I was labeled the ‘smart kid’ in the family, as my brother was part of the carpenters’ union and my sister was a beautician,” Warzecha related. “Still, I went to college without a clue in the world about what I was going to do, but I did have a love for music as virtually all of my friends were involved in music in some way or another.”

Then, during his second year of college, Warzecha had an academic awakening of sorts, realizing that all successful musicians and bands need legal advice, thereby piquing his interest in the field of entertainment law and the intellectual property field.

When it came time to consider his law school options, Warzecha had narrowed his choices to in-state Seton Hall or California Western School of Law in San Diego.

“It came down to palm trees or telephone poles,” Warzecha said of the deciding factors.

After completing his law degree in just 2-1/2 years at Cal Western in 1994, Warzecha was faced with a bleak job market in San Diego, forcing him to return to the East Coast where he and a partner started their own firm in New York, representing musicians, independent filmmakers, and others involved in the entertainment industry.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Warzecha’s partner wanted to return to her Indiana roots.

“So, I moved there in 2002, living and working in Indiana for the next seven years,” said Warzecha, who eventually shut down the firm in 2009 when he fulfilled a longtime desire to reside in Florida.

“I’m a huge fisherman and always wanted to live near the water again, and Melbourne obviously fits that bill,” said Warzecha, whose father instilled in him a love for saltwater fishing.

In 2010, Warzecha joined Widerman Malek, a firm that was beginning to make a name for itself in the IP field.

“When I joined, I was the fifth attorney at the firm,” Warzecha said. “We now have 25 attorneys and two offices.”

Part of his busy practice revolves around the world of Primerus, where Warzecha helps the international organization protect its trademarks and other IP interests.

“There’s always a strong need to enforce and defend cases involving trademark


and IP infringement, especially with an organization that is national and international in scope,” said Warzecha. “Some of the Primerus phrases and concepts were developed at considerable cost and over a number of years, and that investment needs to be protected at every turn.”

Catch phrases such as the “Six Pillars” and “Good People Who Happen to Be Good Lawyers” are among the many valuable assets in the Primerus IP portfolio, said Warzecha, and are among those he is determined to protect. They are much more than mere wordplay, he stressed.

“They, in effect, represent much of the identity of Primerus and reflect an underlying message that is at the heart of the organization’s success,” he said.

“With that in mind, we have taken the necessary steps to safeguard them.”

The final component of the Six Pillars – a commitment to community service – is a cause especially dear to the heart of Warzecha. It also is why he has taken a lead role in advancing Primerus’s community service initiatives.

“I’m a big believer in the need to give back and to help the less fortunate,” said Warzecha, who is chair of the Community Service program for Primerus. “Volunteering time for a good cause is not only rewarding on a personal level, it also makes our communities stronger, more caring, and better places to live. I’m all about that.” 



Defense Mechanism

Med-mal attorney takes pride in defending doctors, hospitals

By Tom Kirvan

As the daughter of health care providers, Seattle attorney Michelle Taft made her parents understandably proud when she joined a firm that specializes in medical-malpractice defense work.

"My parents are thrilled that I'm defending doctors and not suing them," Taft said with a smile.

Taft, who graduated from the University of Washington School of Law in 2013, has spent the past decade with Johnson Graffe Keay Moniz & Wick LLP (JGKMW), becoming a partner of the firm last year. The oldest of four children, Taft had her mind set on pursuing a legal career from an early age and may have been influenced in its ultimate direction by the experience of her parents.

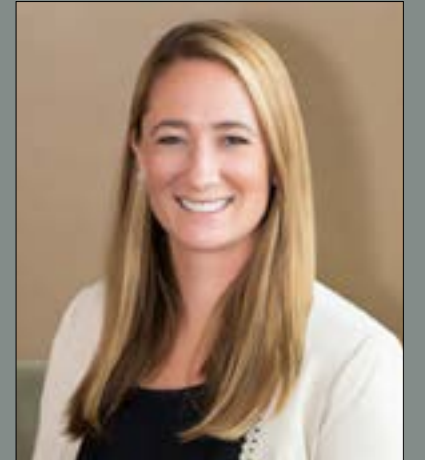
"My dad (Craig) is a retired P.T., while my mom (Pam) is a retired nurse, who worked for years as a labor and delivery nurse," said Taft. "They placed a premium on working hard and getting a good education. They pushed us all to be the best we could be."

A native of Tacoma, Wash., Taft took the parental advice to heart, excelling academically in high school and at the University of Southern California, where

she graduated early, magna cum laude, with a bachelor's in economics and a minor in German while competing as a member of the women's varsity rowing team for the Trojans.

The strong work ethic, love of teamwork, and competitive spirit fostered by her time as an elite athlete continues to serve Taft as a litigator.

Michelle Taft is a civil litigator focusing on defending claims against health care professionals and facilities. In her spare time, Taft and her husband enjoy everything that the outdoors has to offer, including downhill skiing, where she is a member of the Crystal Mountain Volunteer Ski Patrol. Taft is also an active member and former board president of a local rowing club, College Club of Seattle, and volunteers with the national nonprofit SheJumps, which provides programming to increase the participation of women and girls in outdoor sports.



Michelle Taft
Partner
Johnson Graffe Keay Moniz & Wick LLP

On the day she was interviewed for this magazine feature, Taft was in the midst of full-scale preparations for a trial that was expected to last two to three weeks but ended up lasting a full month. The trial involved a plaintiff who filed a lawsuit after she suffered a vascular occlusion above her lip while undergoing a cosmetic filler injection by the defendant doctor, who had performed the same procedure on her many times before.

Among the issues to be decided in the case were whether the plaintiff was properly informed of the risks inherent in the procedure and, relatedly, whether the defendant doctor managed her care appropriately after complications developed, Taft said. Taft assisted her partner, Erin Seeberger, in trying the case, and the duo ultimately came away from the trial with a win on behalf of their clients, the defendant doctor and medical group.



Michelle Taft and her husband Max Mannisto with their two rescue dogs

In a broader sense, the case also illustrated the reasons why Taft was drawn to the task of defending doctors and health care providers in such high-stakes litigation.

“Defending a case can be financially burdensome on the hospital, the doctor, and the practice group involved,” explained Taft, noting the additional high cost of maintaining medical malpractice insurance. “The doctors are in the courtroom with me during cases, blocking their schedules and obviously unable to see patients while they are in there. A trial affects not only the defendant doctor, but also their partners and patients.”

“Additionally, their license is on the line; their professional reputation is on the line,” she said of the legal ordeal, stressing that “health care providers really deeply care” about their patients. “I think that is a fact that sometimes the other side likes to hide. Or the other side will try to vilify

the defendant provider. Yet, health care providers dedicate their education and their entire careers to serving others. They care so much about the medicine and the people they are serving. It deeply affects them when they are sued. They are deeply emotionally invested in these cases.”

Taft said she finds “great fulfillment” in being able to help her clients through the worst moments of their professional lives, helping them come through an extremely emotional and stressful process without losing sight of the love they have for their patients and their profession.

While only a small fraction of the cases she handles go to trial, Taft said appearing in court is one of her favorite aspects of litigation. It invariably provides her with an adrenaline rush that is hard to describe and even more difficult to quantify, particularly when the outcome rests in the hands of a jury or judge.

Taft has been lucky to have excellent mentors throughout her time at JGKMW. As just one example, Taft recalled a case early in her career when as a second chair associate she sought a motion for summary judgment dismissal in a medical-malpractice matter.

“As a young associate, one of my mentors, now one of my partners, let me run with it when I asked if I could handle a motion for summary judgment, seeking a dismissal of the case,” Taft related. “He said, ‘go for it, I support you’ and mentored me through that. And when that case got dismissed, it ended up on appeal, and he allowed me to brief and argue at the Court of Appeals.”

The case that began in 2015 eventually was appealed to the Washington Supreme Court, where Taft assisted a veteran appellate attorney in obtaining a successful ruling on behalf of the defense in 2018, nearly three years after the legal proceedings began.

“It was a huge learning experience for me and was my first foray into appellate work. It gave me an appreciation for how our law evolves in the med-mal world,” Taft said.

The learning curve is an arc that Taft has embraced and successfully navigated over the course of her 10-year legal career.

“As a litigator, every time you go to trial is a huge learning experience that is a culmination of all the work you have done from the second the case was filed up until the time when you see how everything – the discovery, the evidence – unfolds before the jury,” she said. “Every time I go to trial, I come out of it a little bit better at what I do and a little bit wiser from the experience.”

Born and raised in the Great Northwest, Taft broadened her horizons by attending college at USC, an elite private university in the heart of Los Angeles, Calif. There she was a three-year member of the women’s varsity rowing team, participating in a demanding sport where early morning practices six days a week were the competitive norm.

“It was a challenging experience, but very rewarding in terms of the friendships I made and the memories I will always have of competing at the collegiate level,” said Taft, who was actively recruited to row at the Division 1 level while she was in high school. “It was a special time in my life.”

Somewhat fortuitously, her passion for rowing also played a part in meeting her future husband, Max Mannisto, a consultant for QueBIT Consulting, a company that designs and develops business analytics programs. While in college at the University of Washington, Mannisto was a member of the men’s rowing team for the Huskies, competing alongside Taft’s brother, Brandon.

“Max and my brother were best friends in college, and I was in law school at the time when Max and I became friends,” said Taft.

After a long friendship, followed by years of dating, the couple was married during the COVID pandemic, making their union even more official the summer of 2022 at a full-blown ceremony in the North Cascades attended by friends and family.

Taft admitted that the first wedding “ceremony” was less than idyllic and involved filling out an online marriage certificate, having their identities verified by phone, and then signing the marriage license with just one officiant and two witnesses present. The next morning, they placed the license in a drop-box at the King County administration building with a check for \$6 to cover the copying fee, and that was it.

“It wasn’t particularly romantic, but we still had fun,” she said with a smile.

In short, they learned that there is something especially memorable about getting married during a global pandemic. After their formal wedding took place in the summer of 2021, Taft and Mannisto spent their honeymoon in Europe, visiting Italy, France, and Switzerland, where her brother was working at the time.

Her brother has a twin sister, Julia, who is currently finishing her education. Taft’s youngest sibling, John, is a 28-year-old nuclear engineer in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program and is stationed aboard an aircraft carrier homeported in San Diego, Calif.

Taft and her husband share a love for the outdoors (see related story) and their two “fur-babies,” a pair of rescue dogs that regularly accompany them on hikes and camping trips.

“Rescue dogs are the best. They are so loyal and grateful to have a loving home after coming out of a shelter. No designer dogs for us,” she said with a chuckle. 🐾



Michelle Taft and her father at Crystal Mountain Resort, where she is a member of the Ski Patrol.

SheJumps

Nonprofit with catchy name opens (out)doors for females of all ages

By Tom Kirvan

It's an organization dedicated to the cause of "get the girls out."

Accordingly, it goes by the name of "SheJumps," a national nonprofit that Seattle attorney Michelle Taft is particularly passionate about and aligns neatly with her lifelong love of the outdoors, especially in her native Great Northwest.

Taft recently became a board member of SheJumps, thereby ratcheting up her involvement in the organization that first appeared on the outdoor scene in 2007. It was the brainchild of three women from the Salt Lake City area – Claire Smallwood, Vanessa Pierce, and Lyndsey Dyer – who banded together "to inspire people to jump beyond their limitations."

And in a big way, said Taft.

"It offers programming to get women, girls, and people who identify with the women's community into outdoor sports, and to

especially improve access to and diversity in the outdoor world," Taft explained.

"Obviously, skiing is a big one, but also backpacking, mountain biking, hiking, camping, leave no trace, and climbing. The programming that SheJumps does is really broad. SheJumps really puts its money where its mouth is in terms of trying to increase access to and diversity in the outdoor community."

The organization's mission is framed around the objective of offering "outdoor play that transforms," according to Taft. The message permeates its website, highlighting efforts to motivate "women and girls of all backgrounds to step out of their comfort zone in a fun, non-threatening, inclusive environment to learn outdoor skills."

Claire Smallwood, one of the organization's founders, serves as Executive Director of the Salt Lake City based nonprofit and may well be its foremost ambassador.

"SheJumps was started by me and two friends who found that encountering fear and fun in the outdoors led to an incredible sense of self," said Smallwood. "These outdoor experiences, while they are sometimes quite individualistic, are best paired with others to really feel like you are a part of something 'bigger' than yourself. It's evolved beyond my wildest dreams in the past 16 years. We now have more than 6,000 participants in our events annually and our programs range from technical skill-building courses to community connection.

"One thing I'm particularly proud of is the way in which we continue to evolve our language to be more inclusive, identifying that gender equality (the roots of our mission) doesn't mean the same thing as when we started," Smallwood added. "For example, we understand the importance of affinity groups even within our community and we are excited to strive for belonging across trans, cis, non-binary,





as well as racially and ethnically diverse populations.”

Taft has been a longtime volunteer and donor for SheJumps, first learning about the organization eight years ago when she attended a special movie screening of the film “Pretty Faces,” an all-female ski film written by and starring Lyndsey Dyer, one of SheJumps’ co-founders. Ever since, she has been committed to “help spread the love” about its many virtues, particularly by encouraging participants to break through fears and other barriers in life so they can reach their full potential.

“My husband (Max Mannisto) also is a huge supporter of them because their work benefits everyone,” said Taft, an attorney with Johnson Graffe Keay Moniz & Wick LLP. “I really love the work they do to reach out to communities, including those who may not have access to outdoor sports because of racial or income barriers. They really do a lot of great programming to show people that the outdoors is for everyone,” she added, noting that “we have a duty to embrace others and to welcome others into the outdoor space.”

Smallwood, as executive director, said she is grateful that Taft is now part of the leadership team for the organization.

“Michelle joined SheJumps as a board member in July 2023, but we’ve been lucky to have her support and involvement many times in the past,” Smallwood indicated. “Michelle has an amazing generosity of spirit and dedication to our mission. She even directed her wedding guests to donate to SheJumps in lieu of gifts!”




“Michelle has a deep familiarity with our mission as well,” Smallwood noted. “As a ski patroller, she saw the need to offer women an opportunity to see ‘a day in the life’ of a ski patroller, so she helped us create an adult version of our Junior Ski Patrol program. This adult ‘Junior Ski Patrol’ program is important not just because women are outnumbered in the outdoor industry, but because building community connections is a critical part of instilling confidence and leadership skills. Michelle’s legal experience will also help SheJumps as we continue to scale and grow. It’s important to have someone

on our board who has that direct program experience in addition to her long list of professional accomplishments.”

Taft’s efforts on behalf of SheJumps dovetail nicely with her desire to promote the fortunes of women in the legal profession.

“One of my personal goals is to uplift women in the law and in litigation especially, as there have been stereotypes and a lot of pressures put on women that are not necessarily put on men, and there also are barriers that women face

that men don’t face. That pattern is true in litigation, outdoor sports, and sports in general.”

Taft believes that, like the outdoor community, the “entire legal community benefits” when we embrace women, give them a voice, and strive to create positive change and experiences for the next generation of litigators. 

Photos courtesy of SheJumps



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