

Variety serves as the spice of life for Alaska attorney



By Brian Cox

When attorney Josh Hodes graduated more than 20 years ago from Wesleyan University in Connecticut, he headed west to Jackson, Wyoming, looking for open space and quality time with his brother. Through spending long, intense hours working as a cook for a few years, he learned many practical lessons and skills that transferred into his legal practice at Landye Bennett Blumstein in Anchorage, Alaska.

“I learned to multitask on a different level than college,” says Hodes. “I had to manage time and be efficient at all times and there was no time to waste. When working in a kitchen, you have to coordinate and rely on teamwork. Those lessons and skills really helped me when I started my legal career.”

Hodes was born and raised near the New Jersey coast, a continent away from where he now practices law. His father owned an insurance company and his mother managed retail stores. While



Josh has been an animal lover his entire life. A former horse owner, he currently serves on the board of Equine Assisted Therapy Alaska.

his grandfather was a lawyer in Newark, Hodes knew little of his practice but recalls understanding that his grandfather was widely respected in the community for his pro bono work.

Early on, Hodes proved to be a diligent, driven student, a characteristic that has served him well as an attorney.

“I have a really hard time when things aren’t done and are hanging out there,” he says. “I want to cross things off my list and make sure my clients know that I am there for each of them and will get their issues handled when they need them handled. I think it’s part of my DNA.”

At Wesleyan, Hodes majored in English and history, thinking he may pursue his interest in politics. But after completing the rigorous program, it was clear to him that politics was not his calling. Instead, he was ready for a break from academia, which is how he ended up in Wyoming, where his older brother was a professional mountain biker.

In time, Hodes realized he needed a change. The idea of going to law school as a way of advancing his education had crept up on him during his two years in Wyoming and he decided he would head farther west to attend Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon.

As it happened, on his first day at Lewis and Clark, Hodes met his future wife, Liz. The two shared a passion for animal law. He was the head of the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund and she was the editor of the Animal Law Review.

When Hodes graduated in 2005, he remained open to practicing in a range of fields. The economy was slowing and as he and Liz considered the job market, they turned their eyes to Alaska. They had been to the state on vacation and thought they would give life in Anchorage a go.

Hodes joined Landye Bennett Blumstein, which at the time had a Portland office, and Liz went to Davis Wright Tremaine to practice employment law. Nearly 20 years later, both remain with the same firms.

In the beginning, Hodes was at times the only associate at Landye Bennett Blumstein, which afforded him the opportunity to work for all the partners and exposed him to the full range of the firm’s practice. In short order, Hodes was arguing summary judgment motions in court and working on cases involving Alaska

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Josh and his wife, Liz, met on their first day at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland and shared an interest in animal law issues.

Native Law. Through the mentorship of Phil Blumstein, who works primarily with clients on corporate affairs, real estate transactions, Alaska Native law issues, and mergers and acquisitions, Hodes found his niche in the transactional world.

“I love the intensity,” says Hodes, channeling the line cook he once was. “Putting together a transaction is like planning and pulling off a catered dinner. And when you’re done, you find satisfaction when your clients are happy with the result.”

Speaking of his long tenure at the firm and his growth as an attorney, Hodes said “One of the key things about my early experience at the firm is that even when things needed to move quickly and were stressful, Phil always took the time to explain and to make sure that everything was done right,” says Hodes. “That was key. It was that education that made me a better lawyer and something I try to do with those folks that I have helped in their early career.”

Hodes now helps manage the firm and advises corporate and individual clients through all facets of commercial real estate, business and private equity transactions, including entity formation and organization, purchases and sales, and lending arrangements. He also works with Alaska Native corporations on their unique range of legal needs, including commercial and government contracting, land use, and shareholder issues.

One of his primary clients is a commercial developer, the principals of which are also involved in a wide range of businesses.

“I never quite know what I’m going to get in terms of the next e-mail,” he says. “It could be arranging a business structure for a new venture doing business outside of Alaska or it might involve hotel development here. Alaska is an incredible place to practice because we get to see and work on everything from local issues with our neighbors to working on large, institutional projects outside of Alaska. I often find myself working with high caliber attorneys throughout the nation and enjoy that I can do that from here in Alaska.”

In addition to the variety of the work, Hodes enjoys the personal relationships that are at the core of his practice. He prides himself on being able to offer each client service customized to their specific needs. He finds his creativity comes out when he helps a client understand the spectrum of ways to attack a problem.

“I like to meet my clients where they are and give my clients what they need by knowing there are different ways to reach the same conclusion or results,” he says. “I try to understand and help give them the tools to make good decisions for themselves and their businesses.”

A visitor to Hodes’ office can get a quick understanding of the attorney’s personal passions from a glance at one wall. In one frame is a game-worn Philadelphia Flyers jersey that reflects his lifelong love of hockey. When his children were younger, he coached their hockey teams, and he now volunteers with a learn-to-skate program for kids. Beside the framed jersey there is a painting of a cowboy riding his mule along a mountain ridge. Hodes is an avid collector of western art, which he became enthralled with about 10 years ago and for many years he also owned horses. He serves on the board of Equine Assisted Therapy Alaska, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children and adults who are living with disabilities through horsemanship.

Hodes and his wife have three children. Their eldest daughter, Riley, is 15, and their second daughter, Zoe, is 13. Their son, Jari, is 11.



Josh has played hockey since he was a kid in New Jersey and enjoyed coaching his children’s teams when they were younger. Here he celebrates a championship win with his daughter, Riley, and his son, Jari.

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Landye Bennett Blumstein currently has 22 attorneys and is a new member of Primerus. The growth the firm has recently undergone has led to the formation of a management committee, which Hodes serves on. Getting involved in the management of the firm has added a new dimension to his legal career.

“You get to learn other skills that are different from the practice. You need to understand how we work, where we fit in our

community, and how to do your best to take the time to ensure that the individuals working in our firm are happy here and enjoy what they do,” he says. “I think our firm is a great place to work and want to do what I can to keep it that way. And I want our clients to know that we are always here and ready for them.”



Josh shares his passion for horses with his son, Jari (left), and his daughter, Zoe (right).