LISTSERV

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Lawyers-Hardly One Dimensional

In a past column, we discussed the varied talents and diverse career paths of those of us who frequent the IMLA Listserve. We learned that we are indeed a multi-faceted group with a broad span of backgrounds. We are from virtually all fifty states and a handful of foreign countries or territories. We range in age from our 20's to, uh, well a little bit more than that.

As to past occupations, we have bankers, sales professionals, medical professionals, media professionals, teachers, athletes, and even a self-professed beach bum, among other occupations. Then there are the hobbies and avocations which include triathlons, biking, fishing, hunting, baking, running, traveling, writing, woodwork and many others.

In college, our undergraduate majors include Education, Finance, Marketing, Engineering, Art, History, Journalism, Foreign Language, Communications, Religion, Political Science, Government and International Studies, Criminal Justice, Interdisciplinary Studies, Nursing, Medicine, and others; virtually anything is fair game.

Suffice it to say lawyers have a variety of attributes and abilities, far and above quoting statute, case law and saying "No, you can't do that because of the potential liability." A while back I ran across an article about attorneys who engaged in other professions. There are some surprising names on the list, which support the above assertion that lawyers are multifaceted. Just who are these lawyers? Ok, let's take a look. The following people either practiced law or attended law school:

Nelson Mandela – the well-known anti-apartheid leader was a partner in the first black law partnership in South Africa. The site of his former law firm is now becoming a museum in Johannesburg.

Mahatma Gandhi – The leader of the Independence Movement attended University College in London, and after studying he went back to his home country of India. He tried practicing law but was never comfortable cross-examining witnesses. He eventually took a position with a firm in South Africa but spent most of his time pursuing development of his political ideology. He felt the true cause of a lawyer was to unite those with differences.

Washington Irving – who was Ambassador to Spain under Martin van Buren, studied in Europe and passed the New York bar. He was, of course, better known for writing *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

John Grisham – another author who went on to try law school, is famous for his series of legal thrillers. Grisham decided to try his hand at law school after a series of other professions. Originally intending to become a tax practitioner, Grisham instead sought out a career as a trial lawyer. One of his more famous novels, *A Time to Kill*, was inspired by Grisham's real-life observation of a rape trial.

Jerry Springer – the former Mayor of Cincinnati attended Northwestern University School of Law but is more famously known for his television talk show. He was also a campaign aide to Robert Kennedy and practiced law in Ohio before getting involved in radio and television.

Ben Stein – the television personality graduated at the top of his class in Yale Law School. He started his professional life as a lawyer, but reportedly his popularity and personality led to an eventual career in television.

Ozzie Nelson – the *Ozzie and Harriet* star was a graduate of Yale Law School. He reportedly used his skills to negotiate his own agreement with ABC which apparently resulted in a ten-year guaranteed contract, which was unique in the industry at the time.

John Cleese – the English comedy genius earned his law degree from Cambridge. However, he never practiced law. He co-formed the comedy group *Monty Python* with a friend he met in law school and never got into the legal business.

Geraldo Riviera – was one of the top five students in his class at Brooklyn Law School. During his ensuing career as an activist, he was discovered by a news network executive and his career in journalism was born.

Josh Saviano – earned an undergraduate degree from Yale and fol-

lowed that with a law degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. He now practices law in New York. In case you don't recognize the name, he gained television fame as the character Paul Pfeiffer who was Kevin's sidekick in the popular series *The Wonder Years*. Further note – he is not Marilyn Manson as the popular rumor goes.

Nina and Tim Zagat – This husband and wife team met during their attendance at Yale Law School. They started The Zagat Survey after tiring of complaints about the reliability of newspaper restaurant reviews.

Elizabeth Holloway Marston – Marston and her husband are credited with creation of the iconic superhero *Wonder Woman*. She earned an L.L.B from Boston University, and passed the Massachusetts Bar Exam. Her wish was to attend Harvard, but females were not admitted there at the time. Her husband attended Harvard, and she boasts of finishing the bar exam before him.

Fidel Castro – The Cuban leader studied at the University of Havana, was admitted to practice in 1950, and worked for a law firm in Cuba for a time before going on to his more well-known pursuits as the leader of Cuba.

Henri Matisse – the famous French artist studied law in Paris. At the onset of his legal career, he became ill and dabbled in oil painting during his recovery. He reportedly knew from the first moment he held a palette that he had discovered his true calling.

Howard Cosell – the famous TV sports personality entered law school at the urging of his parents. He studied at the NYU School of Law and initially practiced in Manhattan. One of his early clients was baseball great Willie Mays. He started a radio program to promote youth baseball and proved to be a natural at interviewing. He stopped practicing in 1956 to pursue his famous sportscasting career.

Steve Young – the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback holds the unique distinction of earning a law degree and winning a Super Bowl Championship in the same year. He retired from football in 1999 but has yet to put his J.D. to a career use.

Dick Button – the famous figure skater won Olympic gold medals in 1948 and 1952. He later attended Harvard Law School and began a legal career. He continued skating professionally on breaks and after law school.

Will Shortz-The puzzlemaster got his JD from Virginia in 1977, but passed up the bar to get the world's only degree in enigmatology instead. "Law is great training for the mind for almost any career. It was good for me because the thinking skills you get from law school are important in puzzle-solving and puzzle-making."

Francis Scott Key – the author of the *Star-Spangled Banner* was a lawyer when he penned the national anthem in 1814. He served as the District Attorney of the United States and famously represented Sam Houston in an assault trial in 1832.

Julio Iglesias – the famous singer was studying law in Spain in 1963 when he was paralyzed in a car accident. He learned to play the guitar during his lengthy recovery and discovered he was truly a musician. Although he is obviously more well-known for his musical talents, he still completed his law degree in 2001.

David Stern – the former commissioner of the National Basketball Association attended Columbia University Law School and was admitted to practice in New York in 1966. His firm represented the NBA, and he later signed on as the General Counsel for the NBA. And, as is well known, he eventually became the NBA Commissioner. (Sources – *Thirty Famous People with Law Degrees*, by Stacy Conradt, and *Famous People You Didn't Know Were Lawyers,* courtesy of The Droid Lawyer.com.)

Some folks say the life of a municipal lawyer is indeed full of variety but sometimes just isn't all that exciting as far as legal careers go. However, every once in a while, events (good and bad) occur which add a little "spice" to our day to day operations. Such was the case a couple of weeks ago when a defendant allegedly threatened an unnamed colleague with "death and the raping and killing of his wife and children." All of this arose over a Municipal Court charge. This particular defendant now appears to have elevated his petty charge to a serious felony. Why? As I have said before many times in this column, it is for the sole reason that he couldn't control himself and learn to keep his mouth shut.

This is worse than the woman who was in court locally and was charged with disorderly conduct following an altercation at a fast food restaurant because her order was prepared incorrectly. With child in tow, she picked a fight over the sandwich, and ended up spending Christmas in jail over a simple error and her inability to control her temper and her mouth.

Some of you know that I am not that fond of lawyer jokes. I worked very hard to get here, and after a while it gets old being the only one of my profession in the building and constantly being the butt of jokes--and taking the blame for "slowing down the process or making things more difficult than they have to be." This week I actually heard a "lawyer joke" that was funny and supportive at the same time.

It seems this man found a bottle on the beach, and a genie popped out when he picked it up. "For freeing me, I will grant you three wishes," said the genie. "Oh boy," exclaimed the lucky man. He thought for a moment. "For my first wish, I wish for a world without lawyers." Upon blinking, the genie proclaimed "Your wish is granted. There are now no more lawyers." The man was happy, but then the genie said "I will now leave. My work is done here."

"Wait," cried the man. "What is going on? You promised me three wishes." To this, the genie simply replied, "Sue me."

The prosecution rests, your honor… ML