

INSIDE: Recognizing and Managing Stress and Personal Stories of Balance and Crisis

Delaware Lawyer

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Andrew W. Gonser, Rosemary Killian, Loretta Young

"Who knows when some slight shock, disturbing the delicate balance between social order and thirsty aspiration, shall send the skyscrapers in our cities tumbling?" — Richard Wright

This issue of *Delaware Lawyer* is about maintaining a balance between the inherently stressful nature of practicing law and maintaining a healthy mental and physical disposition. It provides information from experts about the symptoms of stress, the current remedies in use, guidance about the warning signs of imbalance and some advice on how to commit to maintaining balance.

The experts include a practicing psychologist and two professionals who have extensive experience in assisting Delaware attorneys in coping with stress. The experts provide information about the type and sources of help that are readily available in Delaware right now and some that will be available for Delaware attorneys in the near future.

The issue also includes two essays written by Delaware lawyers on what happened when their careers became all-consuming and they failed to manage the stress in a healthy way. Those attorneys describe what it is like to crash, the physical or mental price they paid, and how hard it is to restore the balance. They both write with an unusual candor and in an effort to warn the rest of us.

The other articles in this issue describe attorneys

successfully striving to keep their lives in balance. These attorneys, who run the gamut from the managing partner of a large law firm to a full-time volunteer, intersperse extremely busy work schedules with widely varying interests — professional sailboat racing, hot air ballooning, thoroughbred horse racing, flying, teaching, and juggling a family of young children.

A consistent theme for each of them is that time for activities other than work must be made a priority.

We hope that as you read these articles you will examine the balance of your own work life. Maybe you will resolve to spend more time with your family, on the golf course, volunteering, walking, or even just napping in order to protect both your life and your happiness.

As this issue shows, there are many ways to successfully balance a busy schedule so that you remain healthy, wealthy and wise.


Andrew W. Gonser


Rosemary Killian


Loretta Young

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EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Emotional distress and addiction costs the legal profession greatly. Left untreated, attorneys who suffer from these afflictions often end up losing their jobs, being suspended or even disbarred.

More importantly, however, emotional distress and addiction costs the individual greatly. Attorneys who struggle with untreated mental health disorders and/or substance abuse often end up losing their families, having their lives in constant upheaval or even taking their own lives.

In 1991, a study completed at The Johns Hopkins University found that out of 104 professions, lawyers ranked highest in rates of depression. Suicide rates among male lawyers are double the rate of that among the general male population.¹

Research has also found that upwards of 25% of attorneys facing disciplinary charges are struggling with their mental health and/or an addiction.² Frequently cited mental health struggles among attorneys are Depressive Disorders, Anxiety Disorders and Bipolar Disorder. Addictions can include substance abuse, gambling addictions and/or sex addictions. Any one of these can cause tremendous turmoil and chaos if left untreated.³

No matter how clichéd, the first step in seeking out help is to identify that there is a problem. Research indicates that the risk to one's mental health begins in law school, where 30% of students have been found to suffer from depression by the end of their spring semester. By their third year of law school, 40% of students were found to meet the criteria for clinical depression.

Clearly, research suggests that legal education offers limited preparation for coping with the high demands and iso-



lating aspects of the field.⁴ Therefore, it is up to individuals within the legal profession to commit time and effort to monitoring their own mental health and emotional well-being.

Common symptoms of depression are changes in appetite, irritability, suicidal thoughts, changes in sleep, confusion, social isolation, hopelessness, changes in sex drive, helplessness, memory difficulties, sadness, and feelings of worthlessness.⁵

Depression is highly treatable through ongoing therapy. Psychotherapy is the treatment of choice for depression. It provides a milieu in which one can identify the factors that contribute to depression and offers the opportunity to address the psychological, behavioral, interpersonal, and situational causes of depression.

Common symptoms of anxiety include restlessness, irritability, feeling on edge, muscle tension, easily fatigued, sleep disturbance, difficulty concentrating, ruminating, and panic attacks.⁶

Panic attacks often result in sweating or shivering/shaking, trembling, heart palpitations or racing, pains in chest or abdomen, dizziness, fear of losing control or fear of death.

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms to a degree that they

interfere with daily life activities, you may be suffering from a stress-related disorder but you will need to see a professional to diagnose the exact source of your symptoms. It is critical to seek help from a licensed mental health professional who has training and experience. Medication may be used in combination with psychotherapy. Given the potential side effects of medication it is important that psychopharmacological treatment be monitored closely by the prescribing physician (preferably a psychiatrist).

Early experiences of anxiety can often leave one feeling as though an environmental element is the precipitant of the anxiety. For example, if one gets anxious when going to work, the office can become associated with the panic and seen as the cause of it. Therefore the individual avoids going to the office when the true source of their anxiety may actually be the fact that they are overwhelmed by their workload, have limited time to complete their work, and chronic stress has depleted their physical health to the point of exhaustion.

The mind can pair the anxiety with some external environmental factor rather than associate it with its true cause. Left untreated anxiety can generalize to other circumstances and situations and breed on itself until the anxious symptoms become pervasive throughout one's life.⁷

Common signs of substance abuse include managing stress/sleep with substance use, blackouts, inability to control use, increased use/tolerance, using in morning to deal with hangover, hiding your use, feeling ashamed, loved ones voicing concerns, use interferes with functioning, and withdrawal symptoms when you stop using.

Treatment approaches for substance abuse vary from 30-day inpatient approaches to outpatient programs to individual therapy to 12-step programs (such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous). Most treatment professionals agree that abstinence is the goal in addressing an addiction and that determining the appropriate treatment of choice is specific to the individual.

DE-LAP (Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program) is an ideal place to seek assistance in finding resources. It is important to recognize that addiction is a progressive disease that will increase in severity and cause greater impairment and destruction the longer it is left untreated. Furthermore, the ability to recognize problematic substance use is difficult given that the mind of an individual addicted to a substance is preoccupied with the pursuit of using which grossly distorts one's perception of reality.

Emotional distress has been closely linked to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. There are clear biopsychosocial components to most mental health and addictive disorders. Biologically, we may be predisposed to having depressive features, anxious traits, or alcoholism based on our genetic makeup. Psychologically, our internal perceptions and coping skills can leave us vulnerable to increased symptoms of such disorders or can help ward off the presence of emotional struggles. Socially, the environmental forces with which we must deal can pose a further threat to our mental health. In combination, all of these factors influence the presence or absence of emotional dysfunction.

Clearly, chronic stress is costly. Its effects are preventable and unnecessary but require those within the legal profession to speak more openly about their struggles, if not publicly then with

trusted others, loved ones, and/or professionals.⁸ ♦

FOOTNOTES

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THE HEART AND SCIENCE OF STRESS

Everybody is talking about stress. News sound bites constantly remind us about the harmful consequences of living with too much stress. Stressed-out doctors tell stressed-out patients to slow down the pace. Stressed-out lawyers talk to stressed-out doctors about the pressure cooker world of unending cycles of... yes, stress. It seems that the need to deal with stress only causes additional stress. So what is a lawyer to do?

Let's Define Stress

According to Paul J. Rosch, M.D., F.A.C.P., President of The American Institute of Stress, and Clinical Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at New York Medical College, "Stress is difficult for scientists to define because it is a subjective sensation associated with varied symptoms that differ for each of us."¹

Dr. Rosch believes that stress does not always cause distress, and sometimes it can actually make us feel good. This good stress, also referred to as eustress, a word that was coined in 1975 by Canadian endocrinologist Hans Hugo Bruno Selye (1907-1982), provides us with drive and fuels our competitive spirit and will to achieve.

Many litigators who love their jobs get the satisfying feeling of eustress when appearing in court, for example. Others may feel nervous and anxious at the same situations, which is a classic case of distress. Recognizing the distinction between the two is extremely important because the effects of ongoing distress are harmful, as they play havoc with our bodies, minds and spirits.



The question to consider, therefore, is how can we tell when eustress becomes distress, and the answer, according to most experts is not clear-cut, is highly subjective, and is described in emotional terms. In other words, eustress produces joy, exhilaration and an all-around good feeling, while distress brings about anger, anxiety and frustration.²

Allow distress to linger unendingly and without a break, and these feelings will quickly lead to physiological and mental changes turning dis-tress into dis-ease.

Why Does It Happen? Where Does It Come From?

Stress has been with us from the beginning of time. It creates an automatic response, hard-wired into our brains by the evolutionary process as a means to assure the survival of our species and protect us from bodily harm. That response prepares us to either "fight" or "flee" from any perceived threat to our survival. Encyclopedia Britannica defines the fight or flight reaction as "an acute threat to survival that is marked

by physical changes, including nervous and endocrine changes, that prepare a human or an animal to react or to retreat."

When our autonomic nervous system detects what it perceives as a threat it puts us on alert within seconds. The adrenal cortex releases stress hormones which immediately start to bring about rapid changes, uncontrolled by will or logical thinking: our hearts begin to beat faster and harder; blood pressure rises; we breathe more rapidly; our metabo-

lism gets an automatic hormonal burst; our large muscles begin to receive an accelerated flow of oxygenated blood which is diverted from our digestive tract; and fat stored throughout our body is transformed into fatty acids to be used by our large muscles to help us escape and survive. The immune system reduces its efficiency, directing all energy into protecting us from the real or perceived danger.³

It is likely that we are here today thanks to these quick automatic responses that helped our distant ancestors survive.

If Stress Is A Survival Mechanism, Why Is It Killing Us?

The answer is found in the divergence that occurs when these primeval automatic survival instincts meet modern day life. The fight-or-flight response remains embedded in our DNA while the real physical threats to our existence, at least those that can be helped by fighting or fleeing, have all but disappeared.

In our daily lives today, when the fight-or-flight response is triggered, it

is mostly a false alarm that is initiated because our brain cannot distinguish between an actual and a perceived threat. Throughout each ordinary day, minor annoyances, approaching deadlines, interruptions, and computers or phones sounding the tone of an incoming email, place our bodies on notice to be physically ready to fight or flee.

The problem is that we have no need to do either and the physical tension remains in our bodies without an outlet, keeping us in a state of high alert.

With no place to go, these forces churn in our bodies, eating us from within. This perpetual internal agitation creates a long list of harmful events that cause damage to the heart and circulatory system, as well to other organs, including the brain.⁴

The Impact of Remaining in an Ongoing State of Excessive Stress

The moment we imagine that we are at risk, illogical as it may be, our sympathetic nervous system springs into action and causes chemicals, such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol, to be pumped into our bloodstream bringing about the described physical changes.

If a person is indeed in a physically challenging situation, whether running to save a life or running a marathon, these physiological changes will serve their purpose by giving the heart, the brain and the muscles the ammunition they need to deal with the challenge.

When the threat has been eliminated, these reactions will abate, the body will relax, and all functions will return to a state of calm. However, in our modern-day lives, and in the legal profession in particular, these episodes of fight-or-flight stress may have become counterproductive. Most of the "threats" lawyers perceive are mental demands, requiring neither fight nor flight.

Major physical and mental problems crop up when we are forced to control

our internal physical response when dealing with these mental stressors. All the pressure must go somewhere, especially if the mental stressors do not abate, often causing a person to become aggressive, short-tempered, and sometimes downright dangerous to himself and others.

At the same time, inside the body, the unneeded raging blood flow, the constantly high blood pressure levels and the rapid heartbeat increase tension on the walls of the blood vessels, especially the coronary arteries. The constant pounding eventually injures the walls and linings of these arteries causing damage that worsens the longer the assault continues.

Our bodies rush to heal the injured arteries, creating scar tissue at the wound sites, which thickens the walls of our blood vessels and actually causes further damage.⁵ Other parts of our body also suffer the consequences of unrelenting stress, and there isn't a lawyer who is unfamiliar with some, if not all, of those signs: persisting headaches, migraines, an irritated digestive system, persistent high blood pressure, chronic fatigue, depression and more.⁶

How Do The Effects Of Stress Impact The Lives Of Lawyers?

It takes great physical and mental efforts to meet the demands of the legal profession. If your stress levels go unchecked and unabated day in and day out, large amounts of secreted cortisol may become toxic to brain cells, causing exhaustion, resentment and even depression.

The immune system's ability to protect against infection and illness will be compromised. Prolonged elevated blood pressure, injured blood vessels and rapid heart rate will cause permanent damage to the heart and the circulatory system.⁷ Diminished blood flow to the digestive tract will cause changes that can bring about ulcers.

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and remain in the bloodstream can cause plaque inside blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as diabetes.⁸

How Can Lawyers Minimize these Damages?

We must recognize that cutting down on the daily workload is not an option for most lawyers and that the crazy pace of instant communications originating with new technologies is bound to get worse. We can also assume that everyone wants to live a long life in a healthy body, enjoying an alert mind and a joyful spirit. Therefore, lawyers must find effective solutions that can be woven into busy lives that have few interruptions.

According to Dean Michael Ornish, M.D., President and founder of the Preventive Medicine Research Institute, and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, coronary artery disease can be improved and actually reversed by lifestyle changes.

His research demonstrated that adherence to intensive lifestyle changes improves coronary artery health and decreases the occurrence of cardiac events. It also showed that if adherence to lifestyle changes continues for five years or more, the improvements continue to multiply. Lifestyle changes, according to Dr. Ornish, should include a low-fat vegetarian diet, regular exercise, meditation and stress management.⁹

These recommendations are familiar to everyone. Unfortunately, merely knowing them will not yield the needed benefits and adopting them into the lawyer's lifestyle may not be easy.

Start slowly, taking one small step at a time. After all, since the aim is to reduce our bodies' reaction to stress, dealing with stressors should not be a stressful activity in itself. If you frequently pause for only minutes each day and concentrate on quietly breathing deeply for a few minutes, you will give



One expert
recommends lifestyle
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diet, regular exercise,
and meditation.

yourself enough breaks to allow your body to tame the unused and damaging forces of the fight or flight response before they inflict further damage on the heart, the circulatory system and on other vital organs.¹⁰

Adopting this method of breathing should lead to achieving what Dr. Herbert Benson, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard University Medical School, and founder of the Mind Body Medical Institute in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, describes as the Relaxation Response, an innate mechanism that he believes counteracts the effects of the automatic fight-or-flight reactions.¹¹

Another simple way to turn down the turmoil caused by the fight-or-flight response is by doing physical exercise. Get off your chair and move

about and do your thinking while walking around, climbing a few flights of stairs, or flailing your arms around.

The more you move your body, the more you release the pressures accumulated in it and effectively metabolize the excessive buildup of stress hormones. This will help abort the sequence of ensuing damages and will restore your body and mind to a more relaxed state.

There is much more that lawyers can do to help themselves maintain their health and avoid stress-related illnesses, including processes that must be learned and practiced in order to be effective. The Delaware State Bar Association together with the Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program plans to start a special Stress Management Support Program for lawyers and judges that will be open to all members of the Bar beginning in 2011. ♦

FOOTNOTES

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BALANCE vs IMBALANCE

For many it is almost a sense of self-importance or bragging rights to announce that they work long hours. For others, the time pressures, work overload and inadequate personal time, can cause them to feel unhinged. A large number of lawyers are experiencing an extreme case of imbalance and need to balance the heavy demands of the profession with other areas of life.

While evidence supports that hard work is good for the mind, body and soul, the boundaries separating professional and personal life have changed drastically. Lawyers contend with deadlines, work overload, billable hours, and inadequate personal time; now they must also deal with the advancement of technology.

Technological advancements, which promised more leisure time, have actually increased the pace by keeping lawyers “at the office” 24/7 through phones, faxes, e-mails, etc. Some confess they cannot unplug; they leave their devices on while they sleep so they can be accessible at all times.

Blueprint For Change or How Do You Spell Relief?

Whether it is voluntary or involuntary; big or little; sudden or gradual — many of us contemplate change to find relief. Change may range from minor everyday events to major life events. It can be about our behaviors or environment. When we are confronted with change, either through necessity or choice, we are being given an opportunity to redefine ourselves and to choose an outcome that will allow us to grow and to be fulfilled.

Accordingly, change is not something to fear or resist. By embracing and



promoting positive change, we learn more about who we are and what we can do. We can grow and gain confidence through change. Think about one area in your life that you need to cope with or change — do you have a blueprint for change?

In designing a blueprint for change, it is imperative that you know and understand different stages or processes involved in change: (1) Pre-contemplation, (2) Contemplation, (3) Preparation, (4) Action, (5) Maintenance and (6) Termination. Knowing these stages to change is important, but understanding the process is imperative.

Pre-contemplation

Your normal behavior is based on the mental map you have of your own personal world. You may or may not even be aware of the want or need for change; in this stage the individual often plays a game with their defenses. Rather than welcoming the process of change, an individual might deny the need for it by minimizing and justifying the behavior or situation.

Think of it as a football game: your team has the ball on offense and the de-

fense will do everything possible to stop you from scoring or even keeping the ball. Unfortunately, our personal defenses often do the same.

To design a blueprint for change and implement it successfully, we need to be aware and mount a strong offense against the defenses by implementing the following non-inclusive list: (a) become aware of defenses; (b) look for information related to problem behavior; (c) think about information from articles and books on how to overcome

the problem; (d) read about people who have successfully changed and (e) recall information people have personally given about the benefits of changing problems.

Contemplation

During this stage, our emotions and voices are often across the board. We search for absolute certainty that we should change. Some may wait for the magic moment or awakening while others may indulge in wishful thinking and even premature action.

At some point, however, generally the individual begins to return to consciousness and asks the right questions to design their own goals, collect the right data and do a mental analysis regarding their behavior and the real consequences to change. The individual simply does a self-reevaluation.

It is here that one may develop a positive attitude towards change and see the change as an opportunity and/or a challenge that will make them a stronger person. In the alternative, they may elect to wait for that “magic bullet” and do little to implement a successful change. Equally important, the indi-

vidual may own up to their own fears and/or excitement about the changes both to friends and themselves.

Preparation

In this stage of change, an individual actually prepares to make a change. One continues self-re-evaluation and turns away from old behaviors and makes a commitment. This stage includes, but is not limited to: making tough choices; dealing with the anxiety of those new tough choices, taking baby steps (action steps) toward change, setting a date for change, and developing a plan of action. We create a plan of action for action — our blueprint for change.

Action

We take our blueprint for change and start acting on it. Unfortunately during this stage, we usually encounter pitfalls. Perhaps we prepared too lightly or were unwilling to make the sacrifices to change our behavior or situations. Perhaps we are still looking for the myth of the “magic bullet” and the easy solution to our problem. Whatever the “perhaps,” it can destroy our efforts.

Fortunately, we can overcome pitfalls and implement the change we desire, no matter what the issue by finding an active diversion — exercising, relaxing, counter-thinking and being assertive. We can manipulate our environmental controls by avoiding old places, people (toxic) and things. Bottom-line, it is imperative that we be aware of our triggers and cues.

Equally important for successful change is the need to integrate life-skills such as assertiveness, time management, rational thinking and self-care, to remain balanced and remove temptations. This may be a good time to call

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in reinforcements and garner support from family, friends, support groups or professionals, and arrange substitutes for the missed habit or activity or substance. However, beware of substituting a new problem (over-eating, over-spending) for the old.

Maintenance

Maintenance is a way to strategize for on-going success and every blueprint for change should address it. One must be aware of the danger times and danger signs. Furthermore, one should remain vigilant against internal chal-

lenges such overconfidence, daily temptations and self-blame.

Remember too that it is about progress not perfection. Many individuals may “recycle” or move back to one of the previous stages. For them, success requires a second or subsequent attempt.

Many people benefit from learning the difference between a lapse and a total relapse (complete collapse back into the old way). Recognizing a lapse and taking immediate action can save the effort.

Termination

Depending on the person and desired change, total termination of the problem behavior may not occur. Instead, there may be a lifetime of careful maintenance. In other cases, the problem is conquered and temptation to renew the poor behavior ceases.

Confidence that one has really succeeded peaks after a year but temptation may continue for two or three years.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing symptoms of distress or if you know a lawyer (or judge) who is in need of confidential assistance, or if you want additional information on issues discussed in this article, please call me at (302) 777-0123 or e-mail cwaldhauser@de-lap.org. There is no cost to attorneys for DE-LAP services. ♦

FOOTNOTES

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TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE!

When planning and implementing a personal blueprint for change it is critical that you include the following keys to success:

- Take Time To Think: *It is the source of power.*
- Take Time To Play: *It is the secret of perpetual youth.*
- Take Time To Read: *It is the fountain of wisdom*
- Take Time To Pray: *It is the greatest power on earth.*
- Take Time To Love and be Loved: *It is a privilege.*
- Take Time To Be Friendly: *It is the road to happiness.*
- Take Time To Laugh: *It is the music of the soul.*
- Take Time To Give: *It is too short a day to be selfish.*
- Take Time To Work: *It is the price of success.*
- And remember, Life is a long and bumpy road. We each carry our troubles, like a heavy load. There are many hard turns and dead ends, but whenever we are stuck – we must try and try again.

Interview: C.J. SEITZ

Q: As the managing partner of a large firm how do you find the time to keep a balance between work and personal life?

A: Sometimes you can't. Right now, I am incredibly busy with a whole lot of litigation and some really serious cases. So it's been hard, but what you have to do is make an appointment with yourself to do non-work stuff and carve the time out during the weekends. My weekends are for work sometimes, but you have to carve out the time for your own sanity. Most of the time what I am doing is just really high-energy, crazy stuff which provides the balance for me in my life. Work hard and play hard.

Q: Do you find that you keep a pretty set daily schedule?

A: Probably the only thing that's really regular as long as I'm not in court or depositions is that I work out at the downtown Y every lunch. There's a big group that meets at the Y at lunchtime. I try to make an appointment every day to get there. I haven't been doing so well the last couple of weeks but that's kind of my daily thing. I tend to work at home after dinner until time for bed.

Q: One of your hobbies is sailboat racing?

A: Yes, it is professional sailboat racing. I've sailed the Newport to Bermuda yacht race 10 times. I've done countless other ocean races such as the Annapolis to Newport race. Races around Florida.



Races from Florida to the Bahamas and then probably the toughest race I've ever done was a double-handed race where just two of us sailed a boat from Marblehead, Massachusetts, to Halifax, Nova Scotia. And we did quite well, actually ended up beating a lot of the boats that were fully crewed. That's a real grueling thing to do when it's just two of you doing a three-to-four-day race.

Q: When did you start sailing?

A: I started very young, probably when I was 14. I started with a Sunfish and then graduated to bigger boats. So, when I was 16, I did my first Bermuda race on a boat that was called a Tartan 41 with a bunch of people from Wilmington. There was a guy named Bill Ferris, a Wilmington physician, and Bill Butler, who was a very famous veterinarian, and throughout the years a cast of many changing characters — doctors, lawyers, sailing diehards and business people — it's a great way to have made a lot of friendships. When you branch out to these larger ocean

races, you meet a lot of different people and it's a great group of people who enjoy ocean racing because it is such a hard sport in many ways.

Q: How many people are on the crew?

A: The crew is usually 10-to-12 people with a core of six or eight that have been sailing together for many years so there's lots of routine during practices, we

know each other, we know what to do pretty well.

Q: How does the race to Bermuda work?

A: Well, Bermuda is five-to-six days to get there. Racing 24-7, 670 miles from Newport, Rhode Island. We have a delivery crew that brings the boat back so I can spend time after the race with my wife for three or four days and then we fly back in two hours.

Q: What is your role on the boat?

A: I've been a navigator for many years. But also I have been tactician and helmsman. When I was younger I would do foredeck, which was all of the sail changes. It is really an exhausting, physically exhausting thing to do, but luckily as you go up the seniority ranks you can then go back to the cockpit and tell the younger people what to do. It's still a very physical thing when you are racing 24 hours per day and you are four hours on and four off watches so it's a great break from practicing law because Blackberries don't work out

there. No one can contact you. There is a satellite phone on the boat but for emergencies only. But there is no BlackBerry reception half-way to Bermuda.

Q: What is the most unique thing you have seen out on the water?

A: Well, when you cross between the mainland and Bermuda you have to cross the Gulf Stream. It's a river of water that flows at four-to-six knots and on the east coast side of it, the water temperature is usually in the 60s, and you hit the Gulf Stream and the water temperature jumps up into the 80s and the whole world changes. It's like going to the tropics when you cross this river and then on the other side of that the water temperature is in the high 70s or 80s and everything becomes tropical. So in the race the first night or two out you're wearing coats and staying warm and then you hit the Gulf Stream and all of a sudden the water temperature is 80 and hot. And it's all full of life. You see sharks and porpoises and fish and different kinds of whales. There's also something called St. Elmo's fire. It's a static condition where, for example, the rigging in the boat lights up with this dancing fire. The sailboat rigging looks like it is on fire.

Q: What other hobbies do you have?

A: Another really fun thing I do is long-distance bicycle riding. My wife and I and other friends rode from our house in Delaware to our house in northern Vermont on our bikes. It covered 530 miles. So that was one of our big adventures. We did that in six days — door to door. We started in Delaware and rode to New Hope, PA. Then we rode straight up the Delaware River to a town called Milford, Pennsylvania, which is right where Port Jervis, New York, is. Then the third day we cut across New York State and went across the mid-Hudson Bridge and stayed around Poughkeepsie and then



I started flying to turn an eight-and-a-half-hour drive into a two-hour flight. It was also something completely different than practicing law.



the fourth night we rode up to North Adams, Massachusetts. Then the fifth night we stayed in southern Vermont and then day six rode through to our house in Stowe, Vermont.

Q: Have you done any other bike trips this year?

A: My wife and I and another group rode what's called The Longest Day, about 100 people do it every year. Ten of us rode from Port Jervis, New York, to Cape May, New Jersey. So it's the length of New Jersey. We did it in one day — 208 miles. To prepare for the ride we'd go bike riding on Sunday mornings. Usually the training rides were 130 miles or so. We also did a ride we named the Bi-Country Tri-State Ride. We started in Vermont, rode down to New Hampshire across the Connecticut River, rode up the Connecticut River through the northeast edge of Vermont into Canada, around Jay Peak and around the other side and down the New York side of Lake Champlain and back up the Vermont side.

One of the really crazy events I did last summer was a bike race straight up Mount Mansfield in Stowe, Vermont. When I say straight up it's called Race to the Top of Vermont. It's 4.3 miles uphill starting at the bottom of the mountain. We've had a house up in Vermont for a long time. My family, my kids are all skiers, and two of our kids went to college and law school in Vermont. I started flying to turn an eight-and-a-half-hour drive into a two-hour flight. It was also something completely different than practicing law. ♦

Collins J. ("C.J.") Seitz, Jr., is the Managing Partner and Chair of the Technology Committee at Connolly Bove Lodge and Hutz, LLP. He represents clients in a variety of areas including corporate and commercial litigation, intellectual property litigation, arbitration and mediation, mergers and acquisitions and trust litigation.

Profile: STUART GRANT



Lawyers are most afflicted by lack of work-life balance because success is measured by the quality of service provided. We place a heavy professional obligation on client interests, to the point where client interest often trumps self-interest. Our plight is recognized nationally and we are sometimes portrayed as the “Bob Cratchits” of the legal profession, chained to our desks and forced to forego time for outside interests, family and friends.

When scouting writers for the Life-Work Balance issue, we needed someone who worked furiously but knew when to quit and (for even more interest) had some intriguing stress-relieving hobbies. We found a person with his own amazing sense of balance.

“Good Morning, Let the Stress Begin!”

Stuart M. Grant hits the ground running. On his way to work, he’s on the phone doing business. He’s a managing partner who still writes briefs, tries cases, and travels out of town regularly; supervises and teaches new attorneys; and recently traded his evening teaching position for a student desk in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Delaware.

He’s one of Delaware’s biggest politicians, running campaigns and being the “go-to guy” for candidates. He’s a husband (married to the same woman for more than two dozen years) and father of a college-aged daughter and two sons at home.

He’s very active in his children’s lives, attending their sports events (coaching his daughter’s travel soccer team until

she left for college) and sharing all the other aspects of his life with his family.

In his “spare time,” he is very active in his successful thoroughbred breeding and racing venture, The Elkstone Group.¹

A Typical Day at the Office

“There is no typical day at the office,” he quips. “You do what you have to do to meet client needs. Some days it’s a lot, some days it’s less.”

When he started at Skadden, he never wondered how long his days would be. He only worried about who was going to teach him what he needed to know to learn his trade and how soon that would happen.

A self-described “dinosaur,” he is not impressed when prospective associates ask about life-work balance issues. He wants them to come to work with voracious appetites for knowledge and to dedicate whatever time it takes for them to become more proficient in the law and better at managing their time.

Never afraid of hard work, he would leave Brooklyn every summer for the Catskills. At age 15, he’d work as many hours as he could. He wants his children to have the same work ethic in the

hope that they will learn valuable lessons from their experiences.

Life-work balance may be the mantra of law school hatchlings, but it is not going to get you a desk on the 21st floor of Grant and Eisenhower. He scoffs at the question, “Would you be willing to accept 20% less salary for a 20% decrease in work?”

He shoots back, “How does that translate in real

life? We aren’t making widgets. I don’t have clients who are willing to accept 20% less effort in exchange for a 20% reduction in their bill. ‘Your brief needs some final touching up, but we’re not doing that and you can save 20% on your bill’...”

He also says, “I don’t need to be still. Inertia is death.” He regularly paces the sidelines, talking to clients on the phone, while watching his son’s soccer game, stopping the conversation often to heartily scream, “Down the line,” “Keep your shape,” or “Nice tackle” to his son.

He’s available to clients and colleagues 24/7, but there may be cheering or whinnying in the background.²

A Politico

Stuart’s involvement in politics has been extensive both here in Delaware and on a national level. Stuart is on the National Advisory Board of the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

He was the Finance Chair for Governor Markell and remains a trusted advisor to both the Governor and Attorney General Beau Biden.

But while Stuart might be front and center at these many political events, you can almost always find his wife by his side or his children in the background.

His daughter's college dorm room is adorned with photos of her with the President, Vice-President and Senators from the numerous times she served as her dad's "date" at political functions in Washington.

Rarely a week goes by without Stuart on the phone with some Senator or Congressman sharing ideas.

A Second Major Interest

About 10 years ago, the firm he began with Jay Eisenhofer was starting to prosper. The slots had infused the race-tracks with new money, which pumped up the purses and made investing in a racehorse a viable option.

So, the boy from Brooklyn claimed his first horse, a gelding named Mt. Moran, and stepped into the world of racing.

It was a good year for that horse and Stuart wondered, "What if I had more than just one?"

He got another, and then another after that. His fourth horse, Distinct Vision, still holds the Delaware Park track record for a mile and 70 yards.

Coincidentally, at the time he was litigating a huge case in South Carolina, Stuart also had a few young horses in training a half-hour away. Weekend visits to watch his horses breeze provided a brief respite from long nights of preparation and grueling days in the courtroom.

Long story short, the case returned the largest judgment in South Carolina history, the farm went up for sale, and following a few fortuitous twists of fate, Stuart became the new owner of The Camden Training Center, which still plays a pivotal part in his business.

Elkstone Today

Today, Stuart owns a barn full of successful racehorses, most of which he bred or purchased at yearling sales, and that is something.

Breeding a successful racehorse is not as easy as it seems; while performance

may be predicted by bloodlines, bloodlines can be rendered meaningless by poor crossing, incorrect training, improper nutrition, or poor management. It is really a sequence of wise decisions (and lots of luck) that brings success.

Stuart is actively involved in selecting the stallions for his mares, "bringing up baby" and all of the important decisions to follow. He researches bloodlines, reviews the progress of his horses, and decides where and when they should race with the input of his trainers and staff.

It's really is another full-time job with another whole set of worries.

So...Where's the Balance?

I thought, "Wrong guy for this article...he's eyeball deep in work with no relief....stressful days at work followed by half-a-night of horse-related concerns and little time for his family."

Surprisingly, when asked to rate his stress level, he rated it about a five. His outlook on life, demeanor, and his expressions — none reflected high stress.

I confronted him about his schedule: "How do you keep this energy level up without feeling burned out?"

His answers were very enlightening and, contrary to initial impressions, it turns out that he has quite a bit of balance in his life.

His Own Sense of Balance

Stuart's internal operating system is like that of a car. Let it sit idle or turn the accessory key on without starting the engine, and it drains the battery. Engaging the engine keeps the battery juiced.

He has two kinds of stress in his life:

Good stress motivates and energizes, but only works when he has control over his situation. For example, moving through a stack of work is like stoking a fire. Accomplishment actually relieves the tension and moving onto the next task increases self-satisfaction and restores energy.

Bad stress comes into play when situational factors are outside of his control (i.e., incompetent or obstinate opposing counsel who is impeding resolution; or the computer goes down and you can't

put the brief together). He knows bad stress drains his energy reserves; accomplishments are blocked by an outside element and there's no re-energizing.

Although he's busy he manages to pack in a lot of family time by drawing them in, not pushing them away. You can often find Stuart's family attending significant hearings in Chancery Court. And why not? There is a good chance that a story about them will make its way into his argument.

If he goes to the racetrack to watch the horses, it's a family excursion. He takes his sons to watch the horses work on weekend mornings, to the debates or other political events, and he talks to clients at his son's sports events.

Everybody is always going somewhere, but they make it a point to do as much as possible together. While driving, he will often quiz his sons on their school work and in return his sons will quiz him and help him prepare for his equine reproduction test.

Being busy and working long hours does not automatically translate into a lack of balance. Multi-tasking, organization and prioritizing are key to finding quality time with family and friends and enjoying your favorite outlets.

Stuart emphasizes that you have to prioritize...cut out time-wasters like television (quizzed about primetime TV, he was clueless) and writing your own articles (interviews save time).

Stuart Grant is fulfilled, happy and very busy. His last piece of advice on achieving your balance?

"Before you turn out the light at night, always remember how fortunate you are and be grateful." ♦

Stuart Grant practices in the areas of securities and corporate litigation. He has been selected to Delaware Super Lawyers every year since 2007 and has been named to the Law Dragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America the past two years.

FOOTNOTES

1. At this writing, the Elkstone Group is third in the win standings at Delaware Park for the 2010 meet.
2. According to his mother, Stuart is a mensch.

Profile: GREGG WILSON

Most of us watch a fair number of sports events on TV, dabble at one or two in our free time, and a few of us even become proficient at one. Gregg Wilson doesn't watch much TV but he has managed to develop expertise in a wide variety of sports during his lifetime.

Gregg has had only four weeks vacation a year since joining the Bar in 1973 but he holds a commercial pilot's license, has decades of experience as a sailor, instructor status as a skier, runs as a hobby and recently was surfing in Hawaii.

Gregg has two enduring loves: his wife of 29 years, Shelly, a Wilmington Trust Company Vice President, and action sports. In high school, Gregg sailed with his family, swam competitively, pole vaulted and developed an interest in surfing. He learned to scuba dive in college and took advantage of a college R.O.T.C. flight program, receiving his private pilot's license in 1969. Skiing didn't become a passion until he was in law school.

Gregg's expertise as a pilot extends beyond a private pilot's license. He holds a flight instructor's license, a commercial and air transport pilot's license, and jet-type rating (which qualifies him to captain a charter or commercial flight). As a member of the staff of Flight Safety, Inc., he helps train pilots on the Hawker corporate jet. He has a share of ownership in a Cessna 172 and flies mostly for long weekends in the eastern US with Shelly and friends.

In the early 1990s, Shelly made the mistake of taking Gregg on a hot air balloon flight as an anniversary gift. Following that trip he obtained a Com-



mercial Lighter than Air license, which permits him to instruct in the art of ballooning, and purchased a balloon in 1994.

In the decade between 1995 and 2005, he partnered with Happy Harry's Drugstores to give free tethered balloon rides at charity events. He also has had other unusual balloon flight experiences such as throwing out the first pitch at a Blue Rocks game and flying a bride and groom out of their wedding reception.

When time and weather permit, Gregg inflates the balloon, gathering up a small group of friends who ride and chase the balloon across the local countryside. Gregg says he loves the balloon because it provides a unique perspective from the air and looks like a huge floating toy, which evokes a positive reaction from the people below. He finds ballooning the perfect therapy for his type-A personality because it makes him relax and go where the wind takes him.

During law school Gregg taught himself to ski and became a part-time ski instructor at a Pocono resort in order to obtain free and frequent access to the slopes. During their courtship, Gregg taught Shelly to ski and over the past 29 years they have skied in Italy,

Austria and Switzerland, as well as all over Utah and Colorado. Gregg loves the spiritual experience of mountain scenery, the clear blue sky, and the silence of a new snowfall.

Much as they love sailing, Gregg and Shelly recently sold their 26-foot boat, recognizing that a lifetime on the water was taking its toll. Gregg sailed in high school but didn't have much time for sailing in college or law school. He succumbed again to the sport in the early years of his legal career and bought his own boat.

Most of his sailing has been on the Chesapeake Bay but he has sailed boats as far north as Newport and as far east as Bermuda. He even navigated a larger boat from the Bahamas to the U.S. without disappearing in the Triangle. He and Shelly are adjusting to golf as a replacement activity.

His "minor" sports interests, including scuba and running, have continued through the years on an intermittent basis. He dives in clear water in the Keys and the Caribbean every few years and in September won a 5K race in Maui in the 60-65 age group.

During the Maui vacation Gregg resuscitated yet another lost love — surfing. Although 40 years had elapsed since his last outing, he managed to get up on a rented board as others floundered around him, much to the amazement of Shelly and a group of onlookers who were startled to see an old, untanned guy make it on his first try.

Gregg's philosophy is "Why not?" — why not take advantage of every minute? Don't wait until tomorrow. Instead of watching someone else

Profile: CHARLIE BUTLER

Charlie's role as a single dad began in 2005 when Karen, age 50, suddenly died as a result of an arteriovenous malformation. Charlie and Karen were the parents of four children: Katie, then 19, and Chase, then 16, as well as Daniel and Julia, then 8 and 6, respectively. Daniel and Julia are siblings adopted from the Ukraine in 2003.

Charlie credits his close family and many friends for getting him through that devastating crisis, including the bar members who kept his practice afloat until he was able to resume work. He also was the beneficiary of the kindness of a particular stranger, Martha Brown, a senior citizen who insisted that she was compelled to take care of Charlie and his family.

Prevailing over his initial reluctance, Mrs. Brown, now called his "angel," functions as a substitute grandmother for the children, the steady hand for the household, the one who cooks the dinner in the evening and oversees the daily routine.

Charlie says he has the best job in the Attorney General's office. The upside of his work is that he has his fingers on the pulse of the justice system in Delaware. He is privy to secrets, new ideas and looming crises but is in a position to implement remedies and protect the public.

He admits that it is inherently frustrating to convince others to buy into new ideas but he takes the long view and says he is working on developing the extraordinary patience needed to make substantial and necessary improvements

within and without the justice system. He points to recently-passed drug legislation as an example of the patience needed to implement an idea whose time had come.

The downside of his job is that every day is packed with meetings, in between or because of the crises that occur daily in Delaware and in the AG's Office, with its more than 400 employees. Despite that, he says his current job has more flexibility than his solo practice because he is not at the daily call of the court and it is somewhat easier to carve out time to attend the kids' school activities. However, like all working parents, he knows that sometimes he is merely keeping the balls in the air.

Charlie says that he was more of a typical dad before his wife's death, letting her take the burden of decision-making about family matters, volunteering only when necessary. He enjoyed being with his children and he and Karen always made sure they chose work which permitted them to be home each night for dinner — but he readily admits that he let Karen set the routine and he was comfortable doing as directed.

Karen's death not only forced him to assume the unfamiliar burden of all family decision-making but also to carry that burden alone. These days Charlie tries to find opportunities to guide the older children and is directly involved with the little ones: he gets them up for school, supervises breakfast, doles out lunch money and permission slips, checks for clean faces and teeth and gets the kids out around 8 a.m. before he

heads off to work.

He checks on their school work, answers their questions and makes and enforces the rules, always wondering whether he is giving the best answer or using the most effective means, knowing he has no one else to consult. He is keenly aware that he alone is responsible for keeping his children on an even keel as they grow.

He says he doesn't feel sorry for himself because he knows that many people have suffered and are suffering far worse fates than his. He knows that he was married to an extraordinary woman, is blessed with wonderful kids, surrounded by the kindness of friends and family, and has been successful in his choice of a career.

Charlie finds a good balance in his life. ♦

Charlie Butler graduated from Salesianum and the University of Delaware before attending Catholic University Law School. In 1981 he began his legal career in a large Philadelphia law firm followed by two years at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. In 1985, he married Karen Johnson, a fellow Catholic Law graduate and relocated to the Delaware Attorney General's Office. He resigned in 1994 and joined Smith, Katzenstein & Furlow specializing in corporate work until 2000 when he moved to Arizona. In 2004, he returned with the family to Delaware where he opened a solo criminal practice. He closed that practice in February 2010 when Attorney General Biden appointed him Chief Deputy.

GREGG WILSON (Continued)

have fun in sports on TV, why not go outside yourself and have fun. He feels that it is important to stay active in diverse areas to keep a balance in life and that improving skills is the only way to keep them from slipping backwards.

So Gregg's future holds more flights,

more skiing, more running, more golf. And at age 61, perhaps surfing should be added to increase that diversity. ♦

Gregg Wilson became a member of the Delaware bar in 1973 following graduation from Dickinson Law School. He attended Mt. Pleasant High School and the

University of Delaware. He has been in private practice, did stints as both a prosecutor and a public defender, spent more than 20 years as a civil litigator and was the long-time manager of all major civil litigation for the State of Delaware. County Executive Chris Coons appointed him New Castle County Attorney in

Profile: CARL SCHNEE

Carl Schnee has had an intense involvement with the Delaware community from the date he relocated here after law school almost five decades ago. He retired from the active practice of law in 2006 but only adjusted the content of his schedule, not its duration.

Carl immediately began full-time unpaid work as the Special Assistant to the President of the statewide YMCA and is teaching three courses at the Ousler Institute at the University of Delaware, where he instructs on current and past history to wait-listed classes.

Carl has been married to Doris Sortman, a Wilmington native and retired social worker, for 52 years. She was the reason he became a member of the Delaware bar following graduation from law school. He has always been a Type-A personality — early to rise, full of energy, good humor and good manners, religiously keeping to a six-day-a-week work schedule.

At the same time he was involved in a myriad of important civic activities such as spearheading the construction of the New Castle County Children's Detention Center, Chairman of the Board of the Child Advocacy Center, Chairman of the Board of the Delaware Art Museum, and Chair and long-time appointed member of the Criminal Justice Council, among many others. In 2000, he received a Masters Degree in Liberal Studies from the University of Delaware.



Photograph by Jim Graham. Courtesy of the Delaware Community Foundation.

Carl found a counterpoint to the long hours of his professional life in regular vacations with Doris and his three children, as well as in the companionship of a large, and still growing, group of friends and acquaintances.

He made time almost daily to run, biked frequently and spent many vacations hiking in Colorado. He was a regular participant in local charity races and biked in RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa) for 15 consecutive years. Doris kept his social calendar full and the couple made regular appearances at charity and art events in Wilmington.

Carl says that he thoroughly enjoyed his 44 years practicing law but his new jobs are a little more rewarding. His current activities impact long-term public concerns and put to use the knowledge, expertise and friendships he developed during the prior five decades of civic activity.

He explains this by saying that what he did as a lawyer was to solve the immediate problem for which he was hired, whether or not that solution affected larger, long-term public con-

cerns. His new career marshals his expertise to create immediate solutions to public issues where the benefit can be obvious.

As an example, Carl points to the problem of the aging-out of foster children. He has been involved in that issue through his position at the YMCA, his years-long relationship

with the Department of Children, Youth and their Families, his connection to the James Casey Foundation, and as a member of the Delaware Center for Justice.

Those groups recently helped effect changes in law and policy that resulted in assistance to children who previously had been summarily removed from economic support and shelter at high school graduation or the age of 18. The benefit to those children is immediate and obvious and has a corollary benefit to the society in which those children must take their place.

While Carl no longer bikes and runs and may mourn his physical losses, he is happy and productive in his retirement career as he continues a lifetime of contributions to his adopted community. ♦

A native of Philadelphia, Carl Schnee graduated from Villanova Law School in 1961. He joined the Delaware Bar in 1962. He has done both civil and criminal work, first as a solo lawyer, then as a member of several successful partnerships. He was the first First Assistant Public Defender in 1965, ran for elective office, and is a former U.S. Attorney for Delaware.

Leo J. Ramunno, Esq.

RETURN FROM THE EDGE

As a sole practitioner for years, I did not realize the toll the stress of the job and its long hours takes on the human body. In September 2007 I was rushed to the hospital with chest pains and was diagnosed as having a heart attack.

I was told that I had a total blockage of three arteries and a 90% blockage in the fourth. My condition required an immediate quadruple bypass.

My unthinking response to this urgent announcement was that I couldn't have surgery since I had to be in court the next morning.

I was kept alive with a pump moving the blood to my heart until the surgeon could operate. My family was told that without the surgery I would not survive.

After the eight-hour bypass operation, I was sent to the recovery room where I experienced internal bleeding and had to go back into surgery. Following that surgery, I was placed in a medically-induced coma for nine days during which I developed pneumonia, requiring the use of a ventilator.

It was a surreal experience to briefly come out of a coma and find that I was restrained and could not talk and that I was without knowledge of where I was or what had occurred.

When I was finally brought out of the coma, I looked at my chest and realized that I had undergone open-heart surgery. I asked for a glass of ice but, to my dismay, when it was given to me I was not able to hold it and it fell all over me.

I remained in the hospital for a few days to start my rehabilitation. The first time I was taken out of the bed I could only walk 20 steps and was wobbly, winded and weak. After I was a little better I was released, leaving with 12 different medications and an arrangement for home visits from a nurse for the next month.

My recovery seemed very slow and I was surprised how much of my strength I had lost. I went to physical therapy but still couldn't resume a normal work schedule for almost four months. It took almost a year to fully recover.

I now take several medications, get regular blood tests and visit my cardiologist twice a year. I was told that the bypass would last at least 10 years, which, at 53 years of age, is not very reassuring.

I was sometimes working until 2 a.m. several days a week, in the office on holidays, eating out of my car on the road, and not taking care of myself. I was doing real estate settlements at clients' houses throughout Delaware; at times I would drive down to Sussex County two and sometimes three times a day.

These days, I try to take care of myself more and take medication every day. I'm grateful to be here. This battle has changed my outlook on everything. Now I do not stress about anything and I am in a happy place.

All around, I see young lawyers doing the exact same things that I did. I want to tell them that they really need to take better care of themselves and not to stress so much over the job, or else they will wind up like me.

I am the father of six children and I plan to be around for a very long time. I want to walk my now nine-year-old daughter down the aisle someday and get acquainted with my new grandson and meet my future grandchildren.

This experience has changed my life forever and I now know how priceless and delicate life is. ♦

Anonymous

HOLDING ON

I am a grateful alcoholic and I practice law in Delaware...and I am not alone.

I can hear you saying, "What in the hell is a 'grateful alcoholic?'" I'm grateful because I am now sober and I understand the disease of alcoholism — but I am still an alcoholic.

Now, you are probably saying, "What a crock, calling alcoholism a disease!" The American Medical Association has recognized alcoholism as a disease for more than 50 years. According to the American Bar Association more than 15% of all lawyers abuse or are abused by alcohol. In the general population, nine percent suffer from alcoholism.

At Alcoholics Anonymous, we tell our stories by sharing our experiences, strengths and hopes. I was a "normal" social drinker until my 40s. Sure, I sometimes got drunk at a party at home, but not at social or work functions.

Oddly, the more important I thought I was as a lawyer, the more I drank. And the more important I thought I was, the more I felt I needed to be perfect and to always be in control.

By the time I reached age 45, my routine was to come home from work and to have a drink before dinner, followed up by many drinks until I would fall asleep in a chair.

My wife began to be concerned and demanded I cut back on my drinking. It's said that being an alcoholic is a lot like having spinach caught in your teeth — everybody else sees it before you do. To get my wife off my back, I began drinking non-alcoholic beer in front of her and hiding my whiskey in the garage.

I suddenly began visiting the garage more frequently. She would catch me drinking and I would deny it and tell her she was crazy.

At one point my wife demanded that I do something about my drinking or she was going to leave me. I contacted another lawyer that I knew was in Alcoholics Anonymous because he had told me about his drinking days. We teamed up and I went to my first AA meeting — and stopped at a liquor store on the way home. After going to three more meetings (and knowing my wife knew nothing about AA), I came home and declared myself "cured."

For 18 months, I continued to drink in my garage, in my office, in my car and just about
(Continued on page 24)

any other place except inside the house. Every morning I would tell myself, “I’m not going to drink today” and every night, after finishing off a pint of whiskey, I would tell myself, “This is the last time that I’m going to drink.”

My drinking continued to get worse. Alcoholism is a cunning, baffling and powerful disease and I had lost the ability to control my drinking. I knew I had a problem with alcohol but no amount of willpower, knowledge or desire to stop was keeping me from heading to the liquor store.

It got worse...I began having a drink in the morning just to stop my hands from shaking when sober. I had progressed to the point that I was a “maintenance drinker.” I would “black out” and have no recollection whatsoever; sometimes I would come out of a black-out while driving and I would have no idea where I was or how long I had been driving.

I was never sober — how the people I worked with didn’t notice was astonishing to me. I later found out many of them had noticed but no one ever said anything to me or to anyone else. At this point I was drinking more than a liter of whiskey a day.

My wife had set up an intervention and she had brought in some heavy hitters including a judge and a priest. My spider senses were tingling and I knew it was coming. I did the only “right” thing that came to mind — I ran out to the liquor store and slammed down a pint of whiskey...and then I waited.

Of course, I had every excuse in the world why I couldn’t go to rehab — big trial starting tomorrow, haven’t finished cutting the grass, and my car is due for an oil change. Every excuse I came up with, they had an answer for, including the big trial — a call to a co-worker and a continuance would be requested because of my “health.” I was so badly beaten from my drinking, and tired of being in denial, I finally agreed to go to a “rehab.”

I went and after 28 sober days, I thought my alcoholism was arrested. About six weeks after leaving the rehab,

I was drinking again. One Friday night I started drinking and went into a black-out. I obviously continued to drink in the black-out because the next thing I remember I was coming out of it at the Christiana Hospital. It was Sunday night and I had wrecked my car; I am grateful it was a one-car collision and no one else was hurt. My blood alcohol level was 0.33% — almost four times above the legal limit.

I went back to a different rehab and when I got out I drank the same night. I repeated this insanity two more times. On my release, I went to a “half-way house”; a place to make a transition back into living sober. My second day there I drank and was kicked out.

Not welcome at home and with no place else to go, I ended up in a homeless shelter. I had a laundry basket with clothes and a copy of the AA book. The homeless shelter had no shower or bath. I quickly learned to take napkins from fast food restaurants to use as toilet paper. I didn’t have enough guts to commit suicide, but I would have been happy to have been hit by a truck.

With nothing to do, I picked up the AA book. I was reading the story of Bill W. (one of the AA founders) and came across exactly the way I was feeling. Bill W. wrote “[n]o words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in the bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.”

How did he know, 75 years ago, what I was feeling? I thought I was unique. I thought I was different. As I’ve come to learn, only an alcoholic knows what it is like to be an alcoholic. “Earth people” who can drink responsibly have no idea what alcoholism is like.

A guardian angel was sent to rescue me. Carol Waldhauser, Director of the Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program, came and got me out of that homeless shelter. Carol and my wife found a “long-term professionals treatment program” in Nashville. My wife had cashed in some retirement savings she had to pay for the program because my health insurance

refused to pay for anymore treatment.

I finally got it. As my AA sponsor would say, “People who are lactose intolerant don’t drink milk.” It is a disease that compels me to drink even when I know that I can’t, and for this alcoholic it is easier to resist the first drink then it is to resist all the ones that come after.

Being sober isn’t always fun and I am now trying to clean up the wreckage of my drinking. My wife and I are separated. I lost the best job that any lawyer could ever have. I am back practicing law with a small firm. The ODC took action against me for “engaging in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice.”

Some people don’t talk to me anymore. My car has an ignition interlock device and if any alcohol is detected my car won’t start or continue to run. But having problems while sober is much better then adding alcohol to ensure it becomes a bigger problem.

I am grateful to Carol, she has become a dear friend. I am grateful to several lawyers who helped me through my legal issues. One charged me nothing; another served me at half his regular fee. Several members of the Delaware bench wrote me words of encouragement. I am grateful to the partners at my job for giving me another chance when no one else would.

I attend an AA meeting every day. I have new sober friends in AA who truly and genuinely care about me. I have an awesome AA sponsor who has guided me through the 12 steps. I go to an AA meeting every week that is for lawyers only. I belong to International Lawyers in Alcoholics Anonymous. I reach out to help other alcoholics.

Anonymity is required in AA and since I’ve talked about AA, I must remain anonymous. Otherwise I would have no problem putting my name to this article. I went to AA to save my ass — instead AA saved my soul. I am proud and grateful to be in AA and to be a practicing Delaware lawyer.

My hope is that one person with a drinking problem reads this and decides to reach out for help. ♦

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