

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING COMMUNITY

with

CLIFF ROE

As explained by Bill Santen in the July 2015 issue of the CBA Report, the Senior Lawyers Division is publishing a series of articles, each written by a veteran lawyer, seeking to reveal who the author really is, what s/he really wants in life, and how we are going to achieve an even better community.



This year I reached two milestones. I have been happily married for 51 years and a member of the Ohio Bar for 48 years. My earliest memories were of becoming a lawyer. My choices in high school and at Xavier University were always based on that goal. In the fall of 1964, my new wife and I started our life together at Notre Dame Law School. Since she was an R.N. and making the big bucks

(\$380 per month), I was able to study full time. At the end of my first year, we received a full scholarship/stipend and also a baby girl- the first of our six children.

One of the great things about my law school years was that everything was so inexpensive; you could exist on almost no money. We did. After law school and the birth of our second child, we were ready to move back to Cincinnati to start my legal career at a firm named Dinsmore, Shohl, Barrett, Coates and Deupree. At the time, the firm was comprised of 24 lawyers in total. I didn't do it for the money; my salary was \$700 a month.

When I started, I was lucky to be assigned to a legal area that was not yet taught in most law schools — federal securities regulation. The firm's long relationship with Procter & Gamble offered me experience in corporate law, corporate finance and the federal securities laws. In 1968, I was put on a team to work on P&G's divestiture of the Clorox Company, ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court. The 30 months I spent on the Clorox spin-off allowed me the opportunity to work with major New York law firms and underwriters. This experience gave me the foundation to launch my specialty as a corporate/securities lawyer that would last the balance of my career.

During the next three decades, from 1970 to 2000, our firm grew at a rapid pace. We had changed the culture of the firm in the mid-70s from a proprietary firm to a consensus-managed, transparent democracy. This occurred just as mobility hit the legal profession and lawyers started to change firms in droves.

The growth started in small numbers, then groups, then small firms, and then larger firms.

Although I continued to actively practice throughout these years, having extended my practice into banking and health care, I began spending more time managing our corporate practice and serving on our board, as well as negotiating our additions and opening offices in other cities. In 1997, I was elected managing partner of the firm and continued in that position for over 10 years. When I retired as managing partner, the firm had grown to 375 attorneys with nine offices in Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Our growth has continued over the last eight years and we now are a firm of over 625 attorneys with offices in 21 cities located in 10 states and in D.C. — a long way from the 24-lawyer firm that I started with 48 years ago.

So here I am, fully retired and loving it. I get to spend valuable time with my wife, children, and 21 grandchildren. I don't practice anymore, but I do work in a number of my favorite pro bono areas, which leads me to my conclusion.

I cannot stress enough the benefits I derived as a lawyer from contributing my services to our community throughout my career. In my opinion, lawyers bring special strengths and insights to whatever tasks they are faced with as a result of their training and experience. This is why lawyers end up in government, business, and many other important positions throughout our city and society at large.

Our community is currently faced with many serious challenges and every one of us needs to contribute our special skills in whatever way possible to meet these challenges. The great thing about Cincinnati is that it has always been a caring community, and it takes very little effort to find a proper place to serve. We all need to give back as members of (what I think is) one of the world's greatest professions. Little do "they" know that many of us would have practiced for free.

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