

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING COMMUNITY

with

NATE LAMPLEY

As explained by Bill Santen in the July 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.



“When Alexander saw the breadth of his domain, he wept ... for there were no more worlds to conquer.” Whether this quote is correctly attributable to the Greek historian Plutarch, or to the “Die Hard” villain Hans Gruber, it reflects much of what is wrong with our profession and our society as a whole. For many lawyers, the next “world” to conquer is the next big case, the next big client, the next big trial,

or closing the next big transaction. Unlike Alexander, we do not weep because there is always another world to conquer.

My name is Nate Lampley, and I was born in Hamilton, Ohio, in 1963. My parents were both born and raised in Troy, Alabama, but moved to Ohio in the 1950s to escape the most severe Jim Crow government-sanctioned oppression of the South. My father was a cook in the Hamilton Mercy Hospital kitchen for 40 years until his retirement in the 1990s. He never earned more than \$10 per hour. My mother was a nurse’s aide until she died at age 37 in 1974.

I am the seventh of eight children. I have five older sisters, one older brother and one younger brother. Although we never received public assistance—my father refused to accept it—we lived close to the poverty line for the majority of my childhood. Despite my socioeconomic status, I never felt inferior and I never felt sorry for myself. The city of Hamilton was a town filled with dedicated public school teachers, deeply involved athletic coaches whose best coaching took place off the court or field, community-minded clergy, concerned civic leaders, and charitable organizations like the Hamilton Community Foundation. I am who I am today in part because of the positive influence, the kindness, the encouragement, and the support that I received from each of these groups.

I earned full merit scholarships to attend the University of Dayton as an undergraduate and the University of Cincinnati College of Law. After clerking at the Butler County Prosecutor’s Office during law school, I began my career at Dinsmore.

I joined Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease in 1992. I was elected partner in 1998, and appointed as the managing partner of the Vorys Cincinnati office in 2006. I am a trial lawyer with an emphasis on business litigation and employment litigation. Although I have worked hard, I would not be where I am today without the support and encouragement of mentors: Frank Woodside taught me the importance of outworking my opponent. Dan Buckley stressed the importance of civility in teaching me how to be an effective *trial* lawyer (emphasis on trial).

I began this article with a reference to Alexander because seldom do I see examples of the support, the encouragement and the mentoring that made my world, and my life, possible. I encounter many young lawyers who only appear to be interested in conquering their next world. Either they have not been mentored, or they ignore the advice of more senior lawyers. Far too often, this “win at all cost” theme spills into their personal lives. They have no time, or they devote little time, to those community groups that played such an important role in my upbringing.

The CBA sponsors several programs that encourage leadership and mentoring. Although the Bar Association provides a wonderful start, I submit respectfully that we must do more. There are some local lawyers who are meaningfully engaged in mentoring and other benevolent activities, but not nearly enough. As lawyers, we sometimes forget how blessed we are to appear in a representative capacity on behalf of someone or some entity that needs our help. On a daily basis, we are entrusted with important matters such as life, liberty and property. This allows us to occupy an exalted position in society. Just like our clients, our community needs our help. The smallest acts of kindness from us mean so much to those who receive our time and our talents. Our profession and our city will be better if each of us commits to use the dignity of our office to build a better community by mentoring and volunteering, as opposed to conquering another world.

Lampley is managing partner of the Cincinnati office of Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease LLP.