

CREATIVITY

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Keep Professional And Personal Lives In Tune

Balancing work and life was a promise I made to myself

By Lawrence Savell

For me, a far more significant achievement than my 50th birthday this past December was my 25th anniversary of law practice this past September.

When I think back to that newly-minted first-year associate embarking upon his career path, I recall wondering (when I had the time) how things would turn out and whether I had what it took to succeed. But I also recall making a promise to myself that whatever sacrifices I would have to make (and there would be many) I would not lose the essence of who I was and my commitment to those who were important to me. It was, at its heart, a promise to balance my professional and personal lives.

Overall, I kept that promise, whether it meant working much of the Sunday night after a wonderful weekend with my young niece and nephew or seeing other close relatives and friends when possible. More recently, it meant using to the fullest the extensive remote access technology capabilities my firm generously affords which allow me most nights to get home in time to put my young children to bed before resuming work from my home office. And it also has meant pursuing my admittedly off-beat (in more ways than one) musical interests and efforts.

What I Learned At "Law Revue"

During my second year at the University of Michigan Law School (a similarly demanding existence), I had performed a few law-related parodies I had written at the "Law Revue" (not the "Law Review," which actually could help one get a job) alleged talent show. The reaction was emphatically positive, and not only did I perform again during my third year but I was also invited back as an alumnus.

When I joined my law firm—using my first paycheck to buy my first electric guitar, a Rickenbacker Model 360—I initially thought that performing there was out of the question. But ignoring the enormity of my student loans, I bravely got up at a firm holiday party, guitar (and career) in hand, and did a couple of my lawyer songs. To my great relief, they were very well received. I thereafter continued to perform at firm functions, sometimes with an in-house band I put together representing a cross-section of firm personnel.

Performance Gave Way To Recording

During periods when travel and other work requirements prevented my performing, I began recording my law parodies—and then completely original compositions—and producing vinyl records, cassette tapes, and CDs which I gave each holiday season to family, friends, colleagues, and people I met on airplanes.

Although it never dawned on me that someone might actually consider paying money to hear what I had done, in response to suggestions, I prepared my first independent commercial release, "The Lawyer's Holiday Humor Album," in 1998. I was very pleasantly surprised by the positive response from both customers and the press. Perhaps more significantly, some partners even asked me to send copies to their clients.

Since then, I have released three more CDs: "Legal Holiday" (2004), "Merry Lexmas From The Lawtunes" (2006), and my first non-holiday album, "The Lawtunes: Live At Blackacre" (2007). I get tremendous enjoyment creating them (which I do in my home studio, using spectacular music hardware and software to create the illusion of competence), and tremendous satisfaction from the fact that people seem to like them.

My albums, which are available either through my indie label site, [Law Tunes](#), or prominent online retailers, take on a broad range of subjects regarding lawyers, the law, the legal system, and related matters. These include life (and strife)

as a lawyer generally, both the commitments and sacrifices that are required, as well as the rewards.

We Have To Poke Fun At Ourselves And Pursue Our Interests

Although they are generally humorous, my songs are not demeaning or stereotype-promoting in the way that typical "lawyer jokes" unfortunately often are. My efforts are dedicated to the proposition that lawyers' zealous representation of clients and furtherance of the public good can be only enhanced by lawyers' healthy willingness to poke appropriate fun at themselves on occasion. I hope they encourage people to think a little differently about lawyers, and show that we are not necessarily humorless, boring, or incapable of self-deprecation. This in turn may help make people a bit more willing to approach a lawyer when they really need one.

I also hope that my songs illustrate the need for lawyers to take time to pursue their "after-hours" dreams, despite the increasing pressures, longer work days (and nights), and other factors that may make them think it is impossible—no matter how unrealistic those dreams may be. Being able to enjoy or express ourselves, or just blow off steam, makes us happier and thus better at whatever we do that actually pays our bills.

Looking back over my first 25 years at the same firm I joined fresh out of law school, I am proud that my career has progressed despite—and maybe to a small degree even because of—my somewhat unusual interest and pursuit. It would have been a real shame if that young, full-haired and narrow-waisted 1982 version of me had given up on his musical dreams because he somehow felt he had to.

Pursuing that dream has certainly entailed spending long nights with my products liability and media law litigation defense practice, but it has been manageable and worth it. And although, as "Dirty Harry" aptly put it, "A man's got to know his limitations," (and music-wise I certainly do), I appreciate the pleasure and enjoyment it has given me and others. But don't worry: I know it's a real safe bet that a Grammy with my name on it is probably not in the cards.

RESOURCES

[Law Tunes](#)