

## **William J. Bowe: Reflections on Life as a Lawyer**

After graduation from the University of Chicago Law School in 1967, I worked for a year at Ross, Hardies, O'Keefe, Babcock, McDugald & Parsons in Chicago's Loop. The firm represented the local natural gas supplier, so I learned a bit about utility regulation and finance. I enlisted in the spring of 1968 in the U.S. Army's Intelligence Branch for three years. This was immediately after the assassination of Martin Luther King and the resultant race riots in Baltimore, Washington and Chicago that had required the deployment of regular Army troops. I had had no interest in the Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps, as that was a four year hitch. I also figured that I'd be practicing law the rest of my life, so I might as well do something different in the service. I ended up in a stabilized tour in the Department of the Army's Counterintelligence Analysis Branch at the Pentagon in mufti.

Among other things, I worked on counterespionage and countersabotage studies related to the antiballistic missiles then (and now) under development. This took me out of Washington, D.C. to the U.S. Army Space & Missile Defense Command at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, hollowed out Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs, Colorado, home of the North American Aerospace Defense Command headquarters (NORAD), and the Kwajalein Missile Range on Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific.

During my Army service, I also spent time writing intelligence assessments dealing with the likelihood of the regular Army being called up to assist local police and state national guard units in controlling civil disturbances. Given the race riots and anti-war protests of the day, the Army sadly had plenty to do at home in the period 1968-1971, even with the Vietnam War going at full tilt. I later had the opportunity to testify before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee regarding legislation aiming to curtail domestic surveillance. This was just before the Committee's capable Chairman, Sam Ervin, turned his attention to the famous Watergate Hearings.

I joined Roan & Grossman, a law firm spin off from Ross, Hardies when I got out of the Army. It was then I began in earnest to learn my trade as a lawyer. My

decision not to go back to Ross, Hardies was fortuitous, because it shortly lost its main client and let go many of its lawyers. In 1979, I had the opportunity to go in-house to become general counsel of a large, direct marketing company. Before I realized it, I was on my way to becoming an intellectual property lawyer. The focus on trademark and copyright issues there primed me well to succeed my Law School classmate Linda Thoren Neal as General Counsel of United Press International in Nashville when she left to marry Phil Neal, our former Law School Dean. UPI had its legal peculiarities. There was plenty of libel litigation to manage and once I had to figure out how to bail out an unregistered satellite dish on the roof of UPI's Mexico City office after it had been "arrested" by the Federales. Alas, with the decline of afternoon newspapers in America, UPI slid into bankruptcy and I proceeded to receive the course in creditors' rights that I never took in the Law School.

About this time another Law School classmate of mine, Don Samuelson, wearing his headhunter's hat at the time, called to ask if I was interested in joining the pool of lawyers being considered for the position of General Counsel at Encyclopaedia Britannica. I successfully pursued the position and my wife Cathy and I moved back to Chicago in early 1986 with our two young boys. From a professional standpoint EB has been fascinating. Being a publisher buffeted by the shift from print to electronic delivery of its products, it has afforded me a front row seat to observe the adaptation of trademark and copyright law to the Internet. The resiliency of the American legal system and its ability to change to meet the challenges of disruptive new technologies never ceases to amaze me.

In addition to this postgraduate education in the trademark and copyright fields of intellectual property law, I've had the opportunity at EB to plum the mysteries of patent law and the organization of international businesses. EB also afforded me a chance to observe the Washington lobbying scene during my service as chairman of the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition. Beyond long time service as EB's General Counsel, Executive Vice President and Secretary, I also served brief stints as President of its film distribution company, Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, and EB's dictionary publishing subsidiary, Merriam-

Webster, Incorporated. Over the years EB also generously let me take an active role teaching at legal seminars on intellectual property topics.

Looking back at my professional training at the University of Chicago Law School and subsequent career, one thing in particular strikes me. Intellectual property law was pretty much of an afterthought in the curriculum presented to the Class of 1967. It was barely visible in the course catalog. Given the powerful shift of the American economy in the last decades from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, the rise in importance of intellectual property law in our economy has been dramatic. Though I haven't looked at the Law School's course catalog lately, I'm sure this change in our society is now reflected there.

This observation points to a continuing challenge of legal education: How do you design a curriculum for the world your students will actually be practicing law in? Since we can't foresee the future with complete clarity, we know it's not possible to always keep the curriculum ahead of the curve. So let's hope our gifted legal scholars on the Midway continue to focus in good University of Chicago fashion on teaching their students the basics: rigorous independent thinking and the necessary analytical processes that will let them fend for themselves as they confront unanticipated legal issues in a later era.

While these reflections mostly have to do with life as a lawyer since graduation from The University of Chicago Law School, a large part of my life has thankfully been taken up with other matters, including charitable and pro bono work and, most importantly, family. Certainly, no engagement with the working world compares with the satisfaction of having children who are some of the nicest people you'd ever want to know. While this has been largely the work of my wife Cathy, I have had great fun putting more than my own two cents into this game.

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