Judge Cohn at Age 89: “Why Stop?”

By Dan Shine

The question—an observation, really—seemed harmless enough. After all, it would seem reasonable that a man who says he “stood in awe” of federal judges as a young lawyer, who speaks of the “romance” of being a judge, who calls being a federal judge “the brass ring” and who—at age 89—shows no signs of retiring, would love his job.

But if the mild look of irritation isn’t a giveaway, the slight finger wag surely is.

“I never use the word ‘love,’ ” U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn, ’49, admonishes with a stern-yet-fatherly tone. “I always use the words, ‘I get great satisfaction.’ You can’t love this job because sometimes you do things you’re required to do, things that you’re not happy with.”

For example, imposing a criminal sentence required by law with no flexibility in the punishment.

“If the family is in the courtroom and hears you impose a criminal sentence of some severity, and then later were to hear you say, ‘I love my job,’ they would say, ‘That son of a bitch,’ ” he says.

That’s not to say a lawyer or two appearing in front of Cohn, the oldest active federal judge in Michigan, hasn’t muttered words to that effect once or twice. He has been known to dress down lawyers who appear in front of him unprepared or unable to match legal wits with him. But even those who have been on the receiving end of his ire praise him for his legal acumen, sensibility, and, most importantly, fairness.

Despite these admirable qualities, some remember the occasional, quick-fuse temper. To many—even his best friends—he is Oscar the Grouch with a gavel, a lovable grump.

“He can be cantankerous, but you can’t help but like the guy,” says Judy Cassady, who was Cohn’s case manager for 26 years.

Defense attorney and friend Steve Fishman says Cohn has, in Yiddish, “rachmones”—the milk of human kindness for his fellow human beings.”

“That doesn’t mean he can’t be irascible or abrasive,” Fishman says. “But he has a good heart, a big heart.”

Even Cohn cops to having a temper. In a 2005 interview, Cohn said then-Michigan Sen. Don Riegle was apprehensive about recommending him to President Jimmy Carter for the federal bench.

“Riegle was concerned that I lacked judicial temperament, and he was right. I still do,” Cohn told the interviewer. “I had never been a shrinking violet. I was militant, excitable, forceful, occasionally interrupted people, occasionally irritated people.

“I’m very result-oriented. I don’t suffer fools lightly or gladly,” he said back then.

Andrew Doctoroff, ’90, clerked for Cohn and says the judge had an exacting standard for writing and a strong personality. The son of a judge, Doctoroff adjusted to Cohn’s personality “when I learned that he was the judge and I was the clerk” and that his temper quickly blows over, “like a summer squall.” The two remain friends and Doctoroff says Cohn gives him guidance to this day.

Clerking for Cohn, Doctoroff says, “was one of the happiest professional experiences I ever had.”

“Medical School Dropout Becomes Judge”

Cohn was not always irascible. As a child, he had a happy-go-lucky upbringing typical of kids in Detroit in his era—riding bicycles and playing games in the streets, alleys, and vacant lots.

He graduated from Detroit’s Central High in January 1942 and immediately headed to Ann Arbor to begin classes at U-M. He was drafted into the Army during his sophomore year, but, instead of being sent to the front lines, he was put into a college training program designed to populate college campuses left thin by the draft.

Cohn was placed on the pre-engineering track and sent to a small college in Texas. When that program ended, he was switched into pre-med and sent to Stanford. From there he went to Loyola University’s medical school in Chicago. When the war ended, he gave it six more weeks before deciding medical school wasn’t for him. (When he was named a federal judge, the Detroit Free Press headline read: “Medical School Dropout Becomes Judge.”)

Cohn headed back to Ann Arbor and enrolled at the U-M Law School in September 1946 without an undergraduate degree—something possible for veterans with a certain number of college credits.

After graduating, he went to work for his father, Irwin Cohn, ’17, a well-respected Detroit lawyer (the “Cohn” in the Detroit powerhouse law firm Honigman Miller Schwartz & Cohn is Irwin, not Avern). While the father was active in Jewish causes, the son favored politics. Democratic politics, to be precise.

Cohn’s political interest might have begun when he was a young boy listening to the 1936 Democratic National Convention on the radio. As an adult, he was a key Democratic fundraiser in Michigan who played vital roles behind the scenes.
He also was active in community affairs, serving on the Michigan Social Welfare Commission, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, and the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners.

His political and community activities, along with his sterling legal reputation, got him appointed to the federal bench in 1979—a lifelong dream.

“If you’re committed to the profession, becoming a federal judge, in my view, marks the epitome of achievement,” he says.

Cohn has supported the Law School by endowing a professorship in his father’s name and supporting the library. He also funds the Cohn Summer Fellowship that encourages Michigan Law students to get involved in community service.

“I think lawyers have a community obligation,” Cohn says. “There’s always been an element of public service in the practice of law.”

He says while on the bench, his past community and political interests rarely come into play when rendering a decision.

“In 95 percent of cases, whatever your political persuasion or political background, judges are going to come to the same decision,” he says.

But where a judge was raised, his or her upbringing and beliefs—those intangible life experiences—can come into play, Cohn says.

“In those cases where a wide swath of the decision making is discretionary, your life experiences and your world outlook play a major role in your decisionmaking as a judge,” he says.

Outside of the law, Cohn is a voracious reader. His office at the Theodore Levin U.S. Courthouse in downtown Detroit is filled floor to ceiling with books. It’s as if his desk were dropped into the middle of the Law Library stacks.

He also is a fan of the arts, particularly the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT). He once paid $1,500 at a MOT benefit to have his name used in an Elmore Leonard novel. Soon thereafter, a character named Avern Cohn showed up in Leonard’s novel Mr. Paradise.

“There I am as a shyster lawyer,” he says with a laugh. “Those who know me know it’s a spoof. Those who don’t know me—what difference does it make? The only one who might have seriously been offended would have been my mother, and she was gone by then.”

The character did cause a letter writer to The New York Times’ Arts section—after the book was reviewed—to point out that there was a real Avern Cohn and he was a “universally respected judge.”

A follow-up letter writer let everyone in on the joke.

What’s no laughing matter is talk of Cohn’s retirement. That question is met with the same enthusiasm as the one about whether he loves his job. He uses a cane to get about but otherwise is as active and busy as ever.

“You don’t ask a federal judge when he’s going to retire,” Cohn chastises. “My brain’s working. I have some health problems that accommodate well in my work situation but are not conducive to doing a lot of traveling. So if I retired, what would I do?

“I view myself as doing a pretty good job,” Cohn says. “I don’t hear many complaints. So why stop?”

**ON DECISIONS AND MEMORABLE CASES**

“There may be decisions that, if you called them to my attention, I would call them a mistake,” Judge Cohn says. “But the business of judging requires decisions all the time, and if you start to look back and think about your mistakes, you’re going to get paralyzed eventually.”

He says once he makes a decision he moves on to the next case. If his decision is reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, that doesn’t mean he made a mistake, he says.

Still, “every time I’m reversed on appeal, I do go back and look at the decision in which I was reversed and decide if I was still comfortable with it,” Cohn says.

Here are a few cases Cohn says are memorable to him:

*Doe v. University of Michigan* (1989). Cohn’s decision to strike down U-M’s anti-hate speech code because it violated the First Amendment influenced similar regulations on college campuses around the country.

*The United States v. Jake Baker* (1995). Baker, a student at U-M, wrote stories on the Internet in which he fantasized about raping, torturing, and killing women. Cohn dismissed the charges against Baker, saying there was no evidence he would act upon his fantasies and his writings were protected free speech. A framed local political cartoon about the case hangs in the reception area of his office.

*Robert Kearns v. Ford Motor Co.* (1978). Kearns invented and patented intermittent windshield wipers, and successfully sued the Big Three automakers for infringement. “The case gave me training and experience in patent cases because it lasted five or six years,” Cohn later said. Cohn still has a small, gray, plastic wiper control box on his desk. Kearns’ saga was portrayed in the movie Flash of Genius. Alas, the judge in the movie was named “Michael Franks.”
1963

**John A. Scott**, of the Traverse City, Michigan, law firm of Scott & Huff, P.C., was presented by the Probate and Estate Planning Section of the State Bar of Michigan with The George A. Cooney Society Award for outstanding contributions to continuing legal education for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE). In 2011, he was awarded the Michael W. Irish Award for outstanding contributions to the estate planning profession and to his community. He has been a frequent speaker and moderator for the ICLE, and he began and later chaired for 20 years the Annual Drafting Estate Planning Documents seminar. He also served for many years on the Council of the Probate and Estate Planning Section of the State Bar of Michigan, and was chairperson in 2001–2002.

1968

**John Fischer**, partner at Peck Shaffer, has won a first-place award for his golf journalism in the annual International Network of Golf (ING) media awards. His article, “The Day Harry Vardon Came to Town,” recounted the legendary golfer’s visit to the Cincinnati Golf Club in July 1900. He is a frequent writer for golf publications, including *Golf Digest*, *Golfweek*, and *Golf Journal*, and previously won the International Federation of Golf Award for a *Golf Journal* article about the origins of the Walker Cup Match between the United States and Great Britain and Ireland.

1969

**John E. Dewane** was named a judge by the Michigan Supreme Court for the Business Court for the Berrien County Trial Court. Business court cases include those in which all the parties are “business enterprises,” as well as disputes between a business and individuals connected with it, such as employees, directors, owners, or shareholders. Some claims on behalf of or against a nonprofit also may come before business courts, as can cases about corporate governance, finance, organization, and others.

1970

**Steven G. Schember**, of counsel in the Sarasota, Florida, office of Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP, is one of only 10 Sarasota County lawyers among the 221 Florida Bar members who earned legal board certification in civil trial or tax law in 1983 and have remained certified for 30 years. Board certification is the Florida Bar’s highest evaluation of attorneys’ competence and experience in one or more of the 24 areas of law approved for certification by the Supreme Court of Florida.

1971

**The Hon. Alan Loeb** has been designated the next chief judge of the Colorado Court of Appeals, beginning in October 2013. He has served on the Court of Appeals since 2003. Prior to that, he had practiced with Davis, Graham & Stubbs, LLP, since 1971.

1972

**Neil G. Mullally** was named a judge by the Michigan Supreme Court for the Business Court for the 14th Circuit Court in Muskegon. Business court cases include those in which all the parties are “business enterprises,” as well as disputes between a business and individuals connected with it, such as employees, directors, owners, or shareholders. Some claims on behalf of or against a nonprofit may also come before business courts, as can cases about corporate governance, finance, organization, and others.

**The Hon. Frank A. Shepherd** became chief judge of the Third District Court of Appeal in Miami for a term that will run through July 1, 2015. A ceremony honoring him took place July 11, 2013, at the courthouse.

1973

**James R. Jenkins**, senior vice president at Deere & Co., has been selected by On Being a Black Lawyer to the 2013 Power 100 list. The list recognizes the nation’s most influential black lawyers working in government, academia, the private sector, and the nonprofit world.

**Robin G. Weaver** has been elected to serve a three-year term as an at-large representative on the 21-member Board of Governors of the Ohio State Bar Association. He is a partner at Squire Sanders (U.S.) LLP, where his primary area of practice is litigation, and a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. In addition, he teaches at the National Institute for Trial Advocacy and serves on its board.
Barner, ‘82: Leader in IP Law

By Amy Wimmer Schwarb

Sharon R. Barner’s career in intellectual property law has led her to the executive boardroom of a Chicago law firm, to a spot as general counsel at a Fortune 500 company, and to Washington, D.C., where she helped shape policy for protecting American patents and trademarks.

But when she first entered college, Barner, ‘82, envisioned a career spent sorting out problems of an entirely different sort. She majored in psychology at Syracuse University and planned to attend medical school to become a behavioral child psychologist.

Then came the political science class she took as a sophomore. “I really, really enjoyed it. I loved it,” recalls Barner. “I decided I didn’t like spending time in the lab, and I really liked political science. And so I started thinking about law school.”

Another breakthrough happened when she considered her specialty. She was interested in science because of the element of discovery and the opportunity to continue learning. Intellectual property law appealed to her for the same reasons. “I was looking for what I thought would sustain my career over 20 to 25 years, both from a practice perspective and an interest perspective,” Barner says.

Barner has thrived in the area of law she had hoped would retain her interest. She was a partner at the Chicago firm of Foley & Lardner, where she tried numerous high-profile IP cases. She also opened the firm’s first Asian offices—an experience that would translate well when she went to work for President Obama’s administration in 2009. There, she served as deputy undersecretary of commerce for intellectual property and deputy director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. In her two years with the administration, she led 15 foreign missions, including seven trips to China and others to Russia, India, and Brazil.

“One thing I’m very proud of is my international engagement at the office,” Barner says. “We focused on the strength and implementation of intellectual property systems. From an economic perspective, that’s where our U.S. companies are going to have the greatest growth and the greatest need for a level playing field.”

Her work in Washington led to her current position as vice president and general counsel at Cummins Inc., a Fortune 500 company based in Columbus, Indiana, that designs and manufactures diesel and natural gas engines and related products.

Recently, Barner was awarded the 2013 American Inns of Court Professionalism Award for the Seventh Federal Judicial Circuit. The award recognizes a lawyer or judge whose life and law practice displays “sterling character and unquestioned integrity, coupled with ongoing dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession and the rule of law.”

During her career, Barner has been active in professional organizations such as the Black Women Lawyers’ Association of Greater Chicago and the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois, which awarded her its Women of Vision Award in 2011. She also served on the White House Council on Women and Girls (chaired by Valerie Jarrett, ’81) and helped establish President Obama’s program for female inventors.

She says her time at U-M helped her understand the value of mentoring and relationship-building. “In my experience with the other people who were summer starters, we tended to be closer,” she says. “You’re there by yourselves.”

One highlight was the annual minority law school students reception hosted by Professor Harry T. Edwards, ’65. At Michigan Law, Barner took an employment law class from him; today, he is a federal judge.

“Mentoring has been so important in my career,” Barner says. “Someone like Professor Edwards really is a guiding path. That reception, the words that he spoke at that reception, and his willingness to reach out really made a difference for me.”

Attending Michigan Law allowed Barner to return to the Midwest after undergrad. Barner had grown up in Twinsburg, Ohio—home of the annual Twins Days Festival—and is, coincidentally, the mother of twin girls, plus one son.

Her husband, Haywood E. McDuffie Jr., is a lawyer in the Department of Homeland Security in Chicago. “He went to law school at Columbia,” she says. “We frequently joke that’s because he couldn’t get into a good school like Michigan.”
By Jenny Whalen

In Josh Tetrick's case, it was the law degree that came before the egg.

Since law school, Tetrick, ’08, has trekked the globe in search of solutions to some of the world’s greatest problems, from climate change and education inequality to unsustainable farming and global hunger.

It was this passion for meaningful change—and a diagram drawn one day at Michigan Law—that led Tetrick to his current endeavor: food technology.

The founder and CEO of Hampton Creek Foods, a food-tech company specializing in the development of plant-based eggs, Tetrick is a self-described social entrepreneur who thinks like a lawyer.

“A social entrepreneur is someone who sees that in order to solve some of our world’s most pressing problems, you can approach those needs from a business perspective,” Tetrick explains. “The study of law, and specifically the education I received at Michigan, leads to a sharpening of the mind and the ability to dig deep into a problem and see where the gaps are.”

But before he would lead development of McGuire Woods LLP’s global climate strategy, oversee reform of Liberia’s foreign direct investment incentive law, or found a food-tech company backed by Bill Gates, Tetrick was a 1L struggling with the question that worries many law students: What will I do with my degree?

He found his answer in the form of a quickly sketched diagram.

“I knew I had a passion for the impact law can have on society, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to practice at a firm. My first year I remember writing down on a piece of paper some of the global challenges—climate change, hunger, food systems, education inequality—and in the middle I had law, with lines going from law to all the other items. At the bottom, I wrote, ‘Understand the connections.’”

By graduation, Tetrick had interpreted “connections” to mean an interdisciplinary approach. “Michigan Law really emphasizes a systems-thinking approach,” he says. “You’re not learning law as an island of itself; you’re learning law in combination with science, public policy, and entrepreneurship.”

While he has since worked on many of the issues listed in that first diagram, Tetrick says the field of food technology has attracted him as the ideal platform to have the greatest social and environmental impact.

“Our food system is broken. Inefficient. It’s devastating to the environment and bad for our health. Our approach is to use technology to leap over the older ways of thinking and develop a new world of food—a world 10 times more sustainable and 10 times more affordable,” Tetrick says. “Our path to do that is focusing on animal farming and, more specifically, egg production.”

Using plants with the same functional properties of eggs, Tetrick’s company has developed Beyond Eggs, an egg-substitute with the potential to be cheaper, safer, more sustainable, and healthier than real eggs.

And it is Tetrick’s law background that keeps his company’s results at the cutting-edge of intellectual property law and offers insight to the licensing negotiations and foreign investment needed to grow.

“A Michigan Law education gives you the breadth to do a lot,” Tetrick says. “Whether it is working at a law firm or starting your own business, by virtue of going to a place like Michigan it is almost required that you think about the greatest problems, and spend time being engaged and making the world better.”

The Incredible, Edible … Plant-Based Egg

By Jenny Whalen

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1974

Bruce Howell, shareholder in the Portland, Oregon, office of Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt, was recently appointed to serve on the board of All Classical 89.9 KQAC FM. His practice focuses on various aspects of health law, including reimbursement, fraud and abuse, managed care issues, and physician practice management issues. He also handles matters involving genetics, organ transplant technology, reproductive technology, clinical research, and health care insurance coverage.

1979

David B. Kern, a partner in Quarles & Brady LLP’s Milwaukee office, has been elected a fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers. He practices in the area of labor and employment law, and chairs the section’s National Labor Relations Act Team. His practice includes an emphasis on grievance arbitration, discrimination litigation, employer counseling, and collective bargaining.

1978

Larry D. Thompson, general counsel at PepsiCo Inc., has been selected by On Being a Black Lawyer to the 2013 Power 100 list. The list recognizes the nation’s most influential black lawyers working in government, academia, the private sector, and the nonprofit world.

1980

Jill M. Booth has been named director of the Michigan State Court Administrative Office’s (SCAO) new Region V. She practiced law in the private sector for 17 years and then joined the 10th District Court, Calhoun County, Michigan, as a magistrate. Four years later, she was named deputy administrator of the 10th District Court. As a senior management analyst in SCAO’s Trial Court Services Division, she counseled Michigan’s district and probate courts on administrative and procedural matters and analyzed legislation affecting those courts. She also served as SCAO’s liaison to the Michigan District Judges Association, Michigan Court Administrators Association, Michigan Association of District Court Magistrates, and Michigan Association of District Court Probation Officers.

1981

Michael J. Grace has joined Whiteford Taylor & Preston’s tax group and will be based in the Washington office. Both a lawyer and a CPA, he has represented clients in a broad range of tax transactional, planning, and controversy matters. Earlier in his career, he served in the Internal Revenue Service Office of Chief Counsel (National Office) in Washington. Since resuming private law practice in 1991, he has represented clients in various examinations, appeals, and trials of tax controversies.

Ron Heller has been elected chair of the Land Use Commission of the state of Hawaii for the year. He was originally appointed to the Commission in 2010 by Gov. Linda Lingle. He continues to practice in the areas of tax and business litigation with the Torkildson Katz firm in Honolulu.

The Hon. Richard N. LaFlamme was named a judge by the Michigan Supreme Court for the Business Court for the 4th Circuit Court in Jackson, Michigan. Business court cases include those in which all the parties are “business enterprises,” as well as disputes between a business and individuals connected with it, such as employees, directors, owners, or shareholders. Some claims on behalf of or against a nonprofit may also come before business courts, as can cases about corporate governance, finance, organization, and others.

1979

Susan Segal was awarded the Minnesota Women Lawyers 2013 Myra Bradwell Award. The award recognizes female lawyers who express the highest ideals of the legal profession and possess the qualities of courage, perseverance, and leadership on issues of concern to women. She is serving in her third term as the city attorney for Minneapolis.

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1978

Elizabeth A. Campbell, partner and chief diversity officer of Houston-based Andrews Kurth LLP, and one of the executive co-chairs of the African American Alumni Reunion effort at Michigan Law (see p. 49), began a two-year term as the chair of the Houston Area Leadership Council for the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). UNCF is the nation’s largest minority education organization, supporting more than 60,000 students at more than 900 colleges and universities across the country. As chair, she will be actively involved in the fundraising activities of the Houston office.

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**1982**

**Mary Jo Larson**, a partner with the law firm Warner Norcross & Judd LLP, has been elected to the Board of Governors of Quest University Canada. She concentrates her practice in employee benefits and executive compensation.

**Michael P. McGee** has been named chief executive officer at Miller Canfield. A principal and public finance lawyer in the Detroit headquarters office, he has served on the firm’s management board and was its hiring chair. He joined the firm in 1985, and he has nearly three decades of public policy experience and a broad legal background.

**1983**

**Stacy L. Fox** joined Foley & Lardner LLP as of counsel in the firm’s Detroit office. She will focus her practice on cultivating relationships with general counsel and sharing her expertise in company reorganization and experiences in decreasing operational costs. She has worked with Foley for more than 20 years while previously serving as general counsel with Sunoco Inc., Visteon Corp., and Collins & Aikman Corp.

**Jonathan Hollingsworth** is serving a one-year term as the Ohio State Bar Association’s (OSBA) 133rd president. A former president of the Dayton Bar Association, he has served on the OSBA Board of Governors, and chaired the board’s Membership, Public & Media Relations, and Publications Committee. He is a principal in the Dayton firm of J. Hollingsworth & Associates LLC, where he concentrates on litigation, employment, corporate and business, insurance defense, medical malpractice, personal injury, and legal disciplinary matters. He began his career at Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP, and later became a shareholder in the firm of Washington & Hollingsworth.

**Michael R. Lied**, attorney at Howard & Howard’s Peoria, Illinois, office, has been appointed secretary for the Labor & Employment Law Section Council, chair of the Federal Civil Practice Section Council, and reappointed to the Standing Committee for Continuing Legal Education within the Illinois State Bar Association for the 2013–2014 term. His practice focuses in the areas of labor and employment law and related litigation and immigration law, representing employers.

**1984**

**Martiné “Marty” R. Dunn**, partner at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, has been selected by On Being a Black Lawyer to the 2013 Power 100 list. The list recognizes the nation’s most influential black lawyers working in government, academia, the private sector, and the nonprofit world.

**Susan T. Bart**, partner at Sidley Austin LLP in Chicago, was recognized at the Euromoney Legal Media Group’s Second Annual Americas Women in Business Law Awards, winning the Best in Wealth Management award. Her practice is focused on estate planning and wealth transfer.

Retired Vice Adm. **James Houck**, the immediate past judge advocate general of the United States Navy and a distinguished scholar in residence at Penn State’s Dickinson School of Law and School of International Affairs, has been named interim dean of both schools. Penn State’s Board of Trustees approved a plan to change the operation of the currently unified two-campus law school into two separately accredited, but collaborative, law campuses of the Dickinson School of Law, and he will serve as interim dean of both campuses until an interim dean is appointed for the Carlisle campus. Previously, he served as the principal military legal counsel to the secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations and led the 2,300 attorneys, enlisted legal staff, and civilian employees of the worldwide Navy Judge Advocate General’s Corps. His teaching and research focus on international law and national security law, with a particular emphasis on the law of the sea and use of force.

**1985**

**Mark R. Lezotte** has rejoined Butzel Long as a shareholder based in the firm’s Detroit office. He originally joined the firm out of law school in 1981. In 1996, he joined Oakwood Healthcare System, where he served as general counsel until 2009, when he joined Hall Render Killian Heath & Lyman in Troy, Michigan. He has substantial experience in corporate, health care, tax, and exempt organization matters, including corporate and nonprofit governance, business transactions, tax-exempt issues, hospital-physician ventures, and regulatory investigations.

**John V. McDermott**, chair of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck’s litigation group, was appointed to the Latin American Education Foundation Board of Directors. As a board member, he will provide strategic guidance to the Foundation’s executive leadership team and assist in fundraising efforts.

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Law Quadrangle • Fall 2013

By Katie Vloet

When Piper Hendricks, ’03, was clerking in the Southern District of Florida in 2007, she went to a South Beach theater to see a screening of the documentary King Corn. Years later, she spoke with a Catholic nun in Israel about bananas—specifically, legal allegations of human rights violations at Chiquita.

Together, those two occasions helped lay the foundation for a new career path. As a lawyer, she had grown discouraged by the difficulties of winning human rights cases against corporations. So she turned her attention to film as a way of being an advocate for causes she believed in.

“I had no idea how to make films. But I knew they were an effective way to reach people,” says Hendricks, who had practiced as a human rights attorney until founding the film nonprofit p.h. balanced films in late 2011. She still takes on the occasional case, and she says that her training as a lawyer is immensely helpful in her career as a filmmaker.

At p.h. balanced films, Hendricks and her team are working on two short-film series—one called Your Wallet, Your Choice (And Voice!) about how the goods you buy as a consumer connect you to other people in the global economy, and one called Choice Viewing that highlights businesses that are engaging in conscious consumer-friendly practices.

“How does the rubber on your tires get from a tree in Africa to your car? How does a banana from a farm in Colombia get to your breakfast cereal bowl? How do your cut flowers arrive to your door on special occasions? How do the minerals that make your electronics work get from a mine to your cell phone?” Hendricks asks. “We think a lot of people want to know the answers to those questions, and that they’ll consume products differently once they know the realities.”

“We’re showing how we’re connected to different human rights problems around the world. It’s so easy, especially in the United States, to go to the store and buy a chocolate bar and not think about where it comes from,” she says. “People don’t think about if you’re buying chocolate that’s sourced in West Africa, you’re supporting child labor.”

The first short film in the Your Wallet series addresses palm oil; future films will deal with human rights violations involving cotton, electronics, cocoa, and more.

She believes the films can make a change in people’s lives, just as she experienced during the post-King Corn discussion years ago. She also saw it happen when she told the nun in Israel about the human rights case against Chiquita (in which the company pleaded guilty to supporting a paramilitary group in Colombia).

“And this darling nun immediately said, ‘Well, I’m never going to buy their bananas again,’ ” Hendricks recounts. “Her conviction, with which she avowed never to support a company that engaged in such practices, stuck with me. It’s exactly the kind of impact we’re hoping to make with our films, on a much larger scale.”

Hendricks, ’03: Film, Change, and Conscious Consumerism
Brumm, ’01: Major League Bankruptcies

By Amy Wimmer Schwarb

Christopher Brumm, ’01, senior counsel at Major League Baseball (MLB), has fond memories from Michigan Law: the relationships he built; the professors’ classes he feared; the camaraderie of living, eating, and studying at the Lawyers Club.

But Brumm does have one regret from his years at the Law School. “Ironically, I have spent the last three or four years of my life here at Major League Baseball dealing with bankruptcy,” Brumm says, “but I never took a bankruptcy course. I wish I had.”

Bankruptcy has played a central role in Brumm’s work since joining MLB’s legal team in 2007 as counsel. He helped usher MLB through the Texas Rangers’ bankruptcy in 2010, and was senior counsel at MLB by the time the Los Angeles Dodgers filed for bankruptcy in 2011.

Those experiences, of course, gave him a real-world education in bankruptcy law. He learned just how uncomfortable bankruptcy court can be for a sports league—and how much he prefers a negotiating table.

“It gave me an appreciation for how bankruptcy courts function,” Brumm says. “You’re not on sure footing once you enter into the world of bankruptcy. Where in a sports league, we operate under the premise that our rules will be generally respected by the courts. But in the world of bankruptcy, a bankruptcy court judge’s goal is to get the highest price for the assets in question. Everything else takes a backseat to that primary goal.

“In terms of protecting the league and our rules, protecting the right of the other 29 owners to get to say who that 30th owner is going to be—that goal can at times conflict with the goals of a bankruptcy court.”

As senior counsel, Brumm also represented MLB in some record-setting deals last year: The Dodgers sold for $2.15 billion, providing MLB with a happy ending to a tumultuous bankruptcy. And the league secured TV deals valued at $12.4 billion, more than double the value of its previous arrangements with its longtime television partners, ESPN, FOX, and TBS. Recently, Sports Business Daily named Brumm among its “40 Under 40” in the sports business world.

The corporate offices of a professional sports league are a half-world away from where Brumm had planned to spend his career.

As an undergrad at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, Brumm double-majored in history and East Asian studies. He spent a semester in Tokyo, then taught English in Japan after college.

But teaching wasn’t quite what Brumm had hoped it would be. “I needed something where I could achieve goals more quickly,” Brumm says. “I enjoyed working with the kids, but it seemed a much slower pace for seeing results.”

He left Japan and moved back to New York, where this son of a lawyer took a job as a paralegal.

But even after arriving at Michigan Law, he hadn’t lost his interest in Asia. He took courses in international law and Japanese law and chose to interview with law firms that had Tokyo offices.

Brumm began his career at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison in New York and worked there for six years before joining Major League Baseball in 2007. He was named senior counsel at MLB in 2011.

Yankees outfielder Ichiro Suzuki notwithstanding, Brumm’s special expertise in Japanese law and culture is seldom used at MLB. But his fondness for baseball dates to childhood, when he grew up in the Bronx not far from Yankee Stadium.

With his job at MLB, however, he can’t always cheer for the Bronx Bombers. “Working within baseball,” Brumm says, “I’ve become less of a partisan fan for the Yankees as I deal with, and have gotten to know, the front offices of all of the other clubs.” That doesn’t stop him, though, from breaking out the pinstripes and hopping the No. 4 train a few times a year to catch a game at Yankee Stadium.
Kent Matsumoto, general counsel at Glatfelter and co-owner of Golf Rulz LLC, launched a new flash card game, *Golf Rules! Know the Game?*, which teaches the Rules of Golf. To launch the product, the game was sold at the USGA Merchandising Pavilion at the U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club.

1986

Megan P. Norris, a principal in the Detroit office of Miller Canfield, has been re-elected to serve a two-year term as a managing director. She is part of a five-person management administration that works with the CEO to oversee the firm’s offices in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Poland, and China. As the leader of the firm’s Employment and Labor Group, she counsels clients on employment matters such as discipline and discharge, discrimination, harassment, and tort claims. She is a nationally recognized expert on the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act. In addition, she has been elected as a fellow of The College of Labor and Employment Lawyers.

1987

Brian Beutner sold mPay Gateway, where he served as CEO for the past five years, to PaySpan Inc. He is now focusing on working with startups and their founders as they try to expand their innovative concepts into viable businesses. In addition, he was appointed to serve on the board of directors of MNsure, Minnesota’s Health Insurance Exchange, where he serves as chair of the board.

1989

Steven J. Cernak, of counsel in Schiff Hardin’s Antitrust and Trade Regulation group in the firm’s Ann Arbor office, has been nominated to become a council member of the American Bar Association Section of Antitrust Law for a three-year term. He is one of five section members to receive the council member nomination.

1990

Michael Aldana, partner in Quarles & Brady LLP’s Labor & Employment group, completed a business school Partner Development Program and received a certificate in executive management. Quarles collaborated with the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame to develop a customized executive education program for its partners. Over the course of nine months, he participated in a variety of business, organizational development, and leadership courses.

Joe Ahmad (left) and John Zavitsanos (right) are celebrating 20 years together in a burgeoning litigation boutique they started in Houston. Ahmad, Zavitsanos, Anaipakos, Alavi & Mensing P.C., or AZA, founded in July 1993, has grown to include nearly 30 attorneys today with a focus on commercial litigation and intellectual property law. Through the years, AZA has successfully represented clients in significant cases heard in U.S. and international jurisdictions, often prevailing against some of the country’s largest and most-respected firms.

Victor King, general counsel for California State University, Los Angeles, appeared on one of the cover pages of the June 2013 issue of *Corporate Counsel* magazine. He is one of 24 attorneys serving in California State University’s Office of General Counsel, which was selected by American Lawyer Media as one of the country’s four best legal departments of 2013.

Michael J. McMurray has been appointed president of Globetrotters Engineering Corporation (GEC). He joined GEC in 2006. He served most recently as chief operating officer, where he was responsible for executive leadership at GEC, as well as for the acquisition and oversight of several of the firm’s public and private sector projects, partnerships, and initiatives. Prior to joining GEC, he held several senior-level management positions in City of Chicago government under Mayor Richard M. Daley. Early in his career, he served as an assistant state’s attorney for Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, assistant regional counsel for the U.S. Social Security Administration, senior counsel for the United Auto Workers Legal Services, and senior staff counsel for the Chicago Housing Authority.

Frank J. Garcia, professor and law school fund research scholar at Boston College Law School, authored a book, *Global Justice and International Economic Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Additionally, he was appointed associate dean for global initiatives at the law school.
Jana L. Benjamin has been named executive director of the Michigan Board of Law Examiners (BLE). As the BLE’s first executive director, she will assist the organization’s board to oversee and administer the bar examination, which is given twice a year. From 1993 to 1998, Benjamin was an associate attorney at the law firm of Dickinson Wright, PLLC; from 1995 to 1996, she also served as an instructor for the American Institute of Paralegal Studies. In 1999, she joined the U-M Law School as assistant director of admissions, where she served until 2003. She then became a judicial law clerk and prehearing attorney for the Michigan Court of Appeals and remained there until she joined the State Court Administrative Office, the administrative arm of the Michigan Supreme Court, in 2012.

David J. Kaufman, Chicago corporate and securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. Previously, he was a securities attorney, has joined Thompson Coburn as a partner. 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Erin Lewin was promoted to general counsel, along with her appointment to corporate officer as senior vice president, for Avnet Inc. As a member of the Avnet Executive Board and Global Executive Council, she will continue to provide advice and counsel on the legal considerations influencing Avnet’s operations and strategies. In addition, she will serve as a resource to Avnet’s business leaders to support them in their decisionmaking.

1995

Christopher Tovar has joined Oppenheimer & Co.’s legal department in New York as a litigator, mostly handling investor claims.

1996

President Barack Obama nominated Judith Ellen Levy to serve as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Levy has been an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District since 2000, and is director of the U-M Law School’s Public Interest/Public Service Faculty Fellows.

2000

Christopher McVety was promoted from vice president to senior vice president of legal affairs for Merieux NutriSciences Corp., a global food safety and testing company that has more than 70 laboratories in 18 countries. Previously, he was a partner in the mergers and acquisitions group of Howrey LLP in Washington, D.C., and also worked on antitrust-IP matters at the European Commission Directorate General for Competition in Brussels.

1998

Michele Frasier Wing has been named director of finance, administration, and strategic planning for the University of Michigan Law School.

2000

Wayne Reames has been elected to the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, a national fellowship organization of 2,600 trust and estate lawyers and law professors who have been elected by peers in recognition of having made outstanding contributions to the practice of estate and trust law. He is a shareholder at Belin McCormick, and his practice emphasizes taxation, tax controversy, trusts and estates, nonprofit organizations and charitable giving, and corporate law.

2001

Jenny Baker has been promoted to counsel at Reed Smith LLP. Formerly an associate, she is a member of the Tax, Benefits & Wealth Planning Group in the firm’s Chicago office.

2002

Jeffrey Kahn’s book, Mrs. Shipley’s Ghost: The Right to Travel and Terrorist Watchlists, was published by the University of Michigan Press. In the book, Kahn, associate professor of law at Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, explores the legal and policy questions surrounding U.S. national security and international travel.
2004

Aaron Cutler has been named senior adviser for policy and outreach for House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.). He covers financial services, energy, and technology policy, and works on outreach to the business and finance community. He previously worked on the staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee as deputy policy director, and before that as energy counsel. He also has worked as a practicing attorney representing asset management firms on futures and derivatives trading matters.

Nathan Hole was promoted to partner at Loeb & Loeb LLP. He counsels clients about their emerging media and technology activities, including issues related to online and digital marketing and assets, privacy, social media, mobile apps, mobile and digital commerce and payments, and more. In addition, he advises clients on promotional and advertising activities, and he handles a wide range of online brand protection matters and has significant experience representing clients in domain name and intellectual property disputes.

Azadeh N. Shahshahani’s work in the South as a human rights attorney was highlighted in an article in Hyphen Magazine. “Fixin’ to Go Mainstream: Asian Americans are on the rise in Southern politics” focused on the role of Asian Americans in Southern politics. She has been a prominent human rights advocate in the South for eight years. She is the director of national security and immigrant rights at the American Civil Liberties Union’s Georgia chapter, and remains at the forefront of several campaigns to help those who often do not have a voice within the state’s and nation’s legal framework.

Yofi Tirosh, LLM, was tenured and promoted to senior lecturer at the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law. Her scholarship focuses on antdiscrimination law, affirmative action, and law and culture. She teaches courses on labor and employment law, feminist jurisprudence, and food law, and is a regular legal commentator on national Israeli media venues.

David J. Ward recently left DLA Piper to become chief corporate counsel of 1st Alliance Lending in East Hartford, Connecticut.

2005

Reena R. Bajowala (née Gokani) was elected to the partnership of Jenner & Block LLP in Chicago. She concentrates her practice in complex commercial litigation, focusing on class action and ERISA litigation. Her business litigation experience includes representing corporations that are defending class action lawsuits and representing individual corporations in a wide range of business litigation matters, including consumer fraud and contract litigation. She also has experience representing major corporate employers in both individual and class-action ERISA lawsuits brought in federal courts, including recent experience with stock drop and excessive fee litigation.

Umbreen Bhatti, cofounder of islawmix, was selected as a 2013–14 U.S. Knight Fellow. The program champions innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership in journalism by helping the fellows pursue their ideas to improve the quality of news and information reaching the public. Her proposal is a model for drawing on legal academic expertise to produce informed, relevant reporting.

Steve Higgs has been selected as SAGE’s first full-time executive director. SAGE is a new nonprofit organization with a mission to inspire citizens older than 50 to create opportunities for future generations to thrive by committing to raising awareness, encouraging dialogue, and inspiring action to address the needs of those who will follow in their footsteps. Prior to joining SAGE, he most recently was an environmental attorney at the law firm of Perkins Coie, a position he held for six years. Earlier in his career, he gained experience in collaborative problem solving as a U.S. Fulbright Fellow in New Zealand, in program evaluation and strategy at the Ecosystem Management Initiative, and in nonprofit conservation campaigns at American Rivers.

Tara E. Mahoney, a partner in Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP’s Labor and Employment Department, has been appointed by the Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents to the Ann Arbor Learning Community School Board, a charter school in Ann Arbor serving kindergartners through eighth graders. She also serves the Ann Arbor community as president of the board of directors for Neutral Zone, a diverse, youth-driven teen center dedicated to promoting personal growth and artistic expression, community leadership, and the exchange of ideas. Her practice focuses on counseling employers on a wide range of employment and labor matters, including discrimination, retaliation, harassment, and non-compete issues in state and federal courts. She also represents employers in administrative proceedings before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, and the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency.
Chaya Mandelbaum has been appointed member and chair of the California Fair Employment and Housing Council. He has served in multiple positions at Sanford Heisler LLP since 2011, including senior litigation counsel and associate. He was a trial attorney for the Office of the Solicitor at the United States Department of Labor from 2007 to 2011, and an associate at Morgan Lewis and Bockius LLP from 2005 to 2007. He is also vice president of the Scott Raymond Evans Foundation Board of Directors.

Melissa E. Manning, an attorney in Quarles & Brady’s Chicago office, was elected to the junior board of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services (CVLS). The oldest pro bono legal services organization in Chicago, CVLS currently coordinates the efforts of more than 3,000 volunteer attorneys who donate free legal services to thousands of low-income Chicagoans annually. She is a member of the firm’s Commercial Litigation Group, and focuses her practice on all aspects of commercial litigation in state and federal courts, including class action, breach of contract, foreclosure, fraud, and securities litigation. She also serves as a board member and secretary for the Federal Bar Association’s Younger Lawyers Division.

Brian Pandya was promoted to partner at Wiley Rein in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the firm’s Intellectual Property and Litigation groups, where he specializes in patent litigation and counseling, mainly for high-tech software, electronics, and biopharma companies.

Wesley E. Stockard has been elevated to shareholder in Littler Mendelson’s Atlanta office, where he advises, represents, and trains management clients on a variety of labor and employment matters.

2006

Christian Grostic was counsel for the petitioner in Burnside v. Walters, No. 12-7892. The U.S. Supreme Court granted a writ of certiorari in Burnside in May 2013, which spurred the Sixth Circuit to overrule its precedent barring indigent plaintiffs from amending complaints.

Tammy Helmsinski, an environmental attorney in Barnes & Thornburg LLP’s Grand Rapids office, has completed the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI) Larson Center for Leadership program sponsored by ULI Michigan. The Larson Center for Leadership is a curriculum-based program that trains and mentors the next generation of leaders in the real estate and land-use industries. She was one of only 33 emerging leaders selected to complete this inaugural nine-month leadership training program, and she was the only professional from West Michigan selected, as well as the only environmental attorney.

Jacob Oetama-Paul has joined Benesch as an associate in the Innovations, Information Technology & Intellectual Property (3iP) Practice Group and works out of the Cleveland office. He has experience in district-court IP litigation across a variety of technologies and in all stages of ITC investigations, from pre-complaint investigation through discovery, dispositive motions, trial, and petitions for review. He cultivated this skillset through his prior association with Fish & Richardson in Washington, D.C., and through judicial clerkships with the Hon. Arthur J. Tarnow, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and the Hon. Franklin Burgess Jr., Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Peter A. Solimine has joined Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP as a member of the Finance Group in the Cincinnati office. His practice is focused on representing commercial banks and other financial institutions, as well as borrowers and issuers, in leveraged finance transactions, and public and private companies in general corporate matters. He also has significant experience with cross-border transactions, and he has represented clients in numerous industries. Prior to joining Vorys, he was an associate in the New York office of Latham & Watkins LLP.

2007

Jonathan Andrew Paul joined the law firm of Kelly & Kelly, P.C. in Northville, Michigan. Previously, he was an Oakland County assistant prosecutor.

2008

Sonya S. Mays was named senior adviser to Kevyn Orr, ’83, emergency manager for the City of Detroit. She is focused on providing special project oversight to Detroit’s financial and operational restructuring efforts. Previously, she was a vice president in Deutsche Bank’s investment banking practice in New York City, where she provided capital markets and M&A advisory services to the industrial and manufacturing sectors, with a special focus on construction and automotive companies.
2009

Christine Rosso joined the Chicago office of Edwards Wildman Palmer LLP, in the Business Law Department. She comes to Edwards Wildman from Seyfarth Shaw, and prior to that, from the Patterson Law Firm.

2010

Philip Aumüllner, LLM, received the 2013 Theodor Körner Prize for his scholarly project on the compatibility of the principles of Islamic finance with the Austrian legal order in terms of equity instruments. The prize is awarded by the Theodor Körner Fund, which was created in 1953 in honor of the former president of the Republic of Austria. It supports young scholars and artists who have achieved superior academic and professional work and who are expected to create innovative work in the future. He is an attorney at law in the M&A/Corporate Team at Binder Grösswang Attorneys at Law in Vienna.

2011

Chauncey C. Mayfield II has joined Honigman as an attorney. He has experience in acquisitions, dispositions, leveraged buyouts, secured and unsecured financings, and private equity transactions. He was a Honigman summer associate in 2010.

2012

Brian J. Connolly has joined Otten Johnson Robinson Neff + Ragonetti PC as an associate. He will focus his practice on land use, real estate, and litigation law.

2013

Marcos H. Pueyrredon, LLM, an Argentine attorney, is joining the corporate group of Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP in New York as a visiting foreign lawyer.

Kylee Sunderlin has been awarded the Soros Justice Fellowship by the Open Society Foundations. She will use her fellowship to improve the direct legal representation of mothers facing termination of their parental rights based on medical methadone treatment by providing support and technical assistance to family defense attorneys.

Richard Katcher, '43

Dick Katcher, ‘43, a noted Cleveland lawyer and loyal alumnus, died June 19 at the age of 94. After earning bachelor’s and law degrees from Michigan, Katcher began his career as an associate at Noonan, Kaufman & Eagan in New York, and later was a partner at Ulmer, Berne & Laronge, and Baker Hostetler, both in Cleveland. He focused his practice on tax law, and lectured at tax institutes and Case Western Reserve University.

Katcher served in leadership roles for several professional organizations and was tax counsel to Major League Baseball’s American League. In addition, Katcher was a dedicated volunteer and generous donor to the University of Michigan. He received the University’s Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 1987 and was a member of the Law School’s Committee of Visitors, the Alumni Association’s national board of directors, and the Cleveland Major Gifts Committee during the Michigan Difference fundraising campaign.

He established the Richard Katcher Senior Tax Prize at the Law School, and the Richard and Shirley R. Katcher Family Scholarship. He also created the annual Dick Katcher Award, given to the football team’s outstanding defensive lineman or outside linebacker.

“When Dick turned 90, I told him that he was one in a million,” says former Dean Evan Caminker. “As I reflect on the time I spent getting to know him during my deanship, I fear that might not have been a significant enough pronouncement. Dick’s loyalty, enthusiasm, and generosity touched nearly every element of life at the Law School.”

Katcher is survived by his wife, Shirley, his children, Douglas, Robert, and Patti, and three grandchildren.