



WCBA MEMBERSHIP PROJECT

*What have you been doing during the pandemic?
Think of it as our own “Humans of the WCBA”.*



A Dialogue Between Law Student Megan T. Farrell (left) and Attorney Randy Botwinick

Megan: Tell me a little about yourself (where do you live, what do you do in your free time, etc.)

Randy: I am a native New Yorker who grew up in Long Island. In 1996, I moved to Florida, where I live now. I live on the east coast of the state in Delray Beach and find the quality of life to be great. I am an extremely sports-orientated guy and love to stay active.

Megan: Tell me about your educational background.

Randy: I went to Nassau Community College, then was a business major at Boston University. I graduated Brooklyn Law School in 1984.

Megan: What type of law do you practice? How did you come to practice that type of law?

Randy: I am a trial attorney and work on personal injury matters. I was introduced to a small personal injury firm during 2L and was able to work closely with the attorneys and shadow them. I sat in the courtroom and watched trials they were on. It was awesome. I gained so much experience from them. So much so, I stayed with the firm for a couple years. I gained so much experience, only a couple of

days after I was admitted to the Bar, I was in the court room working a trial.

Megan: I would be so nervous! Conducting a trial only a couple days after passing the Bar—talk about intimidating!

Randy: Oh I was! But as time went on, I realized it was all about preparation. The more I prepared the less nervous I was. Still, I may get nervous at the beginning of a trial and get really revved up, but the more I move forward and realize I am well-prepared, the nerves go away.

Megan: What is your favorite part about practicing law?

Randy: Remember your first job? Where you are looking at the clock and waiting to get off? It's never like that. For me, being a lawyer has never been boring. The clock moved. I never had enough time in a day. It is stimulating, it makes you use your brain, and, in the end, it is a good way to make a living. Also, at my core, I am a competitive person. Being a lawyer and trying cases has always given me an opportunity to use my competitiveness.

Megan: Would you say most attorneys are competitive?

Randy: In my experience, lawyers—at least trial lawyers—are competitive people, yes.

Megan: So, when you graduated law school, what were your goals for your career?

Randy: I really wanted to be my own boss. At the time I was working at Pazer & Epstein (now Pazer, Epstein, Jaffe & Fein, PC), a small personal injury firm. I had 2 bosses, one of whom was Perry Pazer, my mentor. He is a great man - taught me everything I know. Still, I wanted to go out on my own. So, one day I went to him and said: “You have been great to me, and I love working with you, but I want to go out on my own.” On the spot, he offered to make me partner. I was shocked and honored, but I still decided to go off and practice on my own.

Megan: So, what were the first couple of years of practice like for you?

Randy: In short, intimidating. The first couple years were overwhelming; I could never learn enough or learn quick enough. As a new lawyer, it is impossible to get away from the unexpected. Things will happen you didn't expect, new problems will arise, and questions will be put to you which you don't have the answer to.

The first couple years will throw that at you. There is no getting away from it, especially when you are young and starting out.

Megan: Being young is actually something I am very nervous about – I’ll be 24 when I pass the Bar. One of my biggest fears is being across the courtroom from an adversary who is twice my age and has far more experience than I do. I am extremely nervous for that.

Randy: I was young when I started out too. I was 24 coming out of law school—maybe 25. When I was in my 20’s—maybe 28—I tried a case and my adversary was close to his 70’s—a very knowledgeable and experienced attorney. After the trial finished, he approached me and said: “You’re a diamond in the rough—all you need is some polish.” It made my day; I breathed a sigh of relief. Preparation is everything. If you prepare, and you prepare well, you will be fine.

Megan: Was there a time you messed up and felt like you failed? How did you bounce back?

Randy: I am speaking as a trial lawyer. There was a time where I lost 3 cases in a row. It feels like you’ll never win a case again. I remember going back to the office and my mentor told me: “There are file cabinets full of cases where people need your help, need your expertise, and need your attention.” You just have to leave the courtroom and look forward, because the next morning, another case will be in front of you, and that person will need your attention and your help. You can’t hang on to the loss too much, because it will affect your work. On to the next. Keep moving forward... but all that is not to say that losing isn’t hard—it never feels good. You just have to remind yourself that people need your focus. You need to move forward.

Megan: Honestly, I don’t think I would handle losing a case well, especially when there is a client who needed help, and I couldn’t make that happen for them. How do you deal with telling clients? Obviously, if it’s a trial, they are likely right next to you when you hear the decision, but afterwards, how do you handle that?

Randy: That’s a good question. So, obviously, they find out at the same time I do, but the key is to sit with them. Talk to them. Explain the decision and listen to them when they need to talk. I have sat with a client for hours after their decision came down. It’s so important to be there and listen to them, talk to them, and comfort them.

Megan: Well, what was one of the happiest moments you’ve experienced in practice?

Randy: This is a happy moment. I love helping new lawyers. Mentoring young people and sharing my experience is a way I can help new attorneys grow while giving back to my community in a way. It brings me happiness. Plus, needless to say, grateful clients and successful cases - I love being able to help people when they need it most.

Megan: Let’s talk about Covid. Has your day-to-day life, including your work life, changed since the pandemic?

Randy: Definitely. I only go into the office about once a week. I wear tee shirts more. It has just had a huge effect on my day-to-day. Everything is online—I don’t like doing business this way. You lose the personal connection. I like looking people in the eye.

Megan: Do you think the legal field will permanently change in any way due to Covid?

Randy: I do. First, I don’t think attorneys will have to drive, say, two hours to attend a court conference that lasts

five minutes. Second, I think working from home will generally become more common. Even if it’s some balance of the remote and in-office.

Megan: As you know, I intend to work in personal injury/medical malpractice work. What types of skills should I be aiming to hone in on?

Randy: I think, going beyond particular skills, the key is focus on what you like, and go for it. Do you like public speaking? What do you like?

Megan: I love public speaking. I like the idea of being a storyteller and being able to paint a picture with specific facts that are given to me. It’s like working in a highly regulated theatre—there are rules and ethical standards, but in some ways you’re able to put on a show for a jury.

Randy: That is a good way to put it. If you like public speaking and you like the idea of being in a courtroom – go for it. Just go for it; work at it.

Megan: What do you think I should focus on for the next 3-5 years to be successful in my career?

Randy: I like this question. It implies that you need more than immediate action items to be successful. It’s more than that. You need a broader prospective, like 3-5 years. I think that’s an excellent time frame. It is terrific to have different goals: short-term, long-term, career, personal, etc. Writing them down can help.

You should find the right people to be around. While sometimes you don’t have the luxury of necessarily choosing who you’re surrounded by, you should aim to surround yourself with the right people. Regardless, you need to focus on working hard. Hard work pays off 99% of the time. Not always immediately, but hard work will pay off.