

Porotsky Balances Work, Family, Service as “Man for Others”

By Julie Kemble Borths

Nearly 15 years ago, when Richard Porotsky was fresh out of Vanderbilt University Law School, he walked straight into a 25-year-old asbestos case. He was there just in time to get a good background in insurance law and to be on the winning side of the case. And the case spurred his interest in commercial litigation and insurance coverage which continues today.

But even before that, Porotsky was drawn to the law by a desire to do public service as well as to do challenging work. It didn't hurt that he was already good at getting people's attention. As the child of musicians — his father played for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra — the trombonist knew that you had to work hard to get people to listen “from start to finish.”

“You have to be sharp. You have to be accurate,” he said. “You have to write so that the judge knows it's important in the first few sentences.

“It's a challenge to communicate effectively, but that's always going to beat just intellectual understanding of the case.”

Porotsky said each case he works on — whether at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP or through his Volunteer Lawyers for the Poor work — there's a challenge, too. “I think that the law is important because it helps people solve their problems,” he said. “And bringing together effective



Porotsky and his family seeing the Reds vs. Phillies at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia this past July when Travis Wood pitched 8 and 1/3 innings of a perfect game.

communication with an analytical understanding of the case is what I really like to do.”

One of the recent highlights of his career was the case *CAE, Inc., et al. v. Three Cities Research, Inc., et al.*, Federal District Court of Oregon. Porotsky co-led a team in obtaining a dismissal of a \$97 million claim brought against a private equity fund and pertinent directors and officers in Federal District Court in Oregon. The case, brought under civil RICO provisions, involved an international transaction with Canadian entities, and concerned alleged contingent consideration owed under a stock purchase agreement. The issues had been previously raised in Canadian proceedings and remained subject to international arbitration in Canada. After extensive briefing on issues involving



THE POROTSKY FILE

Childhood: Porotsky grew up in Cheviot and went to St. Xavier High School where he graduated as valedictorian.

Education: After earning his undergraduate degree at Vanderbilt University, he remained on the Nashville campus for law school.

Family: He and his wife, Kris, have four children, ranging from sixth grade to age 4: Brent, Gena, Aaron and Billy. They are expecting a baby in May.

Home: The family lives in White Oak, not far from where Porotsky grew up. The children's activities, including music for the older three — continuing the family legacy — Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and baseball, involve Dad as well.

TV: The Disney Channel is most often on, not that Porotsky watches it much. “The little bit of time I get to choose the show, it's sports or news.”

Movies: His children are as taken with the Star Wars movies as he was growing up.

Music: While Christmas is the only time he really plays his trombone anymore, Porotsky keeps his love for the instrument alive by listening to jazz and big band music.

Books: With so much reading at work, he does not read many books. But he will make sure his children read *A Season for Justice*, the autobiography of Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Sports: Baseball. Whether it's coaching little league teams or taking the family to Philadelphia to see a near-perfect game by a Reds rookie pitcher, Porotsky loves the sport.

Perfect Night On the Town: Dinner and music with his wife at Chez Nora in Covington. Or, if the kids are along, listening to the Cincinnati Pops on the lawn at Riverbend Music Center or biking the trails at Miami Whitewater Forest. Either way, a Reds game will always work.

Inspirational Quote: “Be a man for others.” St. Xavier High School's creed, derived from the work of the founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius. “They don't let you get away from high school without ingraining that. And I've found it's a good way to live.”

forum non conveniens, abstention, and arbitration, the Court dismissed the case.


His commitment to the law extends to sharing his insurance and professional expertise through CLEs at the Cincinnati Bar Association and elsewhere. He is publishing a book this year through the Ohio State Bar Association, *Ohio Insurance Law: Policy Analysis, Bad Faith Issues and Ethical Conflicts*. The ABA published his article in the November/December issue of *Coverage*, an article for members of the litigation committee: *Insurance 101 — Insights for Young Lawyers: Advertising Injury Coverage for Claims of Intellectual Property Infringement and Related Unfair Competition*, (Vol. 20, No. 6, p. 3).

His commitment to the law also extends to inviting attorneys to join him in making the community a better place through service.

As chair of the Community Service Committee, Porotsky said he is following in the footsteps of his colleague, Alan Abes. “We are continuing the work of promoting community groups and projects that may interest a broad group of attorneys. We’re not setting up a project and running it. We are showing attorneys where their skills might be used.”

Six times a year, the committee takes a “field trip” to a community organization and then reports about the agency in the *CBA Report*. It also hosted a recent seminar that combined professionalism with advice on how to approach community service beyond *pro bono* work. And it continues the work of supporting the YLS and its Holiday Giving Basket (see page 23), for which his firm provides the interactive web site and gift storage space.

“The Giving Basket just had its smoothest year ever,” he said. “Each year we all make improvements to make it easy for the legal community to help kids. And it’s just gotten bigger every year with more people talking about it, bringing more people to assist.”

He describes such work, including *pro bono* legal work, as “the highest calling for a lawyer... doing things that need to be done and making a difference.” 

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