

Blending two lives into one



By Christina Martini
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By David Susler
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Here is a portion of the conversation. To learn more on this particular topic visit chicagolawyer magazine.com.

How do you balance having two lawyers in the household?

Tina Martini: On balance, I think having two lawyers in one household is more of a blessing than a curse. Scheduling tends to be the biggest challenge, particularly when we both have meetings into the evening or need to be on the road at the same time. When that happens, we need to figure out how we are going to take care of our pets and other household responsibilities. At those times, it is also challenging to connect with each other to see how the other is doing and to catch up on the events of the day, especially if there is a significant time zone disparity. That can be tough, especially when schedules are intense over a longer period of time. That being said, there are very few people who can truly understand both the rewards and challenges of being a lawyer as well as another lawyer can, and one cannot underestimate the importance of being with someone who really gets it.

David Susler: For us, that's how it has always been, so it never occurred to me as something unusual or difficult. I would also say that our schedules and finding time to connect are probably the most challenging aspects. However, I also think it helps that we're both lawyers as we each readily understand the demands the profession places on our time, particularly when an unexpected work demand forces us to change our personal plans.

What would you have done differently with your career if given the chance?

Martini: I received my undergraduate degree in industrial engineering (manufacturing). While in college, I started my master's degree, also in manufacturing, and had been

offered a full scholarship to pursue a Ph.D. I put both on hold once I was accepted into law school. If I could do it all over again, I would have found a way to finish my master's and gotten my Ph.D. in addition to my law degree. I often reflect on the tremendous education and skill set I developed as an engineer and the amazing asset it has been for my practice and development as a professional. Like the law, engineering teaches you how to think and reason. It also develops you into a critical thinker who problem solves and processes issues in a very different way from other disciplines. Process engineering, which is much of what manufacturing is, provides skills which are readily applicable across all the different facets of legal practice as well as in the management and operations aspects of the business side of the law.

Susler: On one hand, nothing, because the career I've had makes me the lawyer I am today, and I currently have a job and career that I love. However, had I known then what I know now, I would have taken more business and finance courses in college. I would still have done personal-injury work but maybe would have added commercial litigation earlier. I think I also would have applied for jobs with either the U.S. or state's attorney's offices to get more trial experience. I have tried a number of cases, however, not nearly as many as I would have in those positions.

Also, had I realized then how valuable and fun being active in bar associations is, I would have been active from the outset of my career, instead of waiting until 15 years into it.

What specifically inspires you?

Martini: Being the best professional and person I can be inspires me to get up each morning. My compass is directed at making as much of a positive difference for my clients

and the community as possible. My family is a tremendous inspiration — my father and three brothers in particular, who have shown extraordinary strength and perseverance in the face of overwhelming adversity and loss and whose professional and personal successes are awe-inspiring.

Although she died 25 years ago, my mother continues to inspire me every day. She was so ahead of her time in her brilliance, her courage and her tenacity to be so much more than just another Mexican immigrant victimized by discrimination and prejudice.

David inspires me every day with his generosity, patience, compassion and support. My friends, colleagues and mentors inspire me to be the best I can be, to see issues from multiple angles and to pay it forward by helping the younger generation along.

Susler: These days, I find the law students and Posse scholars that I mentor quite inspiring. They are all amazing, intelligent, driven leaders, on the cusps of their careers and I leave every interaction with them inspired.

My family has always inspired me, especially my father and great uncles professionally. Though my father is mostly retired now and my uncles are no longer living, all three were great lawyers and professionals. They passed on to me a love for the law and respect for the profession and I constantly aspire to honor their names and reputations.

A constant in my life for the past 15 years that I can always rely on, of course, is Tina. Her inexorable drive toward excellence, for continual improvement both professionally and personally, is eminently inspiring to me. The fantastic career I have today is, in large part, due to the inspiration I draw from her. ■

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