

A time of reflection

After 64 columns, it's time to look back, get philosophical

It has been a real honor and privilege to write "Inside Out" over the past 5½ years.

Martini: We have had so much fun writing on topics which really seem to resonate with our audience — and many of which revolve around the business of law.

We have met a number of our readers over the years who have told us how help-

ful the column has been by creating an awareness of a particular subject, or by giving them a variety of viewpoints to consider. Ultimately, this is what is most important to me — to be able to point to a body of work — 64 columns written over the years — and say it has made a meaningful difference to the legal community. The fact that we love doing it is icing on the cake.

Susler: It has been 5½ years of trying — not always successfully — to resist saying, "what she said." Nonetheless, I too have to say it has been an honor and a privilege. It has also been a most unexpected journey. Tina is the writer in the family. I never expected to publish an article, let alone a monthly column for over five years. But we have enjoyed it tremendously. It is also sometimes scary to realize how much Tina and I think alike.

Martini: As far as the greatest lessons we've learned, there have been a number of recurring themes. First, life is short. While it is an oft-used saying, it is very true. Over the past five years, I have lost some dear family members, including my father-in-law, and others have been experiencing deteriorating health. I have also lost some great friends and partners at the firm, a number of whom passed away very suddenly.

The older we get, the more often these things will happen. That's why it is important to love and believe in what you do, and to strike that delicate balance between the professional and personal that truly works for you. Every day is a new day and another opportunity to open yourself to new experiences and wherever they may take you. They may lead you to places you never dreamed of.

Success is driven by a number of factors — clearly, raw intellect is critically important. But you also need to have focus and passion for what you do to help differentiate you from others and to make yourself unique.

Susler: Always be who you are. Over the past 5½ years, we have written this column, I have been the ACC Chicago chapter president, and lost my father, all events that make me understand I am an adult with adult responsibilities. However, the little boy I am at heart remains



Inside Out

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To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com.

quite alive and just as important a part of who I am as that responsible adult attorney.

That is not only OK, it is important; it is what fuels my passion for my job and to be the best lawyer possible for my clients and the best mentor I can be for my mentees.

For example, I work for a manufacturing company. The more I know about the man-

ufacturing process, the better attorney I am for my company. However, every time I walk into one of our factories, I am instantly that 5-year-old boy who says, "Cool! Big machines!" That sparks my curiosity to learn, which is how I succeed at my adult job of being an attorney.

Martini: My biggest piece of advice to readers is to be self-aware. Check in with yourself early and often, know yourself and your strengths and weaknesses. Give some thought about how others perceive you and what their motivations are. You may not always get it right, but it's better to think about it and to try to do it rather than not try at all.

I also recommend that you be mindful and strategic in everything you do. Some people just go with the flow and drift and let life carry them wherever the current happens to be going at the moment. I think it's important to steer the ship to a destination that speaks to you and is where you want to go. Consider how you have been approaching your lives and careers. By taking control, you have a better chance of achieving that level of happiness and fulfillment you seek.

Finally, don't forget to pay it forward. We must all give thoughtful consideration to the legacy we will leave the profession. Being a mentor and confidant to others, doing pro bono, teaching and participating in thought-leadership activities are just a few of the many ways we can do this.

Susler: When an opportunity presents itself, seize it. If you can sense some benefit for yourself, overcome your fears, overcome your story that you can't, and jump on it. In other words, step outside your comfort zone. The rewards in terms of personal growth and professional growth will be well worth it. I also have to echo Tina's advice to pay it forward. As attorneys, I believe this is our professional responsibility. As people, doing so is among the most rewarding things we can do; making a difference for others makes at least as much difference for ourselves. ■

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