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Vol. CXV, No. 4

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

75 Cents

PROFILE IN BRIEF

BY TARYN HARTMAN
Legal News

Tom Branigan Ramblin' Man



Tom Branigan

Although he hasn't seen it yet, attorney Tom Branigan can easily identify with several elements included in the trailer for the new George Clooney flick "Up in the Air": "They pack light, travel efficiently and they've got a thing for slip-on shoes," Clooney tells his co-star while lining up behind a certain group of

businessmen at airport security.

Branigan, the managing partner at Bowman and Brooke's office in Troy, is a similarly expert traveler, knowing exactly what to pack and how to pack it, what to wear on travel days and who to get behind in the security lines thanks to the amount of time he spends in the air for work. He estimates that he flew close to 150,000 domestic miles last year alone.

"Just like anything else in life, when you do it a lot, you get good at it," Branigan says of effectively cruising through the security screening process. He left for Phoenix on his latest work excursion yesterday.

"One of the big challenges that I have with my practice is I really don't have a local practice," Branigan says. "I spend more time in airplanes than I do in local courtrooms on a weekly basis." In addition to frequent air travel, transportation has long been a constant in Branigan's life and career, from the kinds of clients he usually represents — auto companies — to the way he unwinds when he can find a slice of free time to squeeze in a bike ride.

He worked his way through Wayne State University and the Detroit College of Law by working at an auto supplier, from where during the economic struggles of the 1980s he was laid off at least three times. Branigan promised to swear off the industry for good once he finished law school.

"At the forefront of my conscience was, 'I need to find something else,'" something more recession-proof, Branigan says now.

So naturally his first job was working on the DeLorean Motor Company's bankruptcy. He then landed at Bowman and Brooke, which in its early days focused heavily on automotive work, a practice area Branigan still finds fascinating because it exposes him to things many other attorneys don't get to see or do, like re-creating accident scenarios in the desert.

Branigan spends whatever time he can outside the courtroom putting a different type of rubber to the road: the tires of his racing bike. The rides have yielded their share of legal "aha" moments.

"It's great moments of solitude when you're out there, there's a lot of concentration that goes on," he says. "You do a lot of thinking when you're engaged in an activity like that. It allows one to really be focused."

Branigan's career, which has taken him "coast to coast, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, from the Pacific Northwest all the way down to Florida" landed him a spot in 2009's Irish Legal 100, a list published annually by the Irish Voice newspaper and Irish America magazine. The list includes such notable legal names as Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, and noted Illinois U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald. A complete list of the Legal 100 is available at www.irishcentral.com/business/lists/legal_100/.

Branigan's inclusion on the list came with an invitation to a gala at the Irish ambassador's home in Washington, D.C., which he had to miss because he was — where else? — on the road.

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Following the laugh track

Lawyer-turned-writer finds her niche with 'Family Guy' show

BY SHEILA PURSGLOVE
Legal News

When Cherry Chevapravatdumrong earned her degree from New York University Law School, she was on the road to a corporate law career and days spent writing legal briefs.

Then she piled her belongings in her car and burned rubber down another road — coast to coast to Hollywood.

Now she spends her days writing outrageous scripts for the dysfunctional Griffin family on the hit Fox TV show "Family Guy," and co-wrote the spinoff book, "It Takes a Village Idiot, and I Married One."

The Emmy-award winning animated sitcom centers around Peter and Lois Griffin of Rhode Island, teenagers Meg and Chris, and diabolical infant Stewie — her favorite long before she joined the sitcom staff. The family's pet pooch Brian is an unusual mutt with a Mensa IQ, and a penchant for martinis, cigarettes, fast cars, and dumb blondes.

Chevapravatdumrong joined the show in its fourth season, and for a while was its only female writer. She also serves as supervising producer.

It's a far cry from her early writing experiences, keeping a diary in third grade. Then as a "River Rat" Huron High School student in Ann Arbor, she was editor of the school newspaper and wrote for the literary magazine.

"Other than that, I was your standard AP-class-taking, violin-playing orchestra nerd," she says.

Parental pressure nudged the nerd to a degree in psychology from Yale and subsequent law degree, but her heart was never really in it. Instead, writing skits and songs for the annual "Law Revue" musical comedy show was a highlight of her studies.

So while her friends studied for the bar exam, Chevapravatdumrong decided once and for all, the law life was not for her. She headed west, determined to bust into television work, and found a series of assistant jobs — for an agent, for TV executives, and as



Photo by Robert Chase

A Yale University alum, Cherry Chevapravatdumrong earned her law degree from NYU before embarking on a career in television screen writing. In an appearance at the Ann Arbor District Library December 29, she signed books and told stories about life as a TV writer and producer.

assistant to the writing staff of the TV sitcom "Listen Up," starring actor Jason Alexander, where she discovered how short-lived a show can be.

"Assistant jobs are generally difficult and low-paying, but I would've taken them over being a lawyer any day," she says.

All the while, she was networking and writing spec scripts, hoping to break into TV writing.

"You've got to meet people and write scripts," she says.

Networking paid off. She met people who had worked on "Family Guy" before it got canceled. When the show was resurrected, they remembered her, and her foot was well and truly in the door.

"Family Guy" looks like so much fun, it's easy to forget the hard work behind the scenes — outlining, drafting, reading, table-reading with actors, sketching, editing, and fine-tuning after the work returns from Korea where animation is done," she says.

Where does she find ideas for the script? "Anywhere! Random pop culture, life in general," she says. "The great thing about a show like 'Family Guy' is that you can be doing a joke about post-impressionist art one second, gay marriage the next, and 'Jersey Shore' the next. Everything is fair game."

If the TV job was the result of planning and determination, landing a gig writing teen books was pure serendipity. When her agent asked if

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Michigan Legal Milestone plaque placed

You'll find the marker in Zussman Park, outside Hamtramck City Hall, which houses the 33rd District Court. The Michigan Legal Milestone plaque commemorates the 1981 Poletown decision (*Poletown Neighborhood Council v. Detroit*), when, in an effort to bolster Detroit's crumbling economic base, a working-class neighborhood known as Poletown was demolished to make way for a new General Motors plant. This action was challenged by homeowners and small businesses in the area, but was rebuffed by the Michigan Supreme Court in a landmark 1981 decision. The ruling had national ramifications and set a new standard by expanding the power of eminent domain and allowing the definition of public use to include economic development. In 2004, the Court reversed itself (*County of Wayne v. Hathcock*). For more information on the Michigan Legal Milestones program, which highlights significant cases and personalities in our history or to read about all 34 Michigan Legal Milestones, visit www.michbar.org/programs/milestone/milestones_home.cfm.



Michigan Legal Milestone Subcommittee Chair Michael Ellis, Law-Related Education and Public Outreach Committee Chair Jeffrey Paulsen, and the Hon. Paul Paruk, chief judge of the 31st District Court in Hamtramck, stand with the recently placed Michigan Legal Milestone plaque.

DAILY BRIEFS

Program to explore 'Solving Problems in Your Practice'

The Wayne Law Alumni Association and New Lawyer Seminars will present "Solving Problems in Your Practice" on Saturday, Jan. 30, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Spencer M. Partrich Auditorium at Wayne State University Law School.

The program will feature the following presentations:

- An Overview of Problems in the Practice of Law: A Judge's Perspective, with Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Bill Callahan, Family Division.

- When a Litigation Client Creates, or Becomes, the Problem, with Patricia Stampler of Hertz Schram PC.
- A Problem Solving System — Applying It to Your Practice, with Lee Tilson, New Lawyer Seminars founder.

- You Are Known by Your Pleadings and Work Product, with David A. Robinson, retired Detroit police officer with David A. Robinson & Associates PC.

- Solving Problems in a Defense Practice, with Ian Simpson of Garan Lucow Miller PC.

- Avoid Problems: Build Good Client Relationships from the First Meeting, with David Belanger.

- Solving Client Problems When Your Clients Lack Resources, with Joon Sung, clinical law professor, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.

- Practical Solutions for Problems: Questions and Answers, with Paul Youngs.

- Problems with Your Internet Presence, with Justinian Lane, former network administrator for the U.S. Dept. of Energy.
- Solving Society's Most Difficult and Important Problems: Family Law, with Sean Blume.
- Plaintiff's Summary Disposition Motions: Creating Problems for the Opposition, with Racine Michelle Miller of Robinson & Associates PC.

This event is free and open to the public. More information is available at <http://tinyurl.com/New-Lawyer-Seminar>.

Jan. 8 episode of 'Due Process' features immigration law

"Due Process" will focus on legal issues surrounding immigration law on January 8 at 5:30 pm on PBS station WTVS Channel 56. While heightened border security is in question, at the same time, current stringent immigration policies are preventing educated professionals from entering the U.S. Are these policies going to far?

Join host Henry Baskin and his guests N. Peter Antone, Immigration Attorney from Antone Casagrande & Adwers PC and David Koelsch, Assistant Professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law as they discuss our stance on immigration and if it is actually hurting the country.

Due Process airs weekly on Channel 56, WTVS, Friday at 5:30 pm. The program can also be viewed anytime at www.dueprocess.tv or via Comcast's on-demand service. Hosted by well known attorney Henry Baskin, Due Process welcomes leading attorneys, noted experts, and prominent public figures.

Wayne Law hosts Motion Day with Judge Friedman

Wayne State University Law School and the Federal Bar Association will host Motion Day with Judge Bernard Friedman of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, from 9:30 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, Jan. 20. The event will take place in the Law School's Spencer M. Partrich Auditorium.

"We are honored once again to welcome Judge Friedman to the Law School," said Wayne Law Dean and Professor of Law Robert M. Ackerman. "This event allows our students to experience a live courtroom session conducted by one of the federal judiciary's most highly regarded trial judges."

Added Professor Anne M. Burr, Director of Wayne Law's Legal Research and Writing Program, "We are very lucky to have a jurist of Judge Friedman's stature at the law school. First-year students, future litigators and those considering clerkships will all be glad they took advantage of this opportunity."

Motion Day provides an opportunity for students to spend a day in federal court, without leaving the law school. Experienced counsel will argue actual pretrial motions before Judge Friedman, who will then rule or take the matters under advisement. Students are able to observe a variety of oral argument styles, as well as the procedures of the federal district court.

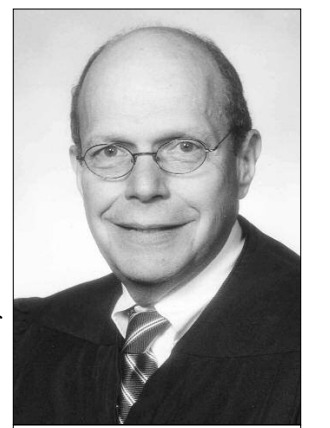
Motion Day is sponsored by the Legal Research and Writing faculty and kicks off the first-year Moot Court program. As part of that program, first-year law students at Wayne Law research and write an appellate brief for the federal court of appeals. They then argue the positions taken in their brief before three-judge panels consisting of local attorneys and judges.

Judge Friedman was appointed to the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, by President Ronald Reagan on April 20, 1988, becoming Chief Judge in 2004. He served in that capacity until last year, when he passed the gavel to Chief Judge Rosen. Prior to 1988 he served as judge for the State of Michigan, 48th District Court, for six years.

Judge Friedman began his law career as assistant prosecutor in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office before venturing into private practice as well as serving as city attorney for Inkster. He also served as a U.S. Army Lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps from 1967 to 1968 on active duty and continued for five more years as a U.S. Army Reserve Lieutenant in the JAG Corps from 1968 to 1973.

A native of Detroit, Judge Friedman earned his law degree from the Detroit College of Law in 1968. His is a member of both the Michigan Bar Association and the Oakland County Bar Association.

For more information, contact Marilyn Vaughan at (313) 577-4822. For more information on Wayne Law, visit the Law School online at www.law.wayne.edu.



Judge Bernard Friedman

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- Wayne Circuit Court
- U.S. District Court
- U.S. Bankruptcy Court



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