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1985-1989


Kenneth S. Resnick: Adventures abroad

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As general counsel and director of government relations for GE Oil & Gas in Florence, Resnick manages the company’s legal affairs and government relations. The company, known also in the industry as Nuovo Pignone, S.p.A., is the leading supplier of gas and steam turbines, compressors, pump valves and other machinery for major oil companies and engineering firms around the world.

“I have no experience in the [oil and gas] industry, which perhaps makes me uniquely qualified for the job. I see everything as a child and ask the questions that others do not because they simply assume the answers,” Resnick said.

After graduating from Georgia Law, he worked as a trial attorney with the Cincinnati-based law firm Dinsmore & Shohl and as an adjunct professor of business ethics in Xavier University’s M.B.A. program before taking a position with the General Electric Company. Additionally, Resnick worked for nearly 12 years leading GE Aircraft Engine’s litigation and compliance group here in the U.S. before being transferred to Italy in January of this year.

“Having no technical background when I took my current position,” he continued, “I had no idea how the oil in the ground became gasoline in my car - although I am now learning!”

Interestingly enough, Resnick said making the switch between cultures, rather than jobs, was the easiest part of his transfer.

“The adjustment has not been difficult from a cultural standpoint at all,” Resnick said, who, prior to his position with GE, lived in Europe for several years and often vacationed there with his Austrian-born wife, Elisabeth.

“What’s not to like?” he added. “I live in Florence [and work for] a great company in a very exciting, global industry at the moment, and I get paid for doing so. As they say, ‘It’s tough, but someone has to do it!’ We have a great team of lawyers at GE Oil & Gas - very diverse, very savvy and very international. I love working with them, and they have taught me a great deal already. Perhaps more than anything else, I enjoy being their student.”

Resnick intends to make a trip to the United States this summer, but not for a relaxing rendezvous. An avid swimmer, he plans to participate in the infamous “Escape from Alcatraz” race - again.

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Resnick has yet another ambitious project at the moment - reading Renaissance author, Dante’s Divine Comedy.

“I cannot in good faith live in Dante’s hometown and not have read this epic story,” he said of the three-book masterpiece. “My goal is one canto [stanzas into which the poem is divided] a day.”

For a man who left the United States for an unfamiliar country, culture and job, hobbies such as these hardly seem inapt. Clearly unafraid to try new things, Resnick lives for adventure, both in his practice of law and his personal life. Who knows what could be next?

- Kristin Kissiah
Phaedra C. Parks: The secret behind some of the Southeast’s superstars

Although entertainment attorney Phaedra C. Parks (J.D.’98) might represent celebrity clients, she seems to have become quite a celebrity herself. Not merely famous by association, Parks has become well known thanks to her own hard work and sought-after legal expertise.

She is the managing partner of The Parks Group, a boutique firm that she established in 2000 to provide specialized legal services to athletes and entertainers. With offices in both Atlanta and Miami, The Parks Group boasts many of the Southeast’s pre-eminent musicians and record labels, professional athletes, and television and radio personalities as clients.

Parks herself has been featured prominently in the media, serving as a legal analyst and commentator for NBC, Fox News, “Entertainment Tonight,” “Celebrity Justice,” “EXTRA” and Court TV, as well as for various local television and radio stations. She has also been profiled recently by Jezebel magazine, Atlanta Magazine and the 2005 edition of Georgia Super Lawyers.

Parks tries to go above and beyond the duties of a typical attorney, choosing to step outside of the box as a basic manager of legal affairs.

“My expertise is not only the practice of law - my firm manages lifestyles, going well beyond the four corners of the law,” she said. “I review and negotiate contracts, troubleshoot during the day and, at night, attend events or go to the studio with clients.”

Parks said one of her most rewarding moments was in her recent representation of Bobby Brown.

“I am pleased with the direction Bobby’s career is moving in,” she said. “We worked hard to reposition and place him back to front page news. We have developed an image that is consistent with Bobby’s core fan base, and I am proud to have guided that process.”

Considering her success in the field, it is ironic that Parks did not always want to be an entertainment attorney. While in law school, she planned to become a medical malpractice or insurance lawyer.

However, she had a number of connections within the entertainment industry - several family members and close friends were athletes and musicians - who, knowing she had a law degree, began to ask her advice on legal matters. Word got out within the field, and her name spread quickly.

 “[The job] really just fell into my lap,” Parks said. “People saw something in me that I did not see in myself originally, but it worked out perfectly. I have never had a day I regretted going out on my own and doing this. It has not always been easy, but it has always been rewarding.”

Parks aims to change a few more lives through her new position as president of the Gate City Bar Association, an Atlanta-based branch of the National Bar Association. Established in 1948, it is the oldest minority bar association in Georgia. Parks is one of the organization’s youngest as well as the only entertainment attorney to ever hold the position.

“My theme for Gate City is ‘Reaching Back, Looking Inward and Moving Forward,’” she said. “I want to refresh the image of an old organization to make it more visible, and I also want to give members more networking opportunities and professional support.”

Simply put, Parks has a passion for makeovers, whether it be in her own legal pursuits or those of her celebrity clients. Her success stories of “turning the frog into the prince” are sure to continue well into the future.

characters in “Caribbean Christmas Carol.”

1995-1999

Blair K. Cleveland (1995) of Macon, GA, was named to the “Georgia Rising Star” list for 2005 by Law and Politics magazine. Ted M. Scartz (1995) of Grayson, GA, associated with Martenson, Hasbrouck & Simon. R. Michael Barry (1996) of Atlanta, GA, was named partner with Epstein, Becker & Green. He graduated from the executive MBA program of the UGA Terry College of Business and participated in the 2005 class of Leadership Georgia. Also, Barry was selected as a “super lawyer - rising star” by Atlanta Magazine and Law and Politics magazine in the area of health law.

Suellen Winick Bergman (1996) of Smyrna, GA, joined King & Spalding. She chairs the Technology Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia and is a member of the Buckhead Business Association Leadership Development Class of 2005-06 and the 2006 Steinberg Glass leadership program. She celebrated the birth of her daughter Stephanie in July 2004.


1999-2000


Phaedra C. Parks (1998) of Smyrna, GA, was featured in the “Lawyers of Distinction” section of Jezebel magazine.


2000s

Heather Carmichael Gorman (2000) of Peachtree City, GA, associated with Thomas, Kayden, Horstemeyer & Risley in the patent law section. Christopher B. Linder (2000) of Marietta, GA, was named partner with Thomas, Kayden, Horstemeyer & Risley. He is married to Cathryn Linder and has two sons, Christopher Jr. (20 mos.) and Stephen (7 mos.). Matthew S. Morrison (2000) of Atlanta, GA, joined Arch Chemical’s Water Products as senior commercial counsel.


Weyman T. Johnson Jr.: Laboring on and off the legal field

Georgia Law graduate Weyman T. Johnson Jr. (J.D.’79) fell in love with the law thanks to a newspaper.

After earning his A.B. cum laude from Mercer University in 1973, Johnson worked for three years with the Columbus Ledger, serving as copy editor, reporter and, later, assistant city editor. Oddly enough, it was his career in journalism that inspired him to want to learn more about the law.

After covering a story about a local teachers’ rally, an organizing effort sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers, Johnson became interested in labor and employment law and, more specifically, the human aspect of the field. It was then he decided to take that interest and incorporate it into a legal career.

He entered law school that fall and, since his graduation in 1979, has worked as a labor and employment attorney. For the past 22 years he has been with the Atlanta office of Paul Hastings.

The vice chair of the firm’s employment law department for its east coast offices, Johnson’s practice entails both employment litigation and traditional labor relations. As such, he represents management in employment law disputes, advising clients on matters falling under the National Labor Relations Act, Title VII and other areas of labor and employment law.

Although he has no typical day at the office, Johnson sums up his work as “a lot of trials, a lot of class action arguments and a good bit of traditional labor law work, too.”

He loves both the variety his work brings him and, most of all, the “human element” that originally led him to the field, which he has found in both the practice of law itself and the relationships he has formed with colleagues.

“’I truly enjoy the people I work with, and especially the interchange with others,” Johnson said. “I have learned a lot from my coworkers and continue to learn every day.”

Johnson also finds his sought-after “human element” through his work with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, for which he now acts as the chair of the national board of directors.

For Johnson, the disease, which affects over 400,000 Americans, has had a very personal impact. Both he and his sister have MS, as did his father and aunt. The disease’s effect on his own family is what drove him to try to make a difference.

Johnson has worked with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society since 1987. He has served as its chair since November 2005, overseeing the group’s 400,000 volunteers and assisting to raise over $200 million annually to help to end the devastating consequences of MS.

When he is not tackling labor law and medical issues, Johnson stays busy communicating his philosophies and legal ideologies to future lawyers.

He serves on Georgia Law’s faculty as an adjunct professor, teaching labor and employment law courses, most recently during the fall 2005 semester.

Interestingly enough, the teaching position seems to have affected Johnson’s own outlook on law, not just those of his students.

“From an academic standpoint, the position is good because it allows me to reorganize the perspective that you do not get from only practicing law. I think having this new dimension has really improved my practice,” he added.

Johnson hopes to pass on his knowledge of and enthusiasm for the law to his students and works hard to help them find a source of personal inspiration that, both 30 years ago and today, is such an important motivation for him.

- Kristin Kissiah


Georgia Law expresses sympathy to the families and friends of the following law school alumni:

In Memoriam

Jerry B. Blackstock (1969)
Atlanta, GA
April 1, 2006

Paul T. Collier (1963)
Gainesville, GA
December 10, 2005

Bartow Cowden III (1949)
College Park, GA
March 8, 2006

W. Mallette Exley Jr. (1950)
Savannah, GA
July 7, 2002

Terry K. Floyd (1973)
Saint Marys, GA
December 12, 2005

Joel J. Fryer (1951)
Atlanta, GA
February 27, 2006

Fred K. Harvey Jr. (1970)
Louisville, GA
February 10, 2006

René D. Kemp (1962)
Hinesville, GA
February 4, 2006

E. Earl Mallard Jr. (1956)
Monroe, GA
March 9, 2006

Edwin D. McDonald (1942)
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
January 5, 2006

R. Kelley Minter (1982)
Buford, GA
December 1, 2005

James C. Owen Jr. (1942)
Griffin, GA
December 3, 2005

John A. Root (1988)
Boca Raton, FL
December 7, 2005

Donald A. Starling (1975)
Douglas, GA
October 10, 2005

Edwin L. Sterne (1948)
Birmingham, AL
March 14, 2006

O. Jackson Taylor Jr. (1966)
Greenville, SC
September 25, 2005

W. Gregory Voynich (1976)
Columbus, GA
March 5, 2006

Gene Mac Winburn (1961)
Athens, GA
March 20, 2006

Robert L. Wood (1950)
Jacksonville, FL
December 6, 2005

Class Notes items were received between November 2, 2005, and April 1, 2006. Information received after April 1 will appear in the next issue of the Advocate.

1960s
James B. Franklin (1964) of Statesboro, GA, received the 2006 Tradition of Excellence Award presented during the State Bar of Georgia’s Annual Meeting. A. Felton Jenkins Jr. (1965) of Madison, GA, was appointed to the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia by Gov. Sonny Perdue. William U. Norwood (1967) of Atlanta, GA, has become of counsel to Pope, McGlamery, Kilpatrick, Morrison & Norwood.

1970 – 1974
Donald J. Ellis (1973) of Atlanta, GA, is of counsel to the newly formed Ellis Funk firm. Brooks S. Franklin (1973) of Atlanta, GA, was elected president of the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for 2006 and is a former recipient of its Lifetime Achievement Award. David I. Funk (1973) of Atlanta, GA, is of counsel to the newly formed Ellis Funk firm. Frank C. Mills III (1973) of Canton, GA, received the Whitney M. Young Award from the Boy Scouts of America in recognition of his service to rural or low income urban youth. Michael J. Bowers (1974) of Atlanta, GA, was named to the “100 Most Influential Georgians” list for 2006 by Georgia Trend magazine. Jonathan C. Peters (1974) of Atlanta, GA, was inducted into the Georgia Fellowship of the American College of Trial Lawyers. R. Benjamin Reid (1974) of Miami, FL, was elected chairperson of the board of directors of Carlton Fields.

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