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September 2018 E-Newsletter Spotlight: Eric Roden (J.D.'12)

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Spotlight: Eric Roden (J.D.'12)



Name: Eric Roden
Title: Partner
Employer Name: Roden + Love, LLC
Location: Savannah, GA
Number of years there: 5
School of Law graduation year: 2012
Other degree(s)/institution(s)/year(s): A.B. Political Science / UGA / 2009

1. What is your most memorable experience from your time at law school?

Winning best advocate in the South Texas mock trial competition was by far my best and most memorable experience. I was proud to have represented the school and Kellie Casey well and got the opportunity to discover a talent and a passion for courtroom presentation that might have taken years or never been realized absent that trip.

2. What advice would you give to current School of Law students?

Study hard but don't get too wrapped up in acing exams and forgot to have fun, be involved in activities, or get to know your classmates. Your first job will largely be based on your class rank and interviewing abilities. Almost everything that happens after that will be based on your ability to produce and to build relationships. No matter what field you go into, you're going to learn very little in law school that prepares you for it. You get the basics and you learn legal analysis but your employer will train you in their particular field and you'll grow with time. You can't go backwards and build the relationships you missed out on building once that opportunity has passed you by though.

3. Please give a brief description of your responsibilities as the founding partner of your firm.

Starting a law firm is starting a business and you have to think of it as such. You aren't simply deciding to be an attorney on your own terms. Since starting our firm, I have been an accountant, marketing director, office manager, tech specialist, handyman, and janitor at varying times. As you grow you develop the luxury of hiring people to fill certain roles you may particularly not relish, but for a long time you're going to have to wear a lot of hats, work longer days to fill those roles, and make sure that everything is being done correctly and timely even as you hire.

4. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect?

The most rewarding aspect is seeing the good that we do in the lives of real people who are struggling through bad circumstances that they didn't create. Particularly in workers compensation cases, injuries can derail the lives of people who have scraped and clawed to survive their whole life and all too often employers turn their backs and insurance companies hire high priced lawyers to use the law as a sword and not the support mechanism it's meant to be. When we can get someone the medical treatment they deserve, the income benefits they've been denied, prevent evictions and repossessions, and help them survive what is often the lowest point in their lives, it's a special feeling.

5. What is one of the greatest challenges facing your field right now?

Legislation, always legislation. At the national level bills targeted at stripping consumers of their Seventh Amendment rights in class actions and mass torts are introduced in committee every session and at the state level the looming threat of damage caps and other anti-consumer restrictions are ever-present.

6. What do you do to handle the stress of your work? How do you relax after a stressful day?

Planning things to look forward to is important when you work long days, weekends, and spend most of your time under an incredible amount of stress. Sometimes it's a three day weekend in a couple of months, sometimes it's a week-long vacation that's a year off, but having dates on the calendar when I know I'm going to step away and force myself to relax helps me get through the grind. I know attorneys who have literally gone years without a vacation and it's not healthy or sustainable, but it's easy to do if you don't book it and force yourself to set that recuperative time aside.

7. What advice would you give to someone wanting to work in your field?

Understand what you are signing up for and pick the right area of practice that fits your personality and long-term goals. More so than most professions, the actual practice of law is dramatically different than the experience of law school. Likewise, the different areas of practice you can choose to go into are in many ways like entirely different careers. I was fortunate to be exposed to criminal, family, personal injury and even some corporate law in an actual practice setting while I was in law school. For me, I knew that civil litigation was the only path where I would get to do the types of things I enjoyed and would find satisfaction in my career.

8. What would you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?

Building my law firm and providing the highest quality legal services to our clients and secure jobs and excellent benefits to the people who work every day to make my vision a success. My partner Tyler and I started our firm five years ago and for months I didn't sleep, questioning whether we were too young, too inexperienced, or maybe just in too competitive a field. I watched small firms around us open and close and I watched more and more massive advertising firms move into Savannah. It was scary and still is today, but through hard work, excellent client service, and with the help of an amazing team, we have grown every year and it's both fulfilling and humbling to be a part of.

9. What book/resource do you find yourself referencing the most?

My most valuable resource has been other attorneys. Georgia is blessed with a very collegial and accessible bar and as a young attorney, the best resource available is someone who has seen/been in and often wrote the book on whatever challenge or question you are facing. I've been very lucky to have fantastic mentors like Mike Prieto, Jeff Harris, Tommy Malone, and others who are giants in our field but will take the time out of their day to answer my calls and help me understand whatever question or challenge I'm facing. Don't ever be afraid to ask a question because everyone had to learn the answer at some point themselves and you're often going to learn a lot more from the real life examples experienced attorneys will share with you than you can from text.

10. When you look out your office window, what do you see?

The wall of the building next door, which is about ten feet away, and a shrub. This question is a little comical to me because it highlights one of the hard decisions we made last year to accommodate our growth. When my partner and I started our firm in 2012, we leased space in a historic high-rise office building downtown. I could see the river and all of downtown and I'd often raise my window at the end the week and smoke a cigar and just enjoy the view. The problem was, there was no parking and as we grew the square foot price became unreasonable. We purchased our building last year and renovated it to specifically suit our needs and while I miss that view every day, the move was the right thing for the business and for our clients and I'm proud that we made it and of the end result of our construction efforts.

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