

Breiner & Breiner: Learning from a father's love of law and life



Ask Ted and Mary Breiner about their careers, and their responses start with their father. It's more than just showing respect for a parent. Al Breiner shaped the lives and careers of his son and daughter in profound ways.

Family. Chemistry. Patents and trademarks. The law. The outdoors. Wisconsin. Virginia. Marquette University. Fine wine.

Each played an important part in the life of Al Breiner, who died in 2002. Each has played important parts in the lives of Ted and Mary Breiner, who have continued the successful intellectual property practice in Alexandria, Va., that their father founded.

Start with chemistry. Al Breiner graduated from Marquette University in the early 1950s with bachelor's and master's degrees in that field and went to work for Johnson Wax in Racine as a chemist. Through his work, he got involved with and interested in patents.

The family, including three children born in Racine, moved to Virginia in 1959, where Al Breiner worked as a patent agent for a Washington law firm and attended Georgetown's law school at night, earning his law degree in 1963. He worked for law firms for several years before setting up his own practice, specializing in patent and trademark law.

Al took Ted to visit Marquette when it was time for Ted to choose a college. Ted says that one visit was all he needed to be sold on the university. After completing his undergraduate degree, he enrolled in Marquette Law School, graduating in 1979. Mary followed the same path several years later, graduating from the Law School in

1982. They maintain strong ties with the Law School and Milwaukee.

"I never intended to go into intellectual property law," Ted says. His father suggested it, but Ted was interested in other areas of the law. However, on a trip to Germany, Ted met a lawyer his father knew, and their conversation convinced Ted. "It was the best decision I ever made, working with my dad," Ted says. "This field is just fun."

Mary joined the firm after her graduation. "I enjoy working with claims and the wordsmithing that goes on," she says. The Breiner law firm has fluctuated between three and four lawyers, but at the present it's Ted and Mary. "Being family, we can speak our minds and we don't have to worry about office politics," Mary says.

Outside of work, Al Breiner had "a love of the land," as Mary puts it. He was an enthusiast for outdoors activities of many kinds, and his children followed suit. For Ted, who is married and has five daughters, that means "you name the sport, and I've either done it or coached it for my kids." It also means he has a great love for a boat he bought in 1995, which is kept at the neighborhood marina a block from the family's home. For Mary, the outdoor impulse includes a big interest in dogs—she has a Norwegian Elkhound—and an active role working on land her father bought two hours west of the Washington area.

In 1979, Al Breiner was in Europe, riding a train along the Rhine River, when he noticed vineyards planted on steep slopes. The land reminded him of the Blue Ridge property he owned. He became interested in trying to grow grapes and make wine there. A test vineyard was planted in 1986. Stone Mountain Vineyards was established in 1995. It now produces about 3,000 cases a year of about a dozen wines.

A third Breiner sibling, Chris, managed the law firm. He also was the Stone Mountain winemaker and ran the winery until he passed away unexpectedly in February 2012. Ted's oldest daughter, Kate, is now operating the winery.

Al Breiner was "a great lawyer, an excellent lawyer," Ted Breiner says. But he was more than that. He was a builder of family bonds and paths, as can be seen in the work and lives of Ted and Mary Breiner and the generation-to-generation continuity of the extended family. ■



TRIAL ADVOCACY 2 *Marquette Law Review* RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE
Professional Sports Law PUBLIC INTEREST LAW SOCIETY *On the Issues with Mike Gousha*
Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic — Council for the Spanish Speaking CREDITOR-DEBTOR LAW
HALLOWS LECTURE 19th Annual Howard B. Eisenberg Do-Gooders' Auction ADVANCED TORTS
Hon. Helen Wilson Nies Annual Lecture DISTINGUISHED LECTURES Pro Bono Work
Marquette Law School Faculty Blog Media Law ADVANCED EVIDENCE International Law
Milwaukee's Future in the Chicago Megacity Conference POSNER PRO BONO EXCHANGE

EXCELLENCE FAITH LEADERSHIP SERVICE

Carved in stone above the fireplace in Eckstein Hall's Aitken Reading Room, these four words succinctly state Marquette University's mission, which is exemplified in Marquette Law School activities that require rather more words.

ESTATE AND GIFT TAXATION Howard and Phyllis Eisenberg Loan Repayment Assistance Program
M-LINC—Marquette Legal Initiative for Nonprofit Corporations George and Margaret Barrock Lecture
Student Organizations Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic for Veterans ROBERT F. BODEN LECTURE
National Sports Law Institute Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic — House of Peace Community Center
The Challenge and the Opportunity: *How Wisconsin Can Meet More Ambitious Goals for Students*
Business Associations FACULTY TEACHING AND RESEARCH *Marquette Elder's Advisor*
MARQUETTE LAW SCHOOL POLL Jurisprudence Prosecutor's and Public Defender's Clinics