



AMERICAN  
BANKRUPTCY  
INSTITUTE

## 2019 Delaware Views from the Bench

### *Ethics Track*

# Best Practices for Stress Management and Time Management in Restructuring

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## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH STRESS/TIME MANAGEMENT

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### DELAWARE VIEWS FROM THE BENCH

1

When you work in the bankruptcy world, whether as an attorney, judge, in-house counsel, or financial advisor, stress comes with the territory



Stress is normal. It actually helps you perform better, UNLESS You have too much stress which becomes burnout. You can still do your task, but it takes a lot of effort to do it well. In time, burnout becomes impairment.

2

### STATE OF THE PROFESSION

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**Between 21 & 23% of practicing lawyers are problem drinkers (v. 6.4% for the general public);**

**28% suffer from depression (v. 6.6% for the general public);**

**19% struggle with anxiety; and**

**23% are impaired by stress.**

Data taken from (i) the 2016 study of 13,000 lawyers by the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs, (ii) the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, (iii) a separate Survey of Law Student Well-Being conducted that same year that included 3,300 law students from 15 different law schools, and (iv) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

3

### What Else Have We Learned?

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Younger attorneys have higher levels of distress symptoms than their older, more experienced peers.

Lawyers don't seek help for their behavioral health problems because of the fear that someone will find out and it will discredit them and possibly affect the license to practice.

4



## Panel Survival Tips On Building Resilience!

Prevention Works – How To Help Burnt Out Attorneys, Judges, and Financial Advisors

Learn the early warning signs of Burnout and Impairment

Learn the early warning signs of Mood, Anxiety and Addiction Disorders

Destigmatize Burnout and Impairment –

People get depressed and/or Anxious and seek ways to get stress relief – It's Normal....

Offer (require) stress Management workshops for attorneys, financial advisors, and staff

PROMOTE TREATMENT, NOT PUNISHMENT

5

## Panel Survival Tips (continued)

Reassess your balance of career success vs. personal fulfillment

Get the rest you need

Make the most of personal time

Don't allow yourself to become isolated (Join DSBA)

Listen to others

Do a thorough self-examination

Talk to family, spouse, peers

Give back (Pro Bono is good for the public and good for the soul)



6

## Panel Survival Tips (continued)

Don't let stress fester

Be patient and express gratitude

Establish a routine to identify professional and personal tasks

Know yourself in selecting blocks of time for a given task

Be flexible

Prioritize tasks

Remember: Identify upcoming tasks; schedule the time to accomplish the task; and JUST DO IT! (small action steps lead to completed tasks)

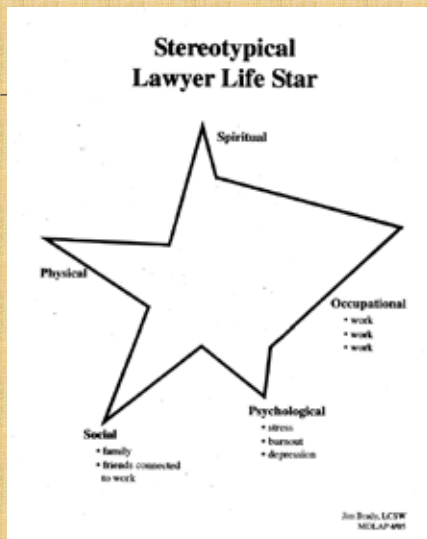
Take a vacation

Practice gratitude

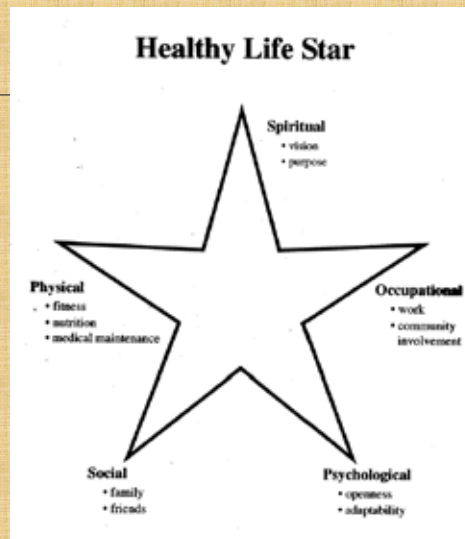


7

## Burnout Zone



## Not Burnout Zone



## Resources:

On Mental Toughness: HBR'S 10 MUST READS, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS, BOSTON, MASS.

THE BEST LAWYER YOU CAN BE: A Guide to Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellness (ABA Law Practice Division), Stewart Levine

The Six-Minute Solution: A Mindfulness Primer for Lawyers, Mindfulness Insights, Exercises and Tips..., Scott L. Rogers, M.S., J.D.

LAWYER WELLNESS IS NOT AN OXYMORON, Andy Clark

MedlinePlus: STRESS [www.medlineplus.gov/stress.html](http://www.medlineplus.gov/stress.html)

American Psychological Association: Stress in Workplace [www.apa.org/helcenter/workplace-stress](http://www.apa.org/helcenter/workplace-stress)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): Stress at Work: [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress)

The Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program (DE-LAP).ORG -[cwaldhauser@de-lap.org](mailto:cwaldhauser@de-lap.org)

9

If you, or someone you know needs help, call  
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10



## DE-LAP ZONE

A Message from the Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program

By Carol P. Waldhauser, Executive Director

## Road Warriors Get Burnout Too



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*For 10 years, John Doe was a true road warrior. In fact, John logged in the long office hours and the time spent away from home to become a successful personal injury trial lawyer in the tri-state area. John even achieved managing partner status at his firm. Back then, John said, “I enjoyed what I was doing because I felt like I was helping people.”*

*Then suddenly and without warning, John lost his enthusiasm. Soon, John found that the enjoyment of law was slipping away – and so was the time with his family. He looked around and saw too large of a percentage of his peers getting divorced, abusing alcohol and drugs, and simply burning out. John elaborated, “There were fellow colleagues that were 50 years old having heart attacks and I thought, ‘Is that the road I am on?’ There must be a better way for this road warrior rather than burning out!”*

• • •

**M**ostly everyone experiences stress and each career has its own set of challenges. The practice of the law, however, seems to bring special difficulties when it comes to that overused word “stress.” Subsequently, some lawyers feel overwhelmed and burned out.

We know that lawyers tend to work a greater number of hours than other professionals. Law firms have large minimum hour requirements that can restrict the development and maintenance of a personal life. Then for solo practitioners and those working in smaller firms, additional strain may come from having a large case load, but limited or no support to catch the overflow of work. Also, individuals in a solo or small practices may take on more than they can reasonably handle. This type of stressful environment often results in an over commitment that often leads to the professional being overwhelmed and even burning out.

### Burnout vs. Wellbeing

Burnout is the lack of enthusiasm (enthusiasm is derived from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, which means “filled with spirit”). Wellbeing means happiness, security, interest, and serenity (balance). Using these definitions, we can draw the conclusion that burnout is the extinguishing of an individual’s spiritual, mental, physical, or emotional enthusiasm towards a dominant interest in their life.



# Preventing Burnout

- **Re-assess your balance of career success versus personal fulfillment.** Sacrificing time with family and rarely having time for interests outside work indicates a potential need for recalibration and prioritizing. Make it a point to set goals to better balance work and plan.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** Technology can increase mental stimulation during day and throughout the night. Unplug.
- **Make the most of your personal time.** Many lawyers have had the experience of being in the office worrying about things that are going on at home, then coming home only to worry about things that need to be done at the office. Be in the present and be mindful.
- **Don't allow yourself to become isolated.** Get out of the office and the house and make sure you are still genuinely and openly involved with friends and engaged in extracurricular activities and hobbies that are not in any way associated with being a lawyer or practicing law.
- **Listen to others.** Pay attention to signs that perhaps you need to change problematic interpersonal habits and pessimistic thinking.
- **Do a thorough self-examination.** Every year I write an article recognizing the need to do a self-audit. Take an inventory of things you need to be happy. Do you really need

all those material things? If you are not happy — do not do it anymore.

- **Talk to spouses, family, peers.** Get the thoughts and opinions of others, since they often notice changes in your behavior and personality before you do. Think about events in their lives that you might have missed, or do not want to miss anymore, because of the too-hecktic work schedule.
- **Give back.** Look not only at the financial aspects of ratcheting back or changing, but take a spiritual view as well. What is your “purpose” and what can you do to help others?
- **Don't be afraid.** Take risks and do the kind of things you want to do. Follow your interest and your instincts. If you need, call DE-LAP for coaching.
- **Don't let stress fester.** Be cognizant that, as lawyers and judges, we are trained to operate at a high level of intellectual abstraction that is analytical and disconnected from personal emotions to allow us to represent clients effectively. This mode of thinking, however, can be severely damaging to our wellbeing if stress (distress and long chronic stress) is allowed to fester.
- **Be patient.** The situations for everybody are so personal and so variable. Remember it is a stressful occupation — accept it — and take time for yourself. Put first things first!

For example, the feeling of being overwhelmed can lead to what is called by some as “project paralysis.” There are lawyers who spend a half-hour a day making “to do” lists, but end up doing nothing. When you have many tasks to accomplish and little mental energy for them, even the smallest tasks can appear daunting.

Your stress symptoms are a response to the stressors in your life (distress and chronic stress). Some professionals thrive on a high level of stress. Others find a fast-paced life to be debilitating. The amount of stress that is right for one road warrior might not be right for another. And, the events that you find stressful are probably not the ones that push your buttons. In fact, experts tell us that up to 95 percent of our stress is in response to the trivial, rather than the important, events in life.

## How to Prevent Road Warrior Burnout


The first tip to prevent burnout and keep calm and carry on is to ask yourself

two questions: “Is it important?” and “Can I control it?” For example, you can control the amount of cases that you take and the hours you stay in the office.

As a long-time executive director, and in another life — spending 20 plus years in the legal profession — I have a unique perspective in helping lawyers achieve a better work-life balance and in getting help with issues that can affect and are affecting their quality of life and quality of professionalism. With that perspective in mind, ask for help when you need it. I know this goes against everything you believe in.

But, the people who care for you do so in good times and in bad. When they come to you and ask you to lend a shoulder or give some extra help when they are struggling, you are happy to do it. For the most part, it is a nice feeling to be relied upon. Give those people around you, or DE-LAP, the chance to be there for you as well.

Remember, it is difficult to be emotionally and physically available to others if you do not have a support system of your own. Take responsibility for reserving your own energy, as well as time for those people who support you. Road warriors are people, too. Remember, John? He did and today he is a road warrior who keeps calm and is carrying on!

For more information about this topic, or any matter that may be affecting your quality of life and/or professionalism call DE-LAP at (302) 777-0124 — we are confidential and free. Also, for tips to survive as a road-warrior follow us on Facebook and Twitter and [www.de-lap.org](http://www.de-lap.org). 

**Carol P. Waldhauser** is the Executive Director of the Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program and can be reached at [cwaldhauser@de-lap.org](mailto:cwaldhauser@de-lap.org).



# Top 10 Things I Have Learned Since I Took the Bench<sup>1</sup>

## Written by:

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In early 2006, I was appointed as a bankruptcy judge in the District of Delaware. My first two-and-a-half years on the bench have been both exciting and challenging; there have been difficult transitions and welcome changes in my life. All in all, it has been a compelling start to what I hope is long and satisfying journey.



Hon. Christopher S. Sontchi

I have only been on the bench a short time, but in the words of Winston Churchill, these few months may not be “the beginning of the end...[but] perhaps, the end of the beginning.”<sup>2</sup> In this short time, I have learned primarily that I have a lot to learn, but I have managed to pick up a few points. Thus, with apologies to David Letterman, here are “The Top 10 Things I Have Learned Since I Took The Bench.”

## 10. Becoming a judge makes you funnier and smarter, but not richer or thinner

Court can be a very stressful environment. While in private practice, I attempted to use humor to relieve stress in the courtroom and elsewhere. The use of humor by a judge in the courtroom, however, can be tricky as there is always the risk of undermining the credibility of the court because litigants may mistakenly believe that the judge is not taking their matter seriously. Inevitably, any quip from the judge elicits an overly enthusiastic response—not unlike canned laughter on a TV sitcom. Of course, litigants are trying to influence the judge and laughing at the judge’s attempt at humor can’t hurt. The reaction is flattering, but the potential bad side of this newly found “wit” is that it can be a significant cause of “judge-itis,” which is the worst thing that can happen to a judge,

## About the Author

Hon. Christopher Sontchi was appointed as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the District of Delaware in Wilmington in 2006. He previously practiced at Ashby & Geddes PA in Wilmington, where he represented a wide variety of nationally based enterprises with diverse interests in most of the larger chapter 11 reorganization proceedings filed in Delaware.

especially a trial judge.

“Judge-itis” is the exaggerated sense of self-importance that results in boorish, rude, irrational, condescending and just plain irritating behavior. “Judge-itis” ultimately harms the operation of the court system, impugns the reputation of the court and can lead to the perception that the results are unfair. Judges need to be constantly vigilant to avoid it.

Fortunately, this magical transformation into a funnier and smarter person has not applied at home. If

opportunity to present their case and advocate their position and the decision was made on the facts and law in a reasoned, impartial manner. Litigants expect and deserve to have their “day in court.”

The need for impartiality requires, to a certain extent, the isolation of judges. While I understand its necessity, adjusting to it has been difficult. It has been hard to distance myself from my friends who are lawyers, both in and out of Delaware. It was particularly difficult (and necessary) in that so many of these friends appear in front of me so often. Moreover, sometimes it is just frustrating and inefficient. For example, I work through my courtroom deputy and judicial assistant when communicating with the bar. In those rare instances when there is a breakdown in communication or confusion, my first instinct is to pick up the phone and work it out, but I can’t.

Frankly, I underestimated how difficult this transition is. That said, the warm welcome from my colleagues on the bench and the many new friends I

## Dicta

anything, my wife and children are tougher on me than ever before and they help immunize me against “judge-itis.” For example, shortly after I took the bench I was playing *Sorry* with my six-year-old son. There was a disagreement over the rules and I told him what I thought to be the correct rule (he disagreed). He looked me squarely in the eye and said, with that serious tone children use when correcting adults, “Daddy, you’re a bankruptcy judge, not a *Sorry* judge.” Of course, my son was right, and his comment quickly checked my inflated sense of self-importance. I might also add that his father was very proud of his excellent grasp of the limits of subject-matter jurisdiction—a skill sometimes lacking in the attorneys appearing before me.

## 9. “People say we got it made”<sup>3</sup>

A judge’s job is to decide disputes—nothing more and nothing less. It is vital to the operation of the court system that persons appearing before the court respect the resolution of those disputes. They need to believe that they were given a fair

have made in the judiciary throughout the country have eased the way. Still, it’s hard to have lunch with a fellow judge in Mississippi when you are sitting in Delaware.

## 8. Going out of business is a good thing—just keep your “GOB Sale” banners to a reasonable size

Often in life we don’t realize the significance of something until it is absent. When I took the bench, I felt this tremendous release of stress. I mentioned it to one of my former partners, and he replied, succinctly, “of course you’re less stressed; you’re not in business anymore.” He was right. I was a partner in a firm of 25 lawyers in Delaware. While being a judge certainly has its share of unique challenges and stress, I don’t stay up nights worrying about getting the next client, billable hours and keeping my clients happy, let alone the day-to-day issues involved in helping to run a business. What a relief. There are things I miss about private practice (*especially the salary!*) but I don’t miss:

- time sheets
- clients

<sup>1</sup> This article had its genesis in remarks I gave at the ABI “Views from the Beltway” seminar in June 2008 in Wilmington, Del. My thanks go to Derek C. Abbott of Morris, Nichols, Arst & Tunnell and Gregg M. Galardi of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom for asking me to speak that evening. Also, I am very thankful to Hon. Kevin J. Carey and Hon. Brendan Linehan Shannon for their helpful comments on this article. The views expressed in this article are my own and do not represent the position of the United States, my colleagues on the Delaware Bankruptcy Court or anyone else, for that matter.

<sup>2</sup> Winston Churchill, “Address at Mansion House on the Battle of Egypt” (Nov. 10, 1942) *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* 150 (3d ed. 1980).

<sup>3</sup> John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band, “Isolation” (Apple/EMI 1970).

- time sheets
- payroll (I let Congress take care of that)
- did I mention time sheets?
- collections
- time sheets (I think you get the idea: I hated time sheets)
- partner meetings
- mandatory continuing legal education<sup>4</sup>
- and, time sheets.

#### 7. “So good, it’s bad”<sup>5</sup>

From my experience in private practice, I knew that the vast majority of bankruptcy lawyers were good, but being on the bench gives you a different perspective. The lawyers that appear before me are incredibly smart, organized and persuasive, which makes my job incredibly interesting but, in some ways, a lot harder.

I quickly discovered (a bit to my surprise) that there are few easy decisions to be made as a bankruptcy judge. If it’s an easy call, the lawyers are smart enough to settle the matter, and if it’s a hard call, they are remarkably persuasive in advocating their positions.

I remember as a young lawyer monitoring countless hearings before Judge Helen S. Balick. I used to try to determine for myself what side should win based on the arguments. Almost always I would “rule” on behalf of the party that spoke last! Of course, Judge Balick’s decisions were significantly less alterable by the lawyers’ arguments. I hope that my own decisions are now less malleable, but the lawyers can make it challenging.

#### 6. “Civil servant” is not an oxymoron

I am blessed with having outstanding colleagues on the Delaware bankruptcy bench. The judges and our clerk of the court have lunch once a week. We discuss our cases, issues before the court, administration and the lawyers—both good and bad (bad behavior in front of one of us will soon be known by all). It is also a nice opportunity simply to socialize and to share our personal lives.

Through the NCBJ and judge-only seminars sponsored by the Federal Judicial Center, I have come to know bankruptcy judges from all over the country. They are a smart, dedicated, eclectic and (perhaps surprisingly) fun group of people. My colleagues on the Third Circuit and the Delaware District

Court have been welcoming and friendly as well.

I have been particularly impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the staff in the clerk’s office. There is a great deal more going on behind the scenes in the courthouse than I ever appreciated before taking the bench.

Also, I lucked into a terrific courtroom deputy and judicial assistant. Their experience and sparkling personalities have been a godsend. Between my staff at the office and my wife and children at home, my ego is kept well in check.

Finally, the law clerks are a breath of fresh air, although, like most young lawyers, their enthusiasm sometimes outstrips their legal skills. In any event, they are of tremendous assistance and help keep things interesting.

#### 5. Everyone—even a judge—has a boss

While in private practice, I thought that, other than on appeal, a judge is answerable to no one but him or herself. That is not true. As bankruptcy judges, we are answerable to the appeals court that appointed us and has the power but we hope not the inclination to fire us (yes, we can be fired). At the very least, the appeals court has the power to deny reappointment.

We are a “judicial unit” of the district court, and we report to the district court judges and are, ultimately, under their authority for certain administrative matters. In my experience, district courts respect their bankruptcy colleagues. They certainly have enough to do in managing the district court’s busy docket to defer to the bankruptcy judges on the vast majority of administrative matters.

We are also accountable to the consumers of our judicial services—the litigants and the bar, who have the right to raise issues with our conduct with the appeals court. Ultimately, lawyers can have an influence on whether we are reappointed.

There is a very healthy government bureaucracy governing the judiciary under an entity known as the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC) and there are plenty of forms to file on a regular basis with the AOUSC and the appeals court. Despite the normal frustration associated with functioning in a bureaucracy, the AOUSC does a great job managing the most unmanageable of people: federal judges. They also provide a wide assortment of resources to help us do our jobs well.

One vexing bureaucratic matter in

which we are currently engaged, however, is a “case weighting study” run by the AOUSC that requires each judge to keep time sheets for a two-month period. It’s amazing the stress that instantly returned with having to keep time. It was like suddenly remembering some childhood trauma. Did I mention I don’t like keeping time sheets?

#### 4. Some travel required

I have attended more conferences in the last two years than I did in the previous five. I enjoy them more than I did as an attorney for a number of reasons. I am no longer required to report my continuing legal education, which means I can attend what I find interesting (and skip what I don’t), rather than worrying about accumulating CLE credits. In addition, at many conferences I have participated as a speaker or panel member. It is much more enjoyable to speak than to listen. In short, legal conferences are still business, but they are much more pleasurable than they used to be. It’s also nice to speak at a conference because otherwise I couldn’t afford to attend most of them. I was surprised to discover that, other than the annual bankruptcy judges’ workshop presented by the Federal Judicial Center, there is no provision in the budget to fund continuing legal education for judges.

Because I enjoy socializing and talking about the law, I enjoy attending conferences, but I avoid discussing pending cases at these events. The close interactions with the bar as well as the funding of our attendance require a judge to be sensitive to legitimate issues of impartiality and judicial independence. Thus, I am happy to socialize and talk about the law.

To keep our activities transparent to the public, the Judicial Conference has instituted rules governing reimbursement as well as reporting requirements. Nonetheless, there have been efforts to limit further reimbursement for judges’ travel, lodging and meals at conferences, which would, in effect, eliminate our financial ability to attend most events. I hope that does not come to pass, because I think that having judges attend and speak at these conferences is a very good thing for the bench and the bar. It facilitates communication and ultimately improves the quality of the advocacy and the operation of the court system.

#### 3. This Old House

I love the Bankruptcy Code. I know

*continued on page 78*

<sup>4</sup> In Delaware, members of the federal judiciary are exempt from the rules governing mandatory continuing legal education. This was one of the more pleasant surprises in taking the bench.

<sup>5</sup> The B-52’s, “Eyes Wide Open” (Astralwerks Records 2008).

## *Dicta: The Top 10 Things I Have Learned Since I Took the Bench*

from page 47

that sounds odd, but it's true. The Code is like a rambling old manor house in England. It is an odd collection of architectural styles: Tudor, Georgian, Victorian and Contemporary. Some of the rooms are warm, cozy and familiar with floorboards worn smooth by years of use. Others are musty and seldom-used, and a few are all but forgotten. Just when you think you know your way around, you discover a new passageway or fall through a rotten step.

I spend a good bit of my time thinking (and occasionally writing) about what the Code means and how it should work. That means applying the canons of statutory construction or, in other words, searching for plain meaning. To paraphrase Judge **Thomas F. Waldron**, however, applying the plain meaning of the statute is the default entrance—not the mandatory exit.<sup>6</sup> In fact, discerning the plain meaning of the Code is often difficult if for no other reason than if the meaning were truly plain, in all likelihood, the parties would have settled the matter and no one would be asking me to interpret the statute in the first place. Of course, sometimes litigants know very well what the plain meaning is but they simply do not like it. They litigate in the hope of convincing a judge to interpret the statute contrary to its intent and meaning. These are the times judges need to be particularly vigilant.

To stretch my metaphor even further, I love old houses, and exploring the old, rambling manse that is the Bankruptcy Code is an intellectually challenging and just plain fun part of my job.

### **2. With unpredictability comes flexibility**

Very often, and despite the best efforts of counsel to keep the court informed, I have very little idea what will be involved in an upcoming hearing: objections, witnesses, etc. I can prepare all morning for a contested hearing only to have it settle at the last minute. This is not a criticism of the bar. Putting a dispute before a judge is an inherently risky proposition, and most people are risk-averse. Thus, a good bit of the unpredictability in the court's schedule is a result of the fact that the parties are constantly seeking to reach a consensual resolution of disputes. Unpredictability is the nature of litigation, especially bankruptcy litigation.

Also, you never know when an

emergency will arise. Recently, in a week that was already fairly well-booked, I had a new chapter 11 case assigned to me on Monday and an emergency hearing that day with "first days" on Tuesday and another hearing on Friday. I also had an emergency matter arise that same Monday in a consumer case that entailed an emergency hearing and drafting and issuing an opinion the next day.

The flip side to unpredictability is flexibility. If a contested hearing settles at the last minute, I can devote my time to other matters, including walking my dogs, riding my bike or spending time with my family. Also, I have a good bit of control over my schedule (although not absolute). For example, I was able to schedule a lengthy vacation in July and I've managed to attend most of my children's school and sporting events and missed fewer dinners. This is a big improvement from when I was in private practice and has been a tremendous benefit of taking the bench. If you don't believe me, ask my family. It may even benefit the litigants and counsel as well: A happier judge is, presumably, a better judge.<sup>7</sup>

### **1. And, the number one "Thing I Have Learned Since I Took The Bench" is: This job rocks—if you can afford it**

Ferris Bueller once said about a 1961 Ferrari 250GT California: "It is so choice. If you have the means, I highly recommend it."<sup>8</sup> The same can be said for taking the bench.

My investiture as a bankruptcy judge was scheduled for a private ceremony in chambers. The afternoon on the day before, one of my future colleagues called me at home to tell me that he had just discovered a conflict in a chapter 11 case and to ask if I could handle the sale hearing scheduled for 5:00 p.m. the next day—the day of my planned investiture. After what seemed an eternity, I remembered to breathe and told him that, if I did not have a conflict, I would be happy to oblige. Now, I had planned on spending my first few days as a judge figuring out how the phones worked,

learning the computer system, finding the copy room, etc. Instead, I spent most of the next day preparing for a contested sale hearing (with a short break to actually become a judge and to celebrate over lunch with my family). The hearing started at 5:00 p.m., and the courtroom was packed. It was an eventful evening. There were witnesses, objections, documents to be admitted and even a chambers conference to discuss treatment of confidential documents. It was frightening, challenging and exhilarating. At the end of the hearing, I called one of my future colleagues and told him, "this job rocks!" I still feel that way.

Nonetheless, there is a substantial opportunity cost (despite the psychic income) to taking the bench that, unfortunately, leads some very qualified lawyers not to seek appointment and some excellent sitting judges to leave the bench. There is a movement with broad support to raise significantly the salaries of the judiciary and to institute an annual cost-of-living adjustment. Bankruptcy judges and magistrate judges make 92 percent of a district judge's salary, which interestingly (and a little frustratingly) makes us the lowest-paid judges (both federal and state) in Delaware. To be clear, I am not complaining. I went into this job with my eyes open regarding compensation. But, like many others, I could not have afforded to take the position and maintain my family's lifestyle without the significant assistance of my spouse's salary. Even with that assistance, I worry about financing my children's education. Thus, I would not refuse a raise, and I hope I get one! It would help greatly to provide the necessary means to continue to enjoy this "choice" job.

I hope you have enjoyed this peek into some of my experiences as a new judge. There is always the risk that familiarity breeds contempt but, at the same time, "where mystery begins, justice ends."<sup>9</sup> I think that, all in all, the operation of the court system is improved when judges share their thoughts not only on the substance of the law but on the experience of judging. I hope you agree.

Finally, as Ferris said after the final credits: "It's over. Go home." ■

<sup>6</sup> Hon. Thomas F. Waldron and Neil M. Berman, "Principled Principles of Statutory Interpretation: A Judicial Perspective after Two Years of BAPCPA," 81 *Am. Bankr. L.J.* 195, 232 (2007).

<sup>7</sup> By the way, this is why you should always be glad when we recess for lunch in my courtroom. I get grumpy when I'm hungry.

<sup>8</sup> *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (Paramount Pictures 1986) (As you may recall, Ferris and his friend, Cameron Frye, "borrowed" the Ferrari from Cameron's father and ultimately "killed" the car when it crashed through the wall of Mr. Frye's garage and plummeted to its death).

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Burke, "Observations on a Publication, 'The present state of the nation'" (1769), *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* 108 (3d ed. 1980).