

alvin wolff jr.

CLASS OF 1979

BY: ALISON SIELOFF

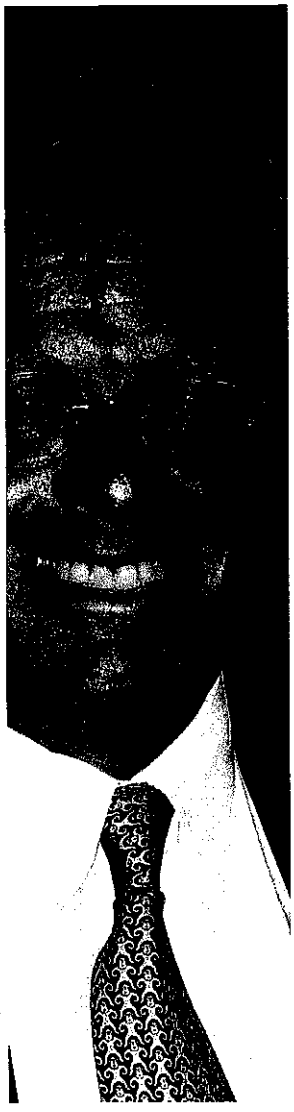


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALVIN WOLFF JR.

Alvin Wolff Jr. ('79), didn't begin his career as a medical malpractice and personal injury lawyer. In fact, when this second-generation attorney—his father also practiced law—started out more than 30 years ago, he handled everything from divorce cases to collections, worked night court and even tried a few felonies.

"Then one day an anesthesia case just walked into the office," says Wolff of an incident in the mid 1980s. "I knew nothing about malpractice, so I went into the hospital, like Paul Newman did in 'The Verdict,' with a camera, and I started taking pictures. Eventually security caught me and escorted me out, but that's how I started doing malpractice work."

Even though handling cases during what may be a family's darkest moments can be stressful and taxing, this kind of work offers fulfillment for Wolff, a husband and father of three.

He says he appreciates "putting some hope in someone's life when it feels hopeless. Giving people something to look forward to. Righting a wrong. And sometimes being able to make positive changes in the health care system."

Drawing on more than 30 years of experience helping accident victims, Wolff offers advice to bicyclists and motorcyclists in his recent publication, *The Total Guide for Motorcycle and Bicycle Accident Victims in Missouri*. An avid cyclist himself, Wolff understands what people go through when injured in these accidents.

Wolff spends much of his free time on two wheels, training and riding as

many as 200 miles during one cycling event. He actively raises funds for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society through cycling each year—in 2010, he collected donations for the organization totaling about \$33,000.

Wolff's newest publication, *How to Pick a Lawyer or What the Advertisers Don't Want You to Know*, is for consumers seeking a legal professional. Both of Wolff's publications are available free on his website, www.stlouis-missouriaccidentlawyer.com.

Wolff also keeps busy as an adjunct professor at SLU LAW, having taught trial advocacy at his alma mater. From his law office in Clayton, Mo., he shares more insights into his career, life outside work, and offers advice for law students:

SLB: How did your experience at SLU LAW prepare you for your line of work?

AW: Law school trained me to think about things differently. When I was in law school, a classmate and I did research for solo practitioners. After seeing the way a lot of different lawyers worked, I didn't think I was going to fit the firm mold. So when I graduated, I used my contacts and asked lawyers to send me the cases that nobody else would handle.

SLB: You're actively involved with more than a dozen charities—Boy Scouts of America, Hope Lodge Cancer Hospice, the Jewish Federation and The Mathews-Dickey Boys' and Girls' Club. Has community service always been important to you?

AW: My father was very involved, my mother is very involved, and my parents trained me to be very involved in the community. I started attending various committee meetings, then heading committees. I find it fun and rewarding to serve and head committees because it's another way for me to make a difference in the community.

SLB: *The Total Guide for Motorcycle and Bicycle Accident Victims in Missouri* is your first book. What inspired you to write it?

AW: I raise a lot of money for multiple sclerosis with the MS 150 ride, and I've seen a fair number of bicycle accidents. During the last few years, my largest cases have been for motorcycle accidents. I didn't see anything written for both bicyclists and motorcyclists, and I wanted to write a book that offers a simple how-to guide that serves as a roadmap on what happens on a case, what you need to do, and what you need to look for in a lawyer.

SLB: With your experience, both practicing and teaching law, what advice can you offer law school students?

AW: If you're interested in trial work, go to court and watch trials. Take all the trial courses that are offered and be prepared for the amount of work you're given. If you want to do trial work, you'll need to work hard, because it takes a lot of work to win a case. **SLB**