

A MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE

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WHY I'M A TRIAL LAWYER

A newspaper story today mentioned another class action settlement. Each member of the class is getting \$140 and the attorney fees will be in the neighborhood of 12 million dollars. While the thought of having an obscene payday danced around in my head, I remembered my client calling me yesterday and why I remain a trial lawyer.

This client has been distraught for several years, enduring a low quality life. Why? Her surgeon put a stitch through a nerve during foot surgery, tied the nerve to a tendon and then decided that she had conversion disorder due to unusual complaints of pain. Her agony was real. She is a client with real injuries; she hired me to be her warrior, to seek some restitution for her harms and losses. She called on the phone, crying. She hung up with a smile on her face, knowing that I am on her side trying to right a tremendous wrong.

While I will probably make a fee on the case that will help pay the ever increasing overhead and ensure a continuation of a comfortable lifestyle, I will never, ever make huge fees that border on the ridiculous. Instead, what I have is a sense of satisfaction of helping people. What I am is a service provider. I am on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. My cell phone rings on weekends, holidays and vacations. My family may not like it, but it's what I'm here for. I help those who have no voice, those too weak to help themselves. I take on their burdens as if they are mine. Tragedy, pain, suffering and despair don't take vacations or holidays.

With this service comes a sense of satisfaction that I make a difference in the lives of my clients and their families. Whether that difference is large or small depends on the magnitude of the case. What I know is that while I may have an office full of cases, the case I am working on for that client is the only case that is important to him.

I think of the parents of brain damaged infants I've represented who were grateful to have a stream of money coming in to care for their child. I think of clients who were left crippled by carelessness whose feelings of hopelessness and despair have been lessened due to my efforts in their case. Most of all, I think of the practices that changed in hospitals and medical offices because they were called out and they decided it would be a good idea to change their careless conduct.

The "thanks" I receive from clients may not come very often. But, I know what I do and I know what a difference it makes in peoples' lives. What I do may not be popular and I know not everyone is going to like me but sometimes doing the right thing entails going against the grain. Most trial lawyers I know go against the grain.

What we do as trial lawyers is special and what we do makes us proud. I may not be the best at what I do, but as long as I breathe I will do what I do as best as I can. ■



The
NYGAARD LAW FIRM
is pleased to announce that
KATIE D. WHITMAN
has joined the firm as an associate.

Prior to joining the Nygaard Law Firm, Katie served as Deputy Chief Counsel for the Securities Division of the Missouri Secretary of State from 2006-2008.

Katie is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law. Her practice will focus on securities law, representing clients in securities regulation and litigation matters.