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In Memorium

Bernard J. Fieger

1922-1988

Fieger Times

News from the law firm of Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson

Vol. 1 Number 2

Since 1950

Summer, 2001

Fieger enjoys life's work

Geoffrey Fieger's office is a riot of color and activity, as those who have visited well know. A man with an uncanny knack for multi-tasking, Fieger surrounds himself with talented people, and interacts with them as he takes a constant stream of calls on speakerphone, jots down signatures on demand, and drifts into distraction over matters on his desk. Fieger's office reflects the nature his mind, where the number of things that percolate simultaneously would drive the average person insane.

On his bookshelf is a photo of his wife, Keenie, to whom he has been married for 18 years. Stacked deep against the wall are bright, tropical paintings of palm fronds and waterfalls, the start of what Fieger hopes one day is the definitive collection of the artwork of Henri Robert Bresil of Haiti. Guarding the massive stacks of papers on his desk are sculptures of two lunging lions, reminiscent of the 2-ton bronze statue in front of his office. The symbol of the lion has simple significance.



Photo by Steve Kaufman

Geoffrey Fieger is interviewed for a segment on Court TV. Fieger frequently appears on the cable channel as a commentator, and when Court TV covers his trials.

"I just like cats," Fieger said, mentioning his beloved pets Koby, Muna, Taka and Suki.

Conspicuously absent from Fieger's office is a computer. He said he has never found it

necessary to plug one in.

Fieger manages a staff of about 45 full-time employees, and oversees 500 active cases at any given time. Since he

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Ven Johnson named partner

Ven Johnson, 39, loves the law. His dedication and impeccable practice of the art led him to be named a partner May 1. His promotion changed the name of the firm as Johnson joins

Geoffrey Fieger, Jerry Kenney and late founder Bernard Fieger.

"I am humbled to have my name on this firm. It's hard to describe," Johnson said from his office in the

east wing shortly after his promotion. "I'm extremely proud to be a partner."

Fieger said Johnson's promotion was a natural step after six years.

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Walsh practices law with style



Photo by Steven Trupp / StarMax

Newspapers called attorney Rebecca Walsh “a drop dead gorgeous gal” when she accompanied Dr. Jack Kevorkian to Time Magazine’s 75th anniversary party at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

When Jack Kevorkian showed up at Radio City Music Hall for Time Magazine’s 75th Anniversary Party with a glamorous young woman on his arm, the gossip columnists started to buzz. But despite their juicy speculations about Dr. Death’s mystery woman, she turned out to be none other than his attorney, Rebecca Walsh.

People have since learned to take Walsh, 35, very seriously. An attorney with Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson for more than six years, Walsh is highly respected for her willingness to tackle anything. Walsh consistently has the highest and wealthiest caseload of any attorney at the firm. Her specialty is medical malpractice, and she juggles 80-85 files at any given time.

“I guess that’s just my work ethic, I won’t say no,” she said. “I get a great deal of satisfaction out of helping the types of clients we have here.”

Walsh’s drive and determination led her to earn a law degree from Cooley in three years while she held down a full-time job as a claims adjuster for Allstate Insurance. After eight hour workdays she attended school from 6-10 p.m. and spent her weekends studying all year ’round.

Her dedication paid off when she received her Juris Doctor with no student loans attached.

Allstate’s counsel, Mitchell & Leon,

hired her on the spot, and she worked there for 1-1/2 years before going to Farmer’s Insurance counsel, Corey & O’Brien. In 1995 she got a tip that a lawyer left Fieger’s firm. After a brief interview, Fieger asked her to start that day.

Walsh has since had many coups, including a recent \$36 million verdict for a woman whose car was struck while she waited for a presidential motorcade in Flint, that settled for \$5 million. But when asked to name her best cases, Walsh says she doesn’t put one above another.

Although she is now a veteran at the firm, her motivation hasn’t faltered. Even being newly wed to her husband Ronn hasn’t kept her out of the office. When she had each of the couple’s two children, she worked the day before delivery, and had the second 14-minutes after arriving at the hospital.

When Fieger heard the news about the first baby, the first thing he said was “I’m glad she had it on the weekend.” After the second one, he said “She never wastes any time.”

Walsh is a member of the Michigan State Bar Association and the Delta Sigma Phi Law Fraternity. She is on the Board of Governors for the Alumni Association at Cooley Law School and has given a seminar on first party no-fault for ICLE.

Firm’s paralegal always hits the target

Whether on the archery range or in the courtroom, Tania Kushner Paige has flawless aim. The paralegal ranked second in archery in the country as a student at Eastern Michigan University, and made history with her sister, Rachalle, as the first sister team ever to compete in the United States Archery Teams.

She uses language learned on the range to describe working for the high-profile firm Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson, where public scrutiny allows no room for error.

“You have to be good in order to work here.

You need to stay focused and reach your goal for every case. You have to be on target all the time,” she said.

Kushner Paige, 28, researches cases, consults with expert witnesses and clients, drafts pleadings, prepares documents for trial, and stands with attorneys in the courtroom helping them in any way she can.

“Day to day it’s different. The excitement Geoffrey brings into the office changes your day, every day,” she said.



KUSHNER PAIGE

Verdicts & Settlements

✓ Geoffrey Fieger, Esq., won a **\$26 million verdict** in a case involving an infant whose hypoglycemia went untreated at Washington Hospital, Washington, Penn. All the baby needed was a thimble full of sugar water. Instead, it was left to suffer brain damage, and will need life-long, around-the-clock care. This was the largest verdict in western Pennsylvania history

✓ Outnumbered by men 80 to 1, a female millwright suffered abuse for years at DaimlerChrysler. William McHenry, Esq. and Geoffrey N. Fieger, Esq. won a **\$20 million judgement** against the automaker in the sexual harassment case. This is the largest single sexual harassment verdict in U.S. history.

✓ Ven Johnson, Esq., secured a **\$3.9 million settlement** in a case where a fuel tanker truck crossed over the center line of Maple Road in West Bloomfield, killing the innocent driver.

✓ Paul Broschay, Esq. secured a **\$2.4 million verdict** in Wayne County for a client who was rear-ended and severely injured by a SMART bus.

✓ In a case tried by Todd Weglarz, Esq. and Jerry Kenney, Esq., a jury awarded **\$1.5 million** for a woman whose bladder surgery was botched at Sinai Hospital, leaving her incontinent and in need of future operations.

Are parents liable for children's crimes?

In 1998, Grosse Pointe school officials turned up evidence that senior boys were taking advantage of 14-year-old female students at various alcohol-laced house parties. Dan Granger, the alleged ring leader of the "Grosse Pointe Sex Assaults," served four months in Jackson Prison for the crimes, but his culpability didn't end there.

Parents of one girl sought representation from Geoffrey Fieger, and brought a civil suit against Granger and his parents. The girl's father wanted not only damages, but to get to the bottom of what happened to his daughter at the Granger home.

"Granger and his cohorts were sexual predators and the trial disclosed the full nature of their reprehensible conduct," Fieger said.

After a two-week trial in Wayne County Circuit Court in June, a jury found Granger's parents negligent, and awarded \$390,000 against young Granger for failing to protect the young girl. While the victory was far from the most lucrative the firm has won this year, it served to prove a very relevant point — That parents are responsible for their children.

That's the theme of another ongoing case, in which Fieger represents the families of two victims of the Columbine High School massacre. They are bringing a \$250 million suit against the parents of gunmen Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris.

"They had knowledge that the boys were making bombs in the garage, and didn't stop them," Fieger said.

Ask the attorney

Q: The media speculated you would make a bid for mayor of Detroit. Why didn't you run?

A: If I was elected mayor of Detroit, I'd represent residents as vigorously and aggressively as I do my clients in



court. I'd be the advocate of every citizen, and I'd make Detroit the jewel of the Midwest and the economic engine of the state of Michigan.

It was so unexpected that Dennis Archer was not going to run. I have scores of cases pending against the City of Detroit Police Department as a result of police misconduct.

Plus, I have two television shows and I love the practice of law. I just didn't feel it was fair to my clients to leave at this time ... 'cause I know I'd win.

The first step toward having a case reviewed by Fieger, Fieger, Kenney and Johnson is to call the general information line, (248) 355-5555.

You will be referred to the appropriate intake attorney so you can explain the details of your case for further review.

Fieger

Continued from Page 1

was catapulted into the spotlight by his impassioned defense of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, he has had to balance his responsibilities to the firm with pressures of life in the public eye.

Fieger takes media calls, heads press conferences, and racks up frequent flier miles taping two television shows in Los Angeles. In the past, he also hosted a nightly radio talk show and vigorously campaigned for Governor. He is often called upon to do live legal commentary on such shows as "Geraldo Live."

Fieger laughs out loud when asked to remember the last time he slept in or took a nap. Instead, he rises at 5:30 a.m. and hits the gym before entering the office. Working 9 to 5 is a foreign concept to Fieger, who often works seven days a week, and well into the evening.

"When you blur the line between your job and your life, work is fun," he explained.

If his work habits made routine life difficult to begin with, his notoriety has made it almost impossible. Fieger is recognized wherever he goes, and said he has found it necessary to avoid crowds in some instances. He did, however, make an exception this summer when he sat front row at The Knack concert. His brother, Douglas, is lead singer of the band known for the classic hit "My Sharona." His sister, Beth, lives in L.A. and writes for television.

Although Fieger has kept his office on Ten Mile Road in Southfield, continuing the legacy of the firm his father founded, his reputation has grown far beyond the city limits.

John Rizotti, publicist for the daytime courtroom show "Power of Attorney," said Fieger's appearances are part of the

"The same people who are critical of Geoffrey would be the same people lined up at our door if their loved one was the victim of medical malpractice."

reason the show hit number one in its first season last year.

"Geoffrey is one attorney that people love to hate. That's what made him famous, what works." Rizotti said.

At times, Fieger is a target of criticism, but his partner, Ven Johnson, said people's perceptions are off the mark.

"The same people who are critical of Geoffrey would be the same people lined up at our door if their loved one was the victim of medical malpractice or some other misfortune," Johnson said. "Every time Geoffrey is in the media talking about a specific case, the top priority in so doing is to draw public attention to what's happening, in the best interest of our clients."

Fieger graduated from Oak Park High School, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in theater in 1972, and a master's degree in speech in 1976 from the University of Michigan. In 1979 he completed his Juris Doctor at the Detroit College of Law. Fieger denies using his theatrical background in the courtroom.

"Juries don't want an act. They want someone to talk common sense to them. Some people think great trial lawyers can pull the wool over juries' eyes and deceive them. That's absolutely ridiculous," he said. "I've reached a point where I practice law like an art. Every case I get, I paint a picture using the principles of law in a way that makes sense to juries, and helps our clients."

Johnson

Continued from Page 1

"He deserves it. It was time. In every person's life comes a wave if taken at its crest leads to success, and he was at that crest," Fieger said. "He's a very hard worker. I've seen him develop into a really fine lawyer with a really good ability to look at cases, see their strong points and present them. It's a quality I don't see very often."

A Saginaw native, Johnson earned his undergraduate degree in political science at Kalamazoo College, where he was an All American tennis player, and graduated from University of Detroit Law School in 1986. After a brief stint with the firm Gromek, Bendure and Thomas, Johnson worked nine years at Kohl, Secrest in Farmington Hills until a friend said he had the perfect job for him. It turned out to be at Fieger's firm, and six interviews later he was hired.

"I thought that Geoffrey and I would do nothing but clash, and I was

right, but in a good way. Our personalities are a lot alike," Johnson said. "We both feel very strongly about what we do. We dig our heels in when we believe in something and take on other people's causes like they are our own."

You can find Johnson in his office any given Saturday working overtime to sift through huge files strewn around his desk. Johnson said he was surprised by the complexity of the cases that go through the firm, many with multiple defendants and larger issues at stake.

"There are multi-million dollar cases, one after another. It was a big step to work here, but I jumped in with both feet and have never looked back," he said.

Johnson is a member of the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association, Oakland County Bar Association and Michigan Bar Association, and serves on the executive board of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association. He lectures on relevant issues for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education, the National Business Institute and the Straker Bar Association. He also presides over mock trials at the University of Detroit Mercy.



Ven Johnson was named partner May 1 after six years at the firm.

Johnson's wife, Shalina Kumar, is an attorney with Sommers, Schwartz in Southfield. He has two children, Erica, 16, and Zachary, 8.

Something to Think About

I thought we had a democracy

"God forbid that we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion. The people can not be all and always well informed... If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is the forerunner of death to public liberty. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

Thomas Jefferson,
Nov. 13, 1787

Every year we celebrate the beginning of our rebellion against British government on July 4. It was a government that passed laws without our consent ... laws that were intended to protect the power of a few men and the profits of British businesses.

In the days leading up to this Fourth of July holiday we had a few reminders that the government of Michigan has become just as antagonistic to the rights and liberties of citizens as the British were in the 1700s. Consider the following events:

When politicians in Lansing took over the Detroit Board of Education they voided a legal election. The same men who say they are for less government and more local control, unilaterally took away the voting rights of people and took over a local school district. Few people

protested, perhaps because the problems in Detroit seemed remote. But there are other solutions to the problems in Detroit and no problem is greater than people being stripped of their right to vote. The State is also moving to void other elections and take over other school districts. Is yours next? If they can void a legal election for a school board, why not void other legal elections?

When politicians in Lansing passed the CCW law, relaxing standards for carrying concealed weapons, they ignored the will of the people to vote on the law.

They attached a provision of money for an unrelated government program to avoid a general vote, and the State Supreme Court ignored their duty to protect our rights and approved the passing of a law without the consent of the people. Even some Republicans were offended by the obvious violation of our voting rights. Others argued that we MAY get to vote on the issue in about two years. But why should we tolerate any violation of our rights for even one day? Why are Republicans afraid of democracy?

Politicians in Lansing now say they will permit drilling for gas under the Great Lakes without a vote from the people. The list of



laws being passed that clearly benefit business interests and violate the legitimate interests and rights of the people are too long to list in this article. Whenever I want to understand the actions of Governor John Engler and the Supreme Court in Michigan, I ask a simple question: Who is going to make money from this law or by electing this person to government? The one rule to understanding Michigan government is: Follow the money.

Is it so hard to understand then why the Governor and the courts would allow laws that benefit big business to be passed without the people voting, or why the courts reverse jury verdicts against big business?

There is nothing wrong with a government that helps


business to prosper. But that is not the role of government.

The primary role of government is to protect individual liberty. Politicians in Lansing believe that they are there to protect the rights of businesses to make a profit.

They have been violating our rights and restricting our liberties to protect their special interests. Do you believe that government should protect your liberty or the profit of business? Do you believe that you have a right to vote on laws that affect your pursuit of life, liberty and happiness? Isn't it time for another revolution?

- Geoffrey Nels Fieger

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Our Mission

To provide the very best legal service available for each and every client.

To defend individual liberty against government intrusion, and protect individuals against the power of corporations.

To do these things with all the cutting edge tools available including state-of-the-art computers, research methods, libraries and medical references.