

ALUMNI NEWS

SPRING 2010

WeirFoulds' 150th Anniversary

The year 2010 marks the 150th year of WeirFoulds' long and distinguished history. We are preparing to celebrate this milestone anniversary but we can't do it without the help of our Alumni. Your memories are an important part of the fabric of our story and we'd love to have you share them with us.

Email or mail us your "*remembrances of things past*" at publications@weirfoulds.com or WeirFoulds LLP, 1600-130 King Street West, PO Box 480, Toronto, ON M5X 1J5.

The Way We Were

Most law firms have a culture that extends beyond the people currently working at it. WeirFoulds is no exception. Our culture has evolved through the passing on of skills, ethics, attitudes and work styles of our alumni during their stay at the firm – with the cycle continuing with every new hire. In this way, all of us have had an influence on the firm, from those who have worked here for their entire careers to those who were with us for just a year or two. And each of us carries a bit of the WeirFoulds DNA with us, wherever we go in our careers.

Of course, the WeirFoulds culture runs a bit deeper than most as 2010 marks the 150th anniversary of the firm. And there are few alumni who can speak to this culture better than the subject of our *Alumni News* profile this issue, John Hamilton, who practised law here for over 50 years before retiring from the firm in 2005.

From his early years as a lawyer, when elevator operators manually drove the elevator car up and down for you, to his later years when technology

changed the style and pace of the profession – John has seen the evolution of both the firm and the practise of law. We thank John for sharing his views and memories of firm life with us and wish him the best in his busy retirement.

Our Interview

Where did you grow up?

I was a Toronto boy – and still am. I did all of my schooling here, from University of Toronto Schools and the University of Toronto, to law school at Ogoode Hall.

Did you have an interest in law at an early age?

Not really, believe it or not. I actually wanted to go into engineering but ended up studying math, physics and chemistry. My parents saw the value in professional training, and thought I should have some, so they persuaded me to explore some further education options.

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I N S I D E:

An Interview with John Hamilton

ALUMNUS PROFILE

John Hamilton



John Hamilton (above) was photographed in Humber Bay Park in west Toronto.

My dad was in advertising, but he knew a number of lawyers and took me to see Justice Laidlaw to chat about law as a career. In those days you could get into law school if you could walk and were breathing – although only about half the class lasted past the first year. Law seemed as good a choice as any to me, so I enrolled.

In those days, law school was a four-year program. You had two straight academic years, then articulated for a year, then did a “half and half” year where you went to lectures from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and then went to work at your articling firm in the afternoon.

How did you end up at WeirFoulds?

The firm was then known as Mason Foulds. My father had been a regular curler with Mr. Mason, and he arranged for me to meet with Dick Walter, the managing partner, before my articling year. There wasn’t much career planning involved on my part. In any event, I seemed to impress Mr. Walter enough to get a job offer and I was happy to take it.

The articling experience was a bit different back then. We worked for \$10 a week – later raised to \$15 a week – and all five students sat in one 8 x 10-foot room. Articling students today get a lot more responsibility than we did. We did a lot of filing, serving things, and title searches. We also had to run errands and do office-related tasks, such as filling the office water cooler. I even remember a student having to run out to get a lawyer’s skates sharpened. And the one big chore that the students did each year was the annual cleaning of the firm’s library. We got paid an extra \$5 each for that one and we had to bring our own vacuum cleaners.

<p>1951–1953</p> <p>Articling Student Mason, Foulds, Arnup, Walter & Weir</p>	<p>1953</p> <p>Associate Lawyer Mason, Foulds, Arnup, Walter & Weir</p>	<p>1963</p> <p>Partner Mason, Foulds, Arnup, Walter, Weir & Boeckh</p>	<p>1991</p> <p>LL.B. (Issued after Osgoode Hall Law School officially became part of York University)</p>	<p>2005</p> <p>Retired from WeirFoulds LLP</p>
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John Hamilton: Under the Surface

Your most treasured possession:

An 18th century long-case clock which I inherited from a great-aunt in Scotland (along with many other antiques).

The one piece of technology you can't do without:

Computer with e-mail and Internet.

Your no-fail way to relax:

Read a boring book or watch baseball on television – puts me to sleep almost instantly.

Your guilty pleasure:

Single malt Islay Whisky.

The most embarrassing moment of your professional career:

Read a will in a title search and didn't notice the word "not" which really changed the entire meaning of the document.

One piece of advice you'd give to a young lawyer starting out today:

Be prepared for lots of hard work and pressure – or more facetiously – "Don't do it."

What was the practise of law like when you first started out?

There were only 13 lawyers at the firm when I started, and I was only the 30th lawyer to have practised at the firm in its history, so to say it was different then is a bit of an understatement.

If you were in a firm of reasonable size, and 13 was a reasonable size back then, your responsibilities as a lawyer were added gradually. And as much as the title searching you did as a student was a bit repetitive, you learned a bit about everything because there were tie-ins to other areas of law, like estates and corporate work.

The firm was divided between those who litigated and those who didn't. For those who didn't, such as me, we covered most areas of law – corporate work, estates, real estate – and our individual practices really developed organically. I remember acting on a lot of large shopping centre developments for the simple reason that someone had to do it and over time I became the lawyer with some knowledge in the area.

On the litigation side, our expertise was widely known and we did the litigation work for many other Toronto lawyers and firms outside of the city. The system in Ontario at that time was that every lawyer outside of the city had to have a Toronto agent. We did a lot of agency work, which involved a lot of motions and some appeals. It also involved a great deal of trust because you were acting for another lawyer's client and you not only had to do a good job, but you had to operate ethically. We would never steal another lawyer's client, and I think our reputation for quality work and sound business ethics

really built our reputation as a firm with an exceptional litigation practice.

What has changed about the way work was done then versus the way it's done today?

It's probably better to ask what hasn't changed! It was a different world, so it's not surprising that the way we worked was very different as well.

The morning mail routine was a good example. Each workday, at about 8:45 a.m., the managing partner, Dick Walter, and one of the firm's permanent senior associates met in Dick's office and opened all letters addressed to the firm and made a record of each piece of mail. All the other lawyers would straggle in between 9:00 and 9:30 and drop by Dick's office to pick up their mail and stay for a short time to chat, whether law-related or not. Dick had wooden benches around the walls of his office so that there was room for most of us.

One of the key advantages to working in a firm is the ability to bounce ideas off of people, and the morning mail ceremony was an invaluable way of talking to everybody in the office for a few minutes most days.

But there were many other work differences, of course. All phone calls went through a central switchboard, secretaries had manual typewriters and operated in a single large room without any telephones, and any copying beyond carbon paper copies had to be sent out to special printing houses – with copies returned back a few days later. There was certainly a gentler pace to the way work was done.

It was also very unusual for lawyers to move from firm to firm, unlike today. So there was a real family feeling to the place. We had one secretary, Katie Fox, who started with the firm in her 20s and worked here for 52 years. Katie ordered all of the stationery and supplies and I still remember her saying when Post-It Notes were first introduced that it was a fad that was never going to last.

You've been retired now for almost five years. What's struck you as the biggest change in law over your career?

There's no doubt that the legal profession is much more money-oriented than it used to be. It really started with the New York firms paying large amounts of money and that style of practice eventually found its way here. When I started, overhead was half of what it is today. There's a monetary pressure that wasn't there years ago.

And fees haven't risen with the costs, so it means that everybody has to work very hard. There was no such thing as billable hours back when I started out, and working nights or weekends was rare. The focus was on doing the work and doing it well and the fees were calculated based on what the work was worth. In many ways I feel sorry for younger lawyers now because the pace and amount of work can be quite punishing. We all have to move faster than we used to, but the problem is that we don't think any faster, and that's where the real pressures come in.

Probably the most noticeable change from my point of view is the introduction of advertising and marketing. When I started in practice (and for many years after), the idea of advertising was not only unusual, but looked on as immoral. One sat behind

the desk, did good work, and the clients came in.

Why do you think WeirFoulds made it to 150 years when so many other firms haven't?

While the culture of the firm has certainly changed over the years – as it has with the practise of law everywhere – I think there are some firm characteristics that do get passed along over time. When I arrived, it was clear that Mr. Mason's and Mr. Foulds' views of the world were ethical, moral, and respectable and I think that that view has stayed with the firm. I haven't worked at the firm in several years but my guess is that we still operate that way and tend to hire people who hold those views. I'm not saying that those qualities guarantee you 150 years of success, but it certainly helps.

What do you miss about the practice?

I certainly miss not being with the people at the firm on a daily basis – and with many of the clients as well.

Because I had worked at the firm since the 1950s, my client relationships went

very deep in many cases, as did those of the firm itself. We had many clients who we represented for several generations, and I was involved with a few of them. I worked with the Ashbridge family of Ashbridge's Bay fame for many years and was the executor of the estates of the two remaining daughters, both of whom died after having married late in life and leaving no children. The firm also acted for three or four generations of the Hudson family, which is where Hudson Drive got its name. I got to know some members of that family very well.

Law is really a people business at heart, so when you retire you miss the day-to-day connections with clients and with the people at the firm who you've worked with for so many years. But like everyone who leaves the firm, you know that a bit of you is still with the firm and that a bit of the firm is still with you, no matter where you go.

Anything you don't miss?

I certainly don't have the same pressures on me that I did when I was younger, so I'm happy to have given that part up. And

while I was fortunate to work with many great clients, there were always a small few with demands that went far beyond the reasonable.

What do you focus on now?

I still do some mediation work through ADR Chambers, perhaps eight to 10 a year. My wife Sylvia is a retired United Church minister and we're still active in the church and serve on a number of committees. We also help lead joint needs assessments for different congregations who are involved in future planning for their church. And with three grown children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild, I think we'll always have lots to keep us busy.

To contact John Hamilton

John welcomes contact with other WeirFoulds alumni. You can reach him at syljohn@sympatico.ca.

TRANSITIONS

WeirFoulds would like to welcome six new alumni.



Jennie Baek joined us in 2007 as an articling student and became a member of our Securities practice in 2008. She has accepted a position with Ogilvy Renault in Toronto.



Sanjay Joshi was called to the British Columbia Bar in 2000 and joined our Securities practice in 2001. Sanjay is continuing his practice with Ogilvy Renault in Toronto.



Laila Perruzza completed her articles with us in 2002 and joined our Securities and Corporate practices in the same year. After considerable thought, Laila is pursuing activities outside the practice of law.



Geoffrey Ritchie joined our Securities practice in 2008, having previously been with the Ontario Securities Commission. He has accepted the position of Director of Compliance with BMO Harris Private Banking.



Binh Vu completed his articles with us in 2000 and returned in 2002 to our Corporate practice. He has joined the corporate finance group at Aird & Berlis in Toronto.



Sandy Yeung joined us in 2005 as an associate in our Real Estate and Corporate practices. She has accepted a position as Corporate Legal Counsel with Shoppers Drug Mart.