

Names in the News

NEWS

MOVES

■ In Vancouver, *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP* (BLG) have lured **Lesley Morrison** and **Erin Pisko** away from *Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP* in Vancouver. Both are now BLG partners, specializing in intellectual property.

■ In Montreal, **Raymond Picard** has joined BLG as counsel, practising in: information technology, intellectual property and corporate commercial. He was previously vice-president, information technology law at CGI Group Inc. in Montreal. **Eric Lapierre** has also joined BLG as counsel, practising in: investment management, securities and capital markets. He was previously manager, investment funds for *Autorité des marchés financiers* in Montreal.

APPOINTMENTS

■ In B.C., **Jeanne Watchuk**, a judge of the Provincial Court of British Columbia, has been appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in Vancouver, to replace **I.H. Pitfield**, who resigned in June 30. Justice Watchuk was appointed to the Provincial Court of British Columbia in 1994. **Murray Blok**, district registrar of the Supreme Court of British Columbia has also been appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in New Westminster, B.C. to replace **G.R.J. Gaul**, who was transferred to Victoria to replace **J.L. Dorgan**, who elected to become a supernumerary judge as of August. Justice Blok has been a district registrar of the Supreme Court of British Columbia since 2002.

■ *McCarthy Tétrault LLP* Lawyer **Harry Underwood** has been inducted as a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. Fellowship in the college is extended by invitation only to a small number of experienced trial lawyers who have mastered the art of advocacy, while demonstrating the highest standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, civility and collegiality. Underwood joins 10 other McCarthy Tétrault lawyers who are college fellows.

Fifty years in the law and counting

MELISSA DUNNE

Back when Bruce Thomas was attending Osgoode Hall Law School in the late 1950s it was still located in the heart of downtown Toronto at the corner of Queen Street and University Avenue. The predominately male students took full advantage of being in the rough-and-tumble city core.

"Many of us between classes would go to a burlesque show running across the street then come back to lectures," recalls Thomas, who celebrated 50 years practising law.

In those days in a class of just over 200 students exactly three were women Thomas said.

"Things have certainly changed since I went to law school," notes Thomas.

These days women outnumber men on law school campuses. By 2009 51 per cent of law school students were women, according to University of Saskatchewan law professor Brent Cotter, who has tracked law school admissions over the past 30 years.

Practising law since 1960 Thomas has seen many other changes. Back when he started practising the male-dominated legal profession was supported by stay-at-home wives and mothers. Thomas credits his own career success to his wife, who stayed home and raised their four children. Nowadays both men and women work outside of the home and it's more of a challenge for both genders to juggle the law and a family life.

"I see as many men as women rushing home to change diapers now," said Thomas.

Lately Thomas has gotten lots of experience working with and mentoring today's crop of lawyers.

When he was a young boy growing up in Midland, Ont., a town about two hours north of Toronto, he had a mentor who led him to a career in the law.

Thomas's younger brother



LAWYER OF THE WEEK

Bruce Thomas

died of a heart condition as both were entering their teens. His father owned a small business and his mother stayed at home raising the children. She had great hopes for her only remaining son. She introduced her son to the town lawyer, who took him under his wing and mentored him.

"I helped him in the office and saw how he helped people," said Thomas. "People brought him chicken and eggs as gifts, this being a small town...He brought me to see Osgoode Hall...I was very impressed."

Thomas went on to attend Upper Canada College, then he earned his bachelor degree at the University of Western Ontario and eventually ended up at Osgoode.

He built an impressive resume going from a small-town boy to a big-city lawyer in the process. He worked his way up to managing partner of Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP. But, as with most big firms these days, they have mandatory retirement. He kept working, but at age 75, when most people have been retired for a decade, Thomas was approached by a group of lawyers at Cassels looking to branch off. He jumped at the opportunity to try something new.

"Most of my friends were retired or retiring, so some were surprised to hear that I'm going to a start-up firm," said Thomas. "My wife says I'm working harder today than I have ever worked."

All that hard work has paid off for Thomas. His new firm,

Name:
Bruce Thomas

Called to the Bar:
1960

Career highlights:

1978 Appointed Queen's Counsel

2008 At 75 he left Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP with six other lawyers to start Thomas Gold Pettingill

2010 At 77 celebrated 50 consecutive years practising law

Thomas Gold Pettingill, started in 2008 with six other lawyers. Now the firm is 17 lawyers strong.

"Some of my friends ask 'Do they allow you to take a nap in the afternoon?,'" says Thomas.

"It's energized me. I'm surrounded by people who could be my children, my grandchildren. I look forward to coming to work everyday. I can tell you it's not work to me."

The key to Thomas's success over the past half-century has been balance. While he clearly enjoys his job he has always had "significant outside interests."

Now a grandfather to five he likes to play ice hockey with his grandchildren and believes in giving back to his community, through volunteering at his church, the Toronto School of Theology and the Toronto Soccer Association.

Now 77 the energetic lawyer shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

"My clients will determine when I retire," notes Thomas. "When I cease to contribute I think I'll get the message." ■

» Got news?

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