

A Father's Legacy

As we celebrate Father's Day this June, the LCBA proudly presents two generations of attorneys; fathers with their children, who now carry on the tradition of justice.

*Story by Sara Fitzpatrick Comito
Photographs by John Michael Heder*



The father who would taste the essence of his fatherhood must turn back from the plane of his experience, take with him the fruits of his journey and begin again beside his child, marching step by step over the same old road.

~Angelo Patri

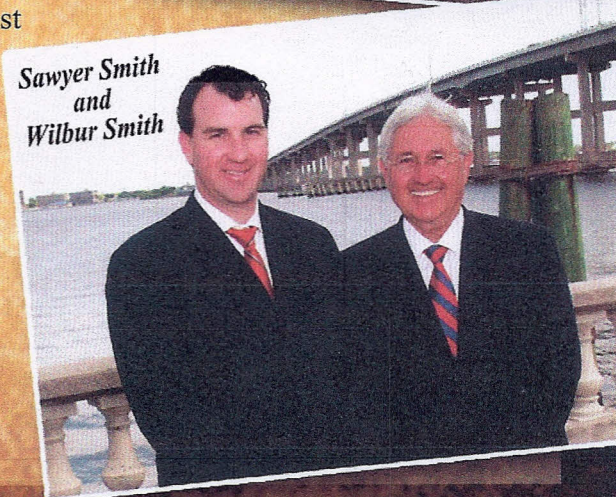
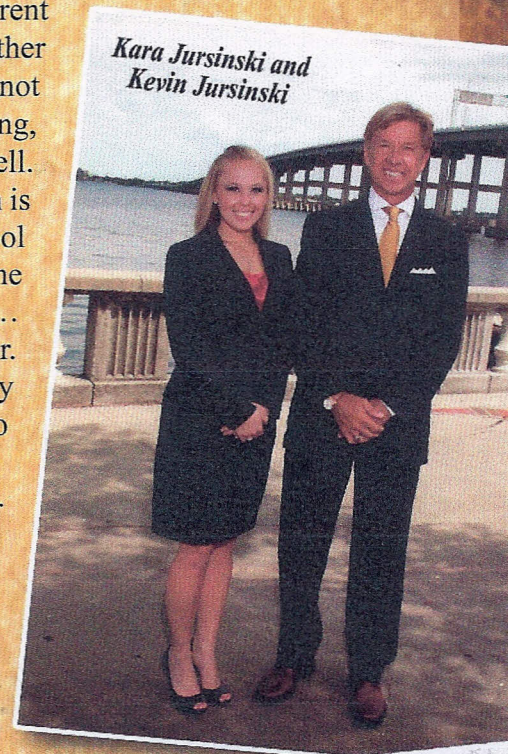
Eye color, a sense of humor, and athletic ability – these are all things that can run in a family. But what about a passion for law? Can you get that from your dad's side? As our handsome photo spread shows, Lee County apples don't fall very far from the tree. In honor of Father's Day, some of our father/child lawyers sound off on what it's like when attorneys follow in their fathers' footsteps.

Sheldon Finman is a Fort Myers family law attorney. His daughter Julia, who works in family law in Tampa, became a lawyer because of him. She explained it's an extension of being a daddy's girl who always idolized her father. "He worked hard to provide for our family, and I knew that he absolutely loved his job," she said. "He had a sincere passion in his profession which I have always admired, and I believe this passion has grown stronger over the years. After I graduated from law school and passed the bar exam, it was a no-brainer that I wanted to practice family law because of my father. His extraordinary work in this field has influenced so many people, and I only hope that I can have the same effect as I continue to practice in this area of law."

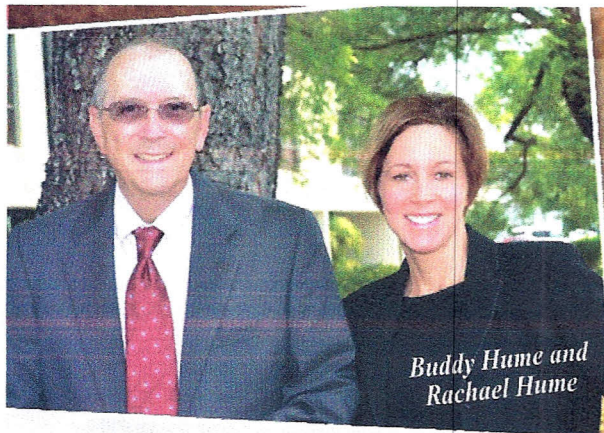
The two are close in spirit, but separated by geography. "We practice in different cities in different firms," Sheldon explained, "but communicate with each other frequently as if she and I occupied the same office." Sheldon said he's not closing the door on the possibility of working with her at some point, saying, "Will she ever come to Fort Myers and practice with Dad? Only time will tell. She is at a good place now and for the time being." A common fatherly refrain is echoed by Sheldon: "I never encouraged any of my children to go to law school and practice law. However...as she began law school, she informed me she would want to go into marital and family law. I did think that was pretty neat... her deciding to practice family law made me feel proud for me and for her. I also feel she has potential to carry on the legacy I have created in family law, whether she ultimately winds up practicing with me or continues to practice elsewhere."

It must indeed be life-affirming to see your child choosing to walk a similar path. Kevin Jursinski knows something about that, now that he works side by side with his daughter Kara. Incidentally, she was recently sworn in on his birthday. "It was a great day for both of us," Kevin beamed. "I thought she was going to be a doctor. I convinced her otherwise. It took a while." Kara offered this advice for parents who work with their children: "Be respectful. They are your colleagues, and in my situation, my boss." She doesn't call him "Dad" at the office, but rather, Kevin. Most clients don't even know the relationship. Her mom also manages the office, and both her parents are careful to treat the entire staff with the professionalism they deserve. She said what happens outside of work shouldn't influence what happens at the office, and she suppresses her gut reaction to talk with her dad spontaneously until there's a formal time set aside for communication. A major perk for her is the mentoring she gets outside of work hours.

Sawyer Smith, who works in criminal defense at The Wilbur Smith Law Firm, said the bond between kids and their dads serves a practical business purpose.

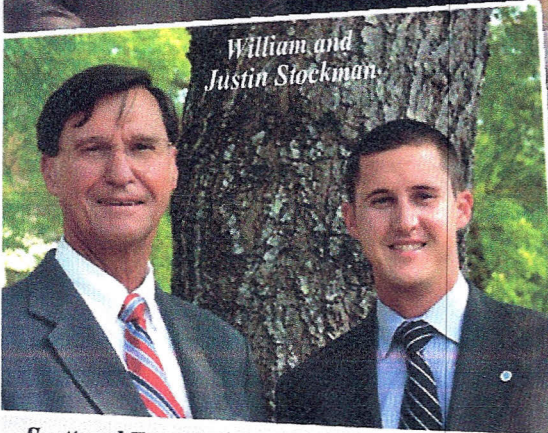


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Buddy Hume and Rachael Hume

Don Isaac and Derek Isaac

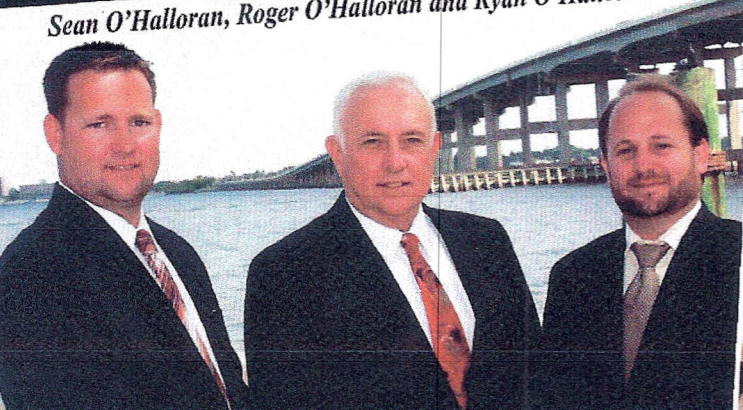


William and Justin Stockman

Scott and Tom Moorey



Sean O'Halloran, Roger O'Halloran and Ryan O'Halloran



“Trust among business partners is an invaluable asset,” he explained, “and the level of trust between a father and his son is unmatched. Working together with your family gives you an edge over everyone else if for no other reason than trust.” Sawyer also identified a comfort level with the work, having been around it for quite some time. “I have worked for my father since I was 12 years old,” he reflected. “It is all I know and all that I have ever wanted to do.”

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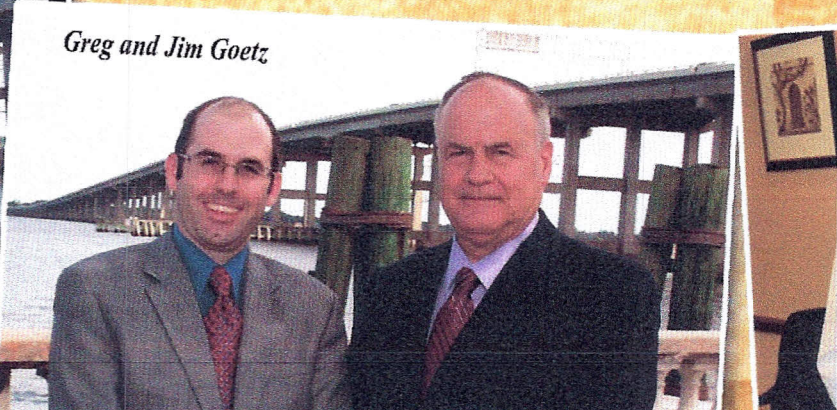
Scott Moorey also described his early exposure to law matters as a deciding factor. “I remember my father’s stories of when he was a public defender. It was exciting and I knew then I wanted to be a criminal defense attorney. I think now that he is a real estate attorney, he enjoys my stories more.”

He also identified the trusting bond between father and son, but thinks it’s better preserved by working in his own firm. “My father has always been my best friend,” he said, “and we probably are still best friends because we do not work together.”

Jeffrey Kushner works in social security disability law with his wife Roberta and son Jonas. Additionally, his daughter is an attorney. He said, “It really has been a total pleasure to see both our children become lawyers and it’s icing on the cake to have Jonas working in the office with us.” He also echoed another common fatherly refrain, saying, “We could not be more proud of them.”

Jonas recognized his dad as an inspiration, saying, “Ever since I was a kid, I watched people come to my father for help. He’s

Greg and Jim Goetz



literally helped thousands of people with some of the worst problems imaginable! It was a great example for me and has always made me proud. “

By all accounts, the working relationship between father and son is supportive. But how do they keep things on the up and up? Jonas acknowledges part of it is his father’s willingness to let him forge his own path, even when working so closely together.

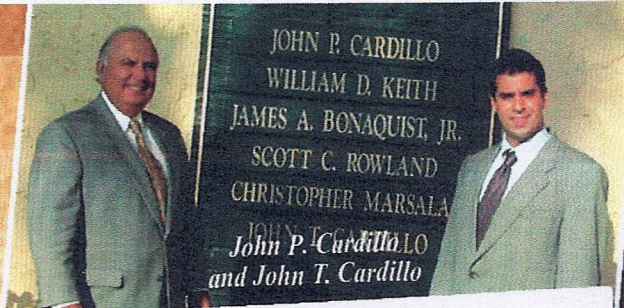
“It seems to me like it could be easier for a father to try and just spoon-feed all of his knowledge and experience to his son,” he said. “I believe my father does it the right way. From the beginning, he pushed and challenged me to work hard and take on the tough cases rather than just instruct me to work as an associate on his cases. It made my own experiences stick. He listens to my ideas, but is there to offer advice and guidance whenever I need it. Parent-child ‘teams’ can benefit from my father’s approach!”

You might notice the On the Bench and From the Bar profiles this month feature County Circuit Judge John Dommerich and his son John, respectively. The younger John recently graduated from Stetson University’s College of law, just like his dad, and joined the State Attorney’s Office in the misdemeanor division, also following in his dad’s footsteps. The judge said, “I’m happy for him. I never pushed him in that direction. I hope he enjoys it as a career. I’m proud of him.” He’s got another reason to be proud, too, with his second son enrolled in law school for the fall.

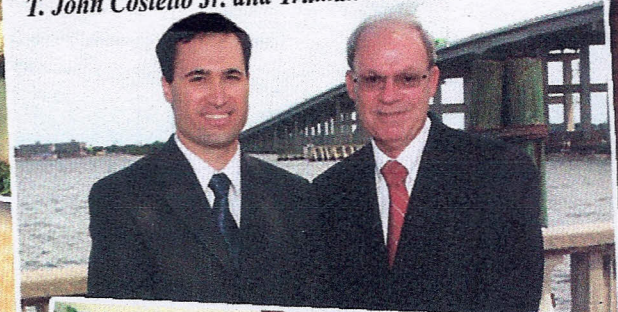
From all of us at Res Gestae, have a wonderful Fathers’ Day! But let us end with a quote from Tom Smoot, Jr., who waxes a bit poetic about his son:

“Few things are more important to me than my children, but don’t tell my wife that. I frequently tell her the same thing in reverse. I can’t remember a single thing that Tom III has done that has caused me grief, except perhaps when he put an alligator in my precious daughter’s bathtub. It truly makes me proud to see him with the same jealous mistress I have had for many years.”

And on that note, cheers to all the dads!



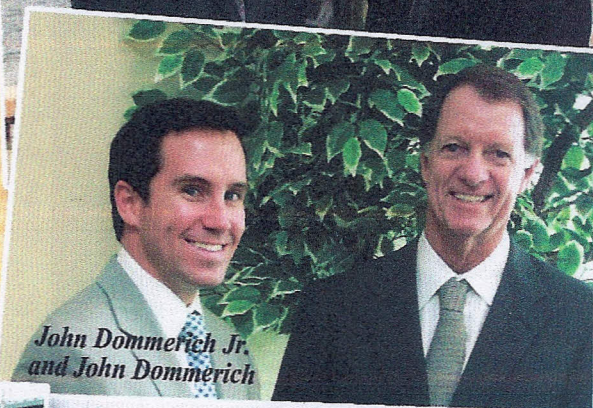
T. John Costello Jr. and Truman Costello



Erica Livingston Loeffler and Edward Livingston



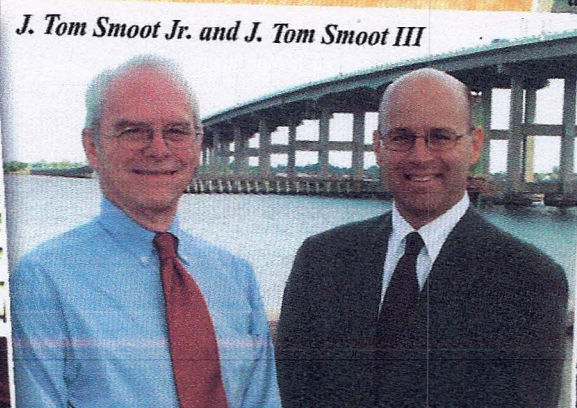
Berke and Charlie Edwards



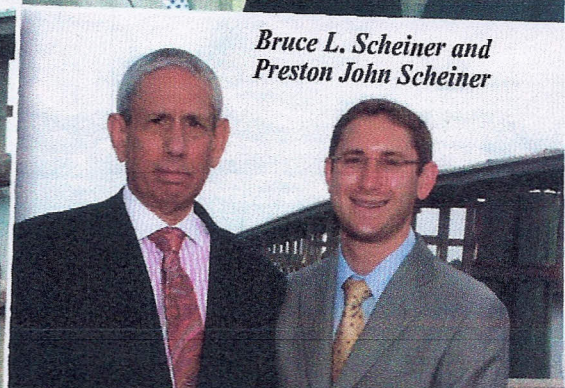
John Dommerich Jr. and John Dommerich



Jonas and Jeffrey Kushner



J. Tom Smoot Jr. and J. Tom Smoot III



Bruce L. Scheiner and Preston John Scheiner