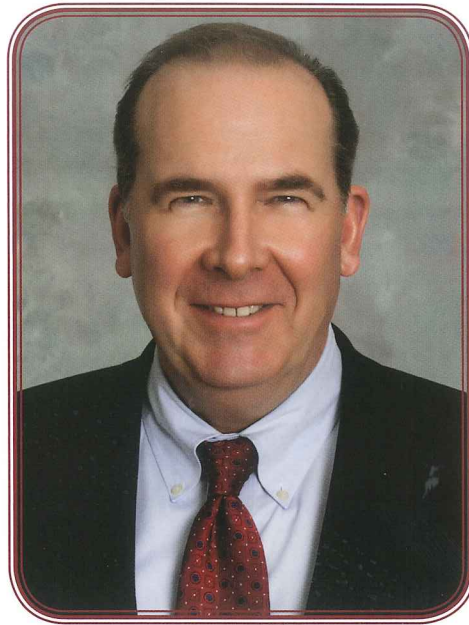


Richard L. Carr Esq.

Riding the Bear: Lessons with Attorney Richard Carr

“Litigation is like riding a bear; you don’t decide when you get off - the bear does.”



From across the conference table, Richard Carr conveys these words to me with no small amount of dignity and reverence. Richard explains that one of his mentors, the late Richard Snell, the well-known and well-beloved Dayton attorney, hit him with this phrase as a young attorney to express the thought that litigation cases have a life of their own. (A quick Google search reveals no other instance of this quote, lending strong credibility to its authenticity and uniqueness.) As our conversation continues, it becomes clear that it will not be the only piece of wisdom that I will be imparted, so long as I know where to look.

Describing himself as someone who enjoys the practice of law and being an attorney, Richard views his work as being primarily focused on contracts and contract litigation. He goes on to explain this largely involves helping people make agreements and helping resolve disputes involving existing agreements, often in the areas of business formation, business planning, business disputes, construction, real estate, wills, probate litigation, and corporations. “Love contracts!” he exclaims, perhaps in an effort to offer some explanation. “Just love them!”

Richard began his legal career practicing at the firm of Rogers and Greenberg. He fondly remembers the time there, in no small part due to the tutelage and mentorship of Richard Snell. According to Richard, Mr. Snell was smart and creative in his practice of law, but pragmatic as well. One particular lesson from Mr. Snell went something like the following: “Sometimes you can’t strain the piss from the buttermilk.” Although Richard says he was a bit shocked, Snell explained that some things can be hard, if not impossible, to separate. Other quotes from Mr. Snell are a little easier to incorporate; the aforementioned litigation bear comes to mind. From Rogers and Greenberg, Richard moved to Auman, Mahan and Furry, where he currently practices.

Growing up in the area, Richard attended Centerville High School, where he competed on the school’s debate team and was second in the state. From there, he attended college at Michigan State. Likely sensing the impending objection, Richard is quick to explain that, at Michigan State, “Win or lose, it’s still a party!” After college, he studied law at Boston College Law School. Richard credits

being argumentative for his decision to pursue the law. "It was the fact that I was very argumentative, and I had a strong sense of justice and the need to seek that justice out."

A family man, Richard is married to his wife, Eileen, who runs the ArtsLive series at the University of Dayton. They have three children: Richard, who lives in Austin, Texas; Simon, who lives in Portland, Maine; and Rachel, who is currently attending the University of Dayton. They also have one grandchild in Austin as well.

For hobbies, Richard enjoys swimming and cycling. He used to run, but he has since given it up. He has worked with the Centerville-Washington Foundation and tries to stay as engaged with civic commitments as possible. He has also coached the mock trial team at Centerville along with Fred Dressel and Zachary Heck. Under their coaching, the team has won two state championships. According to Richard, mock trial is not really about the trial at all. "It's about life skills." He further explains that mock trial teaches a philosophy consisting of three parts. First, it teaches how to absorb a body of material. Second, it teaches the rules for interacting with that material. And third, it then requires students to work together to create a presentation. Richard believes this philosophy is just as applicable to any aspect of life as it is to law, and that the ability to succeed through that philosophy is a valuable skill for any situation.

When asked if he had any advice for younger attorneys, Richard advises the importance of being well organized with one's calendar and contacts. And with contacts, responding to any contact within 24 hours. To Richard, this is the best way to maintain credibility and trust with one's clients, and to maintain a positive relationship with opposing counsel.

In terms of lessons the practice of law has to teach, Richard states that often the practice of law allows one to observe the mistakes of others. Whether one learns from those mistakes is up to the individual, but the lesson is often available should one take it to heart. Richard believes in the importance of law and its practice by attorneys. "We help put things together," he tells me. "And we help deal with conflict." Richard finds that lawyers provide meaningful assistance for individual clients, as well as fulfilling important functions that can help with all of society.

It is the focus on the client that Richard feels is the most important job of the attorney. It does not matter what type of work an attorney does, the key is always the client. A good attorney takes care of the client's needs and serves the unique and individual interests of the client. It is important for an attorney to put their own ego or their own perceptions aside, and instead put the client first and foremost. As Richard puts it, "Take care of your clients and your clients take care of you."

While the language would need to be a little more bombastic to become a "Snell-ism," the wisdom of the lesson is no less clear.