

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Steven L. Hill

Hill Law Office

Kim T. Le

Waxler & Le Immigration Law, LLC

Emery Wang

Vames & Wang

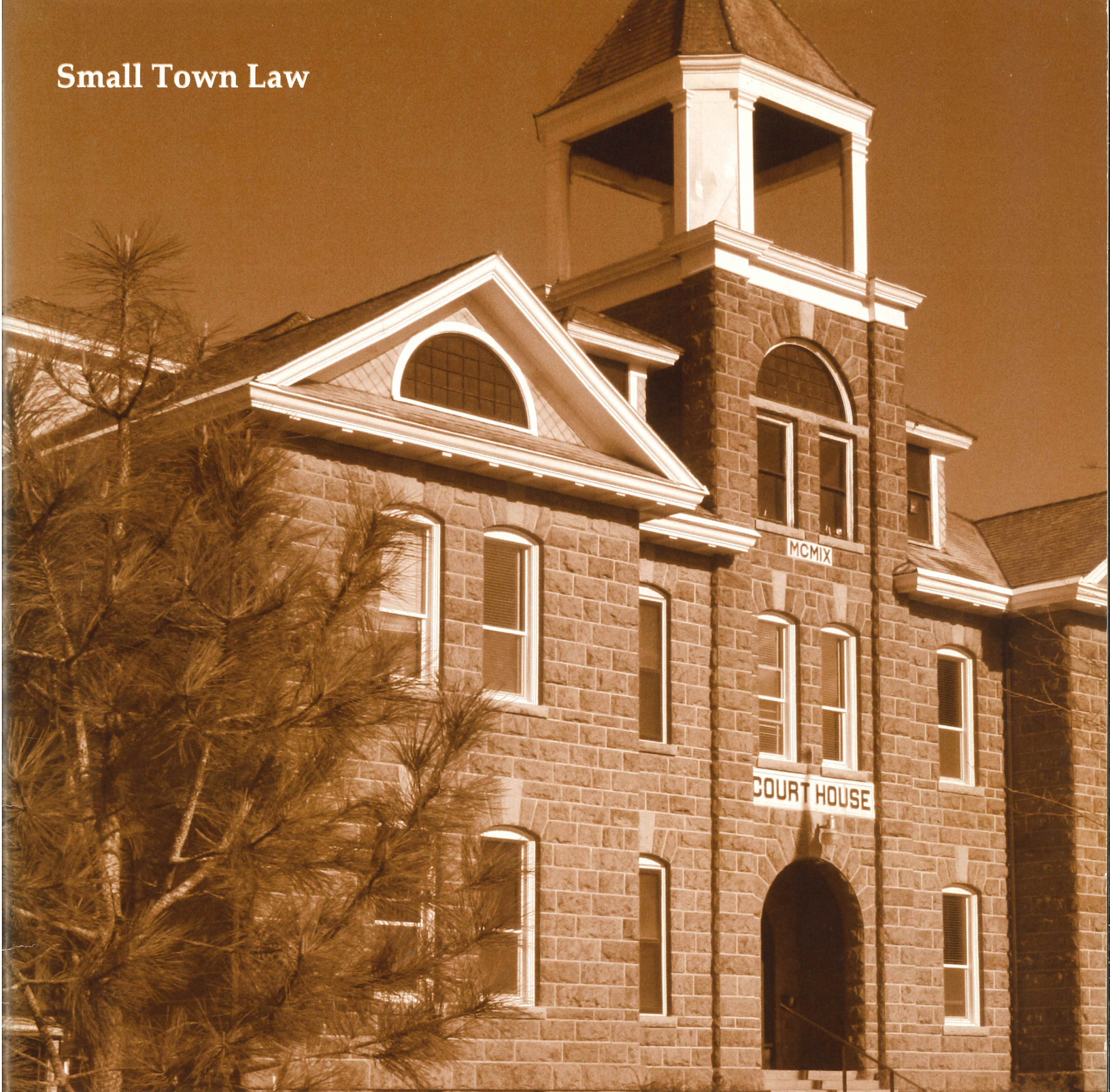
Hong Dao, Moderator

*Professional Liability Fund Director of Practice
Management Assistance*

Suggested readings from various sources for working with diverse clients and making your practice accessible:

- You May Be Needed Elsewhere: How a Market Analysis Can Help You, <https://www.osbplf.org/inpractice/you-may-be-needed-elsewhere--how-a-market-analysis-can-help/>
- Vicarious Trauma in the Time of COVID-19, <https://oaap.org/thriving-today/vicarious-trauma-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>
- Legal Ethics and Trauma-Informed Lawyering, <http://www.repairconnect.org/sites/default/files/2017-Ribet-Legal-Ethics-Trauma-Informed-Lawyering.pdf>
- Pedagogy of Trauma-Informed Lawyering, https://www.law.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/upload_documents/Katz%20-%20Halder%20Pedagogy%20of%20Trauma-Informed%20Lawyering.pdf
- Representing Transgender and Gender-Diverse Clients, <https://www.okbar.org/barjournal/may2020/obj9105taylor/>
- How Working Remotely Builds the Case for Accessibility, <https://www.lawpracticetoday.org/article/working-remotely-builds-case-accessibility/>
- Tips on Making your Practice Gender/LGBTQ Inclusive, <https://www.lawpracticetoday.org/article/tips-on-making-your-practice-gender-lgbtq-inclusive/>
- Law Firm Website Accessibility and ADA Compliance, <https://www.lawlytics.com/blog/ada-compliance/>
- Multilingual Law Firm Websites and SEO Best Practices, <https://www.lawlytics.com/blog/multilingual-law-firm-websites-and-seo/>
- Five Habits of Cross-Cultural Lawyering and More, <https://fivehabitsandmore.law.yale.edu/jean-and-sues-materials/habits/intro-to-the-habits/>

Small Town Law



T R I A L

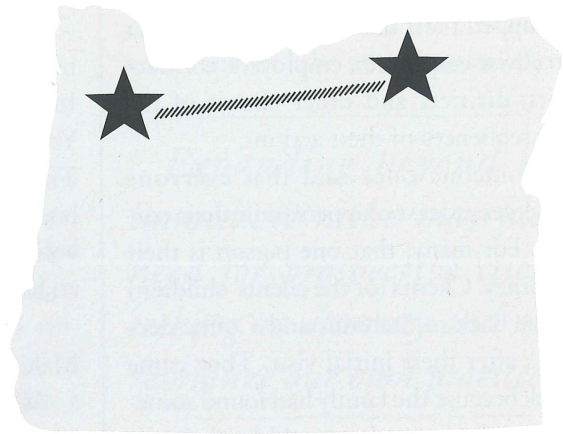
Lawyer

OREGON TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
In the Service of Justice

Fall 2015

HEAD EAST, YOUNG LAWYER

TO THE SMALL TOWN OF PENDLETON



Steve Hill

By Steve Hill
OTLA Guardian

You graduate from law school. No job. Crushing debt. Barely scraping by in rental housing. The dreams that propelled you through law school seem totally out of reach. Those law school admissions brochures brimming with promises of job placement now seem like

a hustle. The bar exam is next. Failure is not an option. Studying and stress are consuming you. All the while, the cool city where you want to live is too expensive. You can't even afford a night out with friends. You are not living the dream, you are living the nightmare in the gorgeous Willamette Valley.

I decided to move to the Pacific Northwest after graduating from Case Western Reserve University School of Law in 1993. At this time, Seattle was making national headlines with its grunge music and European style coffee shops. My law school friend, Lara Johnson (Corson & Johnson), made my decision easier. She often returned to Cleveland after breaks with photographs of Mt. Bachelor and other beautiful places in her home state of Oregon. The state had so much to offer — mountains, ocean beaches and a windsurfing mecca. I chose Portland to start my legal career. Problem was, nobody was hiring. It was

a horrible job market. No other way to describe it.

There was a smattering of contract jobs and office share arrangements. The bulletin board at the Multnomah County Law Library had note cards tacked to it offering \$10 per hour for legal research assignments, deposition indexing and the like. Fellow graduates in the top tier of their classes, even those who had completed competitive summer clerkships, were jobless. Some with law review experience had their job offers rescinded by reputable Portland firms. Many of us had consolidated our loans at 10 percent interest over 30 years to reduce monthly payment amounts. Even so, my payments were more than \$700 per month. The interest could not be deducted. Payments were coming due.

I sublet a room from a Lewis & Clark Law School student in Multnomah Village. Just me, a couple suitcases and 35 boxes of books. I took a night job stocking shelves at Fred Meyer, so I could interview by day.

After seven years of college and law school, this was my reward? I wanted a true associate attorney experience. I wanted to learn from a skilled trial lawyer. I wanted a mentor.

I studied for the bar exam. I set up informational interviews with Portland attorneys who graduated from either my college or law school back in Ohio. They were kind enough to take me to lunch

Maximize Your Client's Recovery With a Structured Settlement



Kathy Osler
kosler@epssg.com

**"You work hard for your clients.
Make sure their Settlements
continue to work for them."**



EPS Settlements Group
The Structured Settlements Company™

www.epssg.com

800-444-4362 • 425-643-9044

Ask Me About Structured Attorney Fee Options!

21-3



The author enjoys skiing with his family at Anthony Lakes ski resort, less than two hours from Pendleton.

and chat about the legal landscape. One taught me how to say “ORY-GUN.” They encouraged me to be strong and not take the down job market personally. There simply were no quality partnership track jobs available in the valley. My law school advisor in Cleveland was a Portland tax attorney for 20 years before he became a professor. He encouraged me to look for work east of the Cascades, especially if I wanted to get away from the rain. And man did it rain...nonstop it seemed until the Waterfront Blues Festival.

While waiting for bar exam results, I got an offer from a small town firm after three interviews. The attorneys at Kottkamp and O’Rourke were exceptionally talented and ethical. My lunchtime mentors in Portland thought highly of the firm and said I should run, not walk, to take the job in Pendleton.

Move to rural Oregon? My family did not think this was a good idea. I did not hunt or ride horses. My family never owned a pickup truck. I was a Yellow Dog Democrat born in Chicago and raised in Minneapolis. I went to Oberlin College. I taught English in Milan, Italy, for two years before law school. I took the LSAT in Florence, Italy. Was I about to make the biggest mistake of my debt-ridden life?

Twenty-one years later, I can look you straight in the eye and say that my move into that little Main Street apartment above Cimmiyotti’s restaurant in Pen-

dleton was a fantastic career decision. I found the job I was looking for out of law school. It set the table for the rest of my career. I took a chance on rural, small town Oregon and it took a chance on me. I challenge every talented, young and jobless law school graduate to consider a similar career path. Small town Oregon needs you!

In the spirit of fellow Midwesterner David Letterman, I give you my “Top Ten Reasons to Practice Law In Pendleton.”

10. More bang for the buck

The housing market in small towns is much better for buyers than it is in the valley. You can buy an interesting old house with good bones for well under \$200,000. Student loan debt and entry level income can make owning a house impossible in Oregon’s metro areas. I bought my first house in Pendleton for \$82,000. I fixed it up with lots of help from friends, neighbors and knowledge-

able people at the local, family-owned hardware store.

Quality office space is affordable for the new lawyer who decides to hang out a shingle. Overhead is sufficiently low to make going solo early in your career possible. Savings also come from less time spent commuting to and from work. Parking is free. Attorneys walk and bike to work.

9. You remain connected

You will not find a faster internet connection anywhere in the state. Pendleton Fiber provides ultra high-speed internet service to your home and office and boasts 100 megabits per second, up and down. Smart phones and the internet have made practicing law in a small town less stressful for a young attorney and OTLA’s listserv is a great resource. The OSB Solo and Small Firm Section is active online.

Eastern Oregon clients occasionally

See Head East p 12

BRIDGES

REPORTING & LEGAL VIDEOGRAPHY

For over 40 years Bridges Reporting & Legal Video, Inc. has been your bridge to responsible, reliable, and accurate court reporting and legal video services in the Eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington, and Western Idaho area.

With one phone call you are covered for all of your court reporting and legal video needs.

**Call 1-800-358-2345
or visit us at
www.bridgesreporting.com
today!**

1030 N. Center Parkway
Kennewick, WA 99336
509-735-2400

P.O. Box 1862
Walla Walla, WA 99362
509-522-0832

153 S.W. 1st Street
Ontario, OR 97914 • 541-889-4909

1312 N. Monroe
Spokane, WA 99201
509-456-0586

17 S.W. Frazer, Su. 363
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-9491

need representation in the valley. You will find yourself filing lawsuits in Portland, Salem and Eugene as your practice grows so you can always strengthen your connections to lawyers in larger cities.

8. Dress down

Young attorneys do not have the budget for a closet full of new suits and dresses. The dress code for lawyers in Eastern Oregon is relaxed. Your clients will be more comfortable telling their stories to you if you are dressed casually at the office. When Portland lawyers come to my office for depositions, they seem to relish the chance to wear jeans.

7. You will polish your social skills

Seven years spent in college and law school wreak havoc on anyone's social skills. My Pendleton friends and I have had lots of laughs watching new arrivals "coming in hot" with their big city personalities. Competitive conversation, habitual interrupting of others and the need to impress amp up one's demeanor in a way that plays poorly to small town audiences, especially juries. Small town culture forces you to slow down and listen. You will learn to resist the urge to one-up those around you and instead let them have the stage. You will be a better guest. You will tell better stories. You will become more likable and in so doing you will have more fun spending time with people. People in small towns like to tell

and listen to good stories. There is an art to both and you will get lots of practice.

6. Ski and hike close to home

Pendleton is near first rate skiing, biking, fishing, hiking and mushrooming. There are no crowded parking lots and traffic jams to spoil the fun. If you like trees, go up into the mountains. If you like big sky, stay down low. There are four distinct seasons and each has its own outdoor activities to enjoy.

Good snow was in short supply last ski season. In fact, skiers from Sun Valley to Mt. Hood traveled to Eastern Oregon to enjoy Anthony Lakes ski resort's powder when most resorts lacked enough snow to open. The base elevation is 7,000 feet and reliably offers excellent powder snow. Last winter, I ran into Portland lawyer Steve Berman (Stoll Berne) in the lift line. He drove five hours and said it was worth the effort. My drive was 90 minutes. Anthony Lakes is owned by Baker County and offers affordable lift tickets and rental equipment.

5. Control your time

Everything is close to home and work for a small town lawyer. Your daily commute to the office is about 15 minutes, if you decide to walk. Less than five minutes if you drive. You can run errands and have lunch at home without ruining your work day. Think about what you could do with an extra

10-15 hours a week not spent in traffic.

4. You will get meaningful work

If you would rather handle cases from start to finish than carry a partner's trial bag for six years, try practicing law in Pendleton or any other small town in Oregon. Try some cases. Get the opportunity to see good cases before they pass over another attorney's desk. Practice law in a community where your services are needed and where you can afford to be appropriately selective about the matters you handle. Do good work and your book will grow. Go to the dry side to make your own rain. Having your own client base makes you more marketable.

You will be in demand immediately and in a wide variety of practice areas. Instead of being forced to work in an area of law you dislike based on a desperate need for a job, you can choose a practice area that suits you.

Making tough judgment calls early in your career will give you confidence as you gain experience. Though scary at first, especially if you begin as a solo practitioner, this process will prepare you for your future and allow you to trust your battle-tested judgment. The confidence gained through experience will be recognized by clients and fellow attorneys. You cannot develop these skills working on small pieces of cases for others who do not trust in your ability to handle a file from start to finish.

3. People are doing cool things

You may be surprised to know the tri-county, metro area does not have a lock on artisan wares and award winning breweries. In my neck of the woods, people are brewing great beer, bottling world class wine, blending artisan chocolate, roasting coffee, building top quality saddles and making custom cowboy hats for Hollywood producers.

Pendleton has the highest per capita number of residential solar panel installations in the state. Friends drive electric cars, host writing clubs, organize outdoor music festivals, build straw bale homes,



Helping you understand the
medical issues, giving you
more time to practice law.

Wendy L. Votroubek, RN, MPH, Certified Legal Nurse Consultant
Integrity Legal Nurse Consulting PDX

legalnursepdx.com | 503-775-3221 | wendy@legalnursepdx.com

grow organic crops, restore old movie theaters and offer yoga classes.

2. Mentors are everywhere

Experienced local attorneys, judges and court staff will take an interest in you as a new lawyer. Treat the local attorneys well, and they will root for you and help you succeed. Small towns are like university campuses in many ways. Like students, Pendleton lawyers cross paths often just because we live in the same place. You will have ample opportunity to chat with more experienced attorneys at lunch counters, coffee shops, grocery stores, sports events, the hardware store and on walks through town. Invite their critiques and sit in on their trials. Help them out when you have the opportunity and they will help you.

According to OSB data, there were 53 Professional Liability Fund-covered attorneys in Umatilla County (home of Pendleton) in 2014 and 24 of them were more than 60 years old. This compares

to 3,714 PLF-covered attorneys in Multnomah County last year, 1,086 of whom were under age 40. Last year, only 14 PLF-covered attorneys were under age 40 in Umatilla County. A young lawyer in Pendleton does not have to compete as much for good work. There is plenty to go around. This makes it easier to make friends in the profession.

I am lucky to have a friendship with long time Pendleton attorney Gene Hallman. We get together for lunch, oftentimes with other local attorneys, at out-of-the-way restaurants with names like "Umapine Café" and "The Oasis." The food is good and the places have character. We hosted the infamous "Eat What You Kill" party for OTLA members in June 2002. The friendships among local bar members young and old made that event possible.

1. Rural Oregon needs you

Attorneys can be influential leaders. Most lawyers went to law school to de-

velop the skills necessary to make the world a better place. Shortly after you move to a small town you will be tapped for service on boards, councils and commissions. You will be trusted to make high-impact decisions and your accomplishments through service will reward you personally and professionally. These opportunities are much more difficult to come by in Portland, Salem or Eugene.

The bar needs more lawyers who understand rural Oregon. Should you return to the valley, know that you will cherish your years spent on the dry side and they will make you a better lawyer, Oregonian and person.

Steve Hill advocates for injured people and their families. He is the principal at Hill Law Office, 310 SE Second St., Ste. 200, Pendleton, OR 97801. Hill is a member of the OTLA Guardians of Civil Justice at the Guardians Club level. He can be reached at steve@stevhilllaw.com or 541-276-2911.



THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DISTINGUISHED NEUTRALS

OREGON CHAPTER

The following attorneys are recognized for
Excellence in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution



Jeff BATCHELOR
PORTLAND



Sid BROCKLEY
CARLTON



William GIBSON
CLACKAMAS



Susan HAMMER
PORTLAND



Jim HUTCHINSON
PORTLAND



Richard SPIER
PORTLAND



Met WILSON
PORTLAND

Check Detailed Bios & Available Dates Online at www.ORMediators.org

As approved by local members of the national plaintiff (AAJ) and defense (DRI) bar associations*

* The National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals (www.NADN.org) is an invitation-only professional association of over 900 litigator-rated mediators & arbitrators throughout the US and a proud partner of the AAJ and DRI. For more info, please visit www.NADN.org/about