

Pacific Daily News Column
LIFE, LOVE, AND THE LAW
“Sharing Advice on Family Law Matters”
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After nearly 30 years of practicing family law, I was feeling a bit restless. Although I enjoy what I do, I had this nagging desire to try something new and different - to get out of my comfort zone.

For the past 10 years I had devoted most of my free time as a Cub Scout leader. Now that my youngest son had "graduated" from Cub Scouts, I resigned my position and wondered what to do with my spare time. I knew that I wanted to do something that appealed to me and benefited the community at the same time.

After much soul searching, I came up with a solution that merged my training, interests, and background. Why not write a weekly newspaper column about family law and have some fun while doing it? After all, I actually had some extra time on my hands.

For me, writing newspaper articles about family law was a logical choice. As a lawyer, I do a lot of writing. However, legal writing tends to be formal with little room for stylistic flair. Writing for a newspaper is much more fun.

Before becoming a father, I would occasionally contribute travel and historical articles to the PDN. Now seemed a good time to resume this hobby but to focus more on my professional expertise as a family lawyer.

After all, people are naturally curious about family law matters. I can't go to a party without several people coming up to me and beginning a conversation with: "I heard that you're a lawyer. Can I ask you a quick question?"

To be candid, this drives me nuts. I go to a party to relax, dance, and hopefully to shed my role as an attorney for a few hours. As a result, I don't go to many parties any more. But, I miss parties and dancing!

After thinking the matter over for a while, a win/win solution struck me. If I can answer people's family law questions through a newspaper column, maybe people won't need to corner me at a party and I can get back on the dance floor. I figure it's worth a try!

For me, Life, Love and the Law seemed an appropriate title for my column. Like it or not, from our first breath to our last, law constantly impacts our lives, those we love, and sometimes, those we used to love. For example, law determines who gets to take a baby home from GMH and who decides if and when to pull the plug on a dying loved-one.

In between the extremes of birth and death, a variety of laws weave their influence through many aspects of our lives. For example, laws tell us who can marry and when; who can adopt and who can be adopted; how to raise, educate, discipline, and support our children; how to end either a marriage or relationship; who gets custody of children after a divorce or break-up; how to stop someone from bothering us; and how to make arrangements to leave our property to others upon our death.

My goal is to give readers a better perspective on the law by exploring these and other family law topics from various points of view. Of course, we'll look at specific laws as we discuss particular topics. In addition, we may research the law's historical roots and discuss its impact on the community.

At times we'll review actual court decisions on specific matters. You'll soon learn that laws don't always mean what we think they mean. Laws can have different interpretations.

Finally, we'll discuss the social and psychological impact the law has on individuals and families.

I needed to decide which topic to start with. I considered taking topics alphabetically. That would mean I'd start with the subject of adoption. However, after talking to other writers, I'm convinced I should start elsewhere.

They warned me that for my column to be successful, I need to grab my readers' attention from very start. They told me my first topic needs to be a bit edgy and racy - really get the readers' juices flowing and the fingers of Facebookers racing across their keypads. Another tidbit of information they gave me - sex sells!!! Hmmm... What to do?

Bingo, I've got it! Divorce!!! Now that's a pretty edgy and racy topic, wouldn't you agree? There's plenty of drama. There's he said, she said. There's good versus bad. There's right versus wrong. And there's sex - - sometimes too much, and sometimes too little! I can hear the tapping of my readers' keyboards already!

I don't mean to make light of the topic. Divorce is a very serious subject and can be incredibly sad. The effects of divorce are widespread, not only impacting the divorcing couple, but their children, extended family, and friends as well.

I'll begin the topic of divorce by looking at the most common reasons couples divorce. In my experience, these include the failure of couples to get to know each other before they marry, physical and verbal abuse, financial mismanagement, drug and alcohol addiction, and adultery. As I review these topics with you, I'll offer some recommendations on possible ways to save a marriage.

So, please join me each Monday for my latest installment of Life, Love, and the Law.

Warning: I am neither a sociologist nor psychologist. However, three years of teaching high school, ten years as a Cub Scout leaders, 30 years of practicing law, not to mention my role as a father to a "tween" and a teenager, have given me some insight into the working of the human mind and the games people play. However, as I dish out advice, just remember the old saying, "you get what you pay for!"

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