Managing Partner is a force in New Jersey

As Managing Partner of the New Jersey office, James C. Orr (Partner-New Jersey) has plenty to do. Yet, his extracurricular activities keep him on the go as well. A national youth organization, a university and a planned community are all the beneficiaries of Jim’s drive to “give back.”

Jim’s legal skills and status in the community are a boon to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Jersey. Last year Jim was named to the board of directors of the New Jersey arm of this national youth advocacy program. While Jim is not a Big Brother directly mentoring young people, he is helping out by raising funds for the organization’s programs.

Wilson Elser launches new firm website

Wilson Elser has launched a brand new website. The site, located at www.wilsonelser.com, features updated attorney biographies, new practice descriptions, office overviews, published articles, news and much more.

Another feature of the firm’s new website is the ability for readers to subscribe to all electronic publications. Readers can subscribe directly online to Wemedia, eAlerts, eNewsletters and other specialized publications important to client needs and interests.

“In today’s world, major businesses have to present to the public and their clients a modern website that reflects not only the nature of their business, but also a clear and professional manner in which they conduct their business on a global

Managing Partner is a force in New Jersey

As Managing Partner of the New Jersey office, James C. Orr (Partner-New Jersey) has plenty to do. Yet, his extracurricular activities keep him on the go as well. A national youth organization, a university and a planned community are all the beneficiaries of Jim’s drive to “give back.”

Jim’s legal skills and status in the community are a boon to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Jersey. Last year Jim was named to the board of directors of the New Jersey arm of this national youth advocacy program. While Jim is not a Big Brother directly mentoring young people, he is helping out by raising funds for the organization’s programs.

Continued on page 2

Firm opens new Florida office in Orlando

Wilson Elser is continuing its national growth by joining forces with the law firm of Bussey, White, McDonough and Freeman, P.A. and opening an office in Orlando, FL. The new office joins Miami as Wilson Elser’s second location in Florida.

In announcing the expansion and new office, Thomas W. Wilson Sr., Chairman of the Executive Committee of Wilson Elser, said the firm has always aimed to extend its reach throughout the country to better serve clients. With this addition, Wilson Elser now has 20 offices in the United States.

“We view Central Florida and the Southeast as a rapidly growing area where
Former LA Partner sees ‘public service’ as his new calling in life

Patrick M. Kelly (Partner-Los Angeles), left, attended the swearing in of Judge Otis D. Wright II, center, by retired Court of Appeals Judge Charles S. Vogel, right.

In a lifelong career centered on the law, Otis D. Wright II has been a sheriff, a prosecutor and a Partner at Wilson Elser. Recently elevated to the bench in California, this son of a World War II airman said it was the 9-11 attacks that made him want to serve as a judge.

As he was preparing to be sworn in as a Los Angeles Superior Court judge last November, Otis reflected on the benchmarks of his career. He recalled his progression from Los Angeles County deputy sheriff, to deputy attorney general in the California Department of Justice, to Partner in Wilson Elser’s Los Angeles office. For Otis, the journey has always been about service and a commitment to excellence.

Along the way, there were life-changing moments that helped focus him on where he wanted to go in his career. He looked back to the inspiration of his father’s service as a Tuskegee Airman during World War II, the encouragement from his wife to become a lawyer, and his personal introspection after he canceled his seat on a fateful flight from Boston to Los Angeles on September 11.

“It was my wife, Evelyn, who encouraged me most,” to go to law school. He was 31 years old and working hard as a deputy sheriff for Los Angeles County. “My wife sent for the applications for me to take the LSATs.” Otis said he took some kidding from friends in the sheriff’s department. “I remember guys asking if I thought about what it’d be like to be a new lawyer at 35 years old. I said I could either be a 35-year-old cop or a 35-year-old lawyer.” Otis stayed with the law and chose to practice rather than enforce it.

But it was that fateful day in September 2001, a day that could have ended in his death, that pushed Otis in a new direction in his life. He had chosen to stay in Boston and make a last-minute attempt to resolve a difficult legal situation, rather than abandon negotiations that had broken off. The flight he canceled ultimately made history. The plane he would have been on slammed into the World Trade Center in the nation’s worst terror attack. After 9-11, Otis knew there was more for him to do in life. He began to reflect on his path in life. This reflection, he said, led him to seek a judicial appointment.

“As a public lawyer you feel that you’re making a difference. As a matter of personal satisfaction, I feel I have to do this,” he said about his judgeship. “It’s just a fluke that I didn’t get on that United Airlines flight from Boston to LA on 9-11. Not having been on that flight — that tells me there is something else for me to do in life,” he said.

Otis had already had a successful private practice career. He started at Wilson Elser as an Associate then became a Partner. Otis said his time at Wilson Elser prepared him well to serve on the bench. He said the firm has a “commitment to excellence.”

Discussing the media controversy over U.S. Supreme Court nominees, Otis said the judiciary used to be independent. “It’s unfair to ask people what their philosophies are or how they are inclined to rule.” Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger “didn’t care about my opinions on . . . social issues. What he did care about is competence,” Otis said.

A resident of Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, Otis graduated from Southwestern University School of Law, where he serves on the board of trustees.

Wilson Elser is proud that one of its partners has been elevated to the bench and is making a significant contribution. For Otis, the journey to this point in his life has been driven by dedication and hard work, but also by the hand of fate.

We wish him much success in this next phase of his legal career.

Wilson Elser launches new firm website from page 1

platform,” said Thomas W. Wilson Sr., Chairman of the Executive Committee.

“We shut down an antiquated site that was cumbersome and difficult to use and built a 21st century website that meets the needs of the attorneys. It gives them a tool that will help them grow their business,” said Director of Marketing Paris A. Gunther.

One of the most visible changes that will accompany the new website is the new format for e-mail addresses. “My new e-mail is paris.gunther@wilsonelser.com,” said the marketing director. “Drop me a line with your thoughts on the new site.”

According to Paris, in excess of 300 attorney bios were rewritten. “Edits are still under way with many people who have gotten on board,” she said. Additionally, 21 practice descriptions were rewritten, 21 office pages were drafted and a host of other presentation materials were added to the site. “It’s been a long haul for the marketing team, but now the firm has something it can be proud of for a long time.”
White Plains lawyer serves hometown city council in Connecticut

Michael W. Coffey (Partner-White Plains) is finding that public service is a fulfilling adjunct to his law career. While many attorneys turn to hobbies to balance out their demanding work schedules, Michael sees holding public office as a natural extension of his professional life. A longtime resident of Norwalk, CT, he was recently re-elected to the Common Council there.

Many years as an active litigator have given Michael an understanding of the law that he has routinely applied in past political endeavors. A native of Long Island who attended Connecticut College, he decided during his school days that Connecticut was a nice place to settle down and have a family. After graduation, Michael moved back to New York and worked as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn. While there, he was introduced to his future wife, Kathleen, who was the Queens district attorney. Today they live in Norwalk with their three boys, ages 5, 2 and 9 months.

Election to the city’s 15-member legislative body has offered Michael a sphere of influence in which he can effect his goals. He wants to see “safer streets” and “government run more efficiently.” Michael is one of five at-large council members, which means he represents all residents of the city.

Michael is not a newbie to politics. Past endeavors. A native of Long Island who attended Connecticut College, he decided during his school days that Connecticut was a nice place to settle down and have a family. After graduation, Michael moved back to New York and worked as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn. While there, he was introduced to his future wife, Kathleen, who was the Queens district attorney. Today they live in Norwalk with their three boys, ages 5, 2 and 9 months.

Election to the city’s 15-member legislative body has offered Michael a sphere of influence in which he can effect his goals. He wants to see “safer streets” and “government run more efficiently.” Michael is one of five at-large council members, which means he represents all residents of the city.

Michael is not a newbie to politics. Past roles have included serving as chairman of the New York State Young Democrats, being campaign manager for a state attorney general, and working on a variety of other political campaigns over the years. In 2002, Michael ran for probate judge in Norwalk, but lost. The following year, he ran for the Common Council and was elected.

Norwalk is home to approximately 85,000 people, and the council oversees the operation of the city government and its annual budget of roughly $250 million. Michael will be president of the legislative body for the next year. He also serves as chairman of the council's Ethics and Ordinance committees.

During this term on the council, Michael aims to tackle a variety of municipal issues. One of his main goals is a rewriting of the city’s ethics code. The code was last revised in 1968. Since then, says Michael, Norwalk has grown from a “small town” to a “small city.” He said the needs of the city are different now. Some points of revision include procedures for addressing ethics complaints and the selection process for committee members.

As for the Ordinance Committee, Michael is looking to restructure city rules about outdoor dining in the South Norwalk business district. The area is commonly referred to as SoNo.

The council has already taken action regarding a controversial U.S. Supreme Court ruling. In the highly publicized case Kelo v. New London, the court ruled to permit seizure of private property by a city for the purpose of economic development. To protect private property owners in Norwalk, Michael and his fellow councilmen put forward an ordinance restricting use of eminent domain. The action essentially would nullify the high court’s ruling on the local level. This bold move garnered a large amount of media attention, and was a topic of discussion on National Public Radio.

Unlike others in politics, Michael has no desire for higher office. “The city council is it,” he says. As a litigator, he tries roughly 10 cases per year in Connecticut and New York and does not have time for more politics. His practice focuses on federal, state and appellate courts, with emphasis on construction litigation, municipal litigation, complex litigation and general tort liability defense. But for the residents of his community, the time he does have is put to very good use.

Firm opens new Florida office in Orlando from page 1

many of our clients already have significant business interests. So it is only logical we be there to serve their expanding needs. The firm of Bussey, White, McDonough and Freeman, P.A. has a client service commitment similar to ours and we believe they will fit in with our network of offices,” Wilson said.

John W. Bussey III (Partner-Orlando), who will serve as the new Managing Partner of the eight-lawyer office, said “linking our two firms offers our clients in this market a strong national network of offices to serve their needs around the United States. We look forward to being part of the Wilson Elser network.”

E. Stratton Horres (Partner-Dallas), Managing Partner of the Southeast Region, said the decision to add an Orlando office reflects national growth trends. “The southern tier of the country is considered an expansion area for all types of businesses,” Horres said. “That’s why we’re expanding there.”

Bussey, along with Sean M. McDonough and Nicholas D. Freeman, joined Wilson Elser as Partners. Robert A. White joined as Of Counsel.

Wilson Elser has had a Miami office for almost 20 years. That office, staffed with about 25 attorneys, has served Wilson Elser’s clients throughout Florida and Latin America in the areas of commercial and business litigation, general and professional liability, health care law; insurance coverage and product liability.

The Orlando attorneys have experience in corporate matters, insurance, product liability, toxic torts, medical malpractice, wrongful death and personal injury.
New Partners

Wilson Elser named 18 new partners to the firm at the beginning of 2006 as part of an expansion of its national law practice. The new partners were announced by Wilson Elser about the same time the firm was identified by The National Law Journal as one of the fastest growing law firms in America.

“Our firm continues to expand to better serve our clients,” said Thomas W. Wilson Sr., Chairman of the Executive Committee, in a press release about the new partners. “The 18 individuals elevated to Partner within Wilson Elser will add significant bench strength to our firm. It is a great pleasure to congratulate them and we look forward to their continued success in the years to come.”

The new partners come from eight different offices located from the East Coast to the West Coast. The new partners are listed below with brief biographies.

Michael H. Bai was named a Partner in the New York office. His practice focuses on product liability matters, regulatory issues and insurance disputes. Michael is responsible for the defense and representation of manufacturers of various products, both domestically and internationally, and coordinates the national defense of several domestic and foreign manufacturers. He has written and lectured on various jurisdictional issues, including The Hague Service Convention.

Erik C. DiMarco was named a Partner in the New York office. His practice focuses on litigating cases involving toxic tort, product liability, premises liability and general liability matters in New York and Connecticut. Erik has been extensively involved in the defense of asbestos exposure, personal injury and wrongful death suits. Prior to joining Wilson Elser, Erik represented various entities in the civil prosecution of cable and satellite piracy cases under the federal Telecommunications Act. He was responsible for extensive motion practice, successfully arguing against the Seventh Amendment right to a jury trial in piracy cases.

Kevie Ann Aulbach was named a Partner in the New York office. She defends hospitals and physicians in complex professional liability cases from inception to trial. Kevie is admitted to practice in New York state courts and the U.S. District Courts for the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York. Prior to coming to Wilson Elser, she was an assistant district attorney in Kings County for three years.

Arlene N. Berger was named a Partner in the Los Angeles office. Her practice emphasizes complex litigation defense from commencement of the action through trial, with specialties in product liability defense, professional negligence and complex civil litigation in both federal and state courts. She has successfully defended several class action lawsuits, as well as represented unfair competition claims. Arlene is admitted to practice in California, in the U.S. District Courts for the Southern, Eastern and Central Districts of California, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal.

Anthony M. Goldner was named a Partner in the Chicago office. His practice focuses on product liability, medical malpractice and general liability. Anthony is responsible for supervising the day-to-day defense and management of the Chicago office’s growing toxic tort defense practice that currently consists of approximately 250 asbestos, mold, benzene, carbon monoxide and welding rod cases. Anthony is a member of the Defense Research Institute and the Illinois State Bar Association.

Erik C. DiMarco was named a Partner in the New York office. His practice focuses on litigating cases involving toxic tort, product liability, premises liability and general liability matters in New York and Connecticut. Erik has been extensively involved in the defense of asbestos exposure, personal injury and wrongful death suits. Prior to joining Wilson Elser, Erik represented various entities in the civil prosecution of cable and satellite piracy cases under the federal Telecommunications Act. He was responsible for extensive motion practice, successfully arguing against the Seventh Amendment right to a jury trial in piracy cases.

Christopher P. Flanagan was named a Partner in the Boston office. Christopher is a litigator with more than 10 years of trial experience. His practice focuses on product liability, professional liability, general liability and aviation liability. Christopher has represented businesses, property owners, schools and individuals in a variety of matters in state and federal courts throughout Massachusetts and in New Hampshire.

Aaron R. Haimowitz was named a Partner in the New York office. His practice focuses on environmental toxic tort, construction, contract, municipal liability, general tort liability and insurance coverage litiga-
tion. Much of Aaron’s practice deals with the New York State Labor Law, as well as the New York State Industrial Code, OSHA regulations and other administrative codes. Aaron has successfully tried complex cases in the New York State Court system, as well as the U.S. District Courts for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York. Additionally, he has monitored trials on behalf of excess insurers.

Laura B. Jordan was named a Partner in the White Plains office. Laura’s practice focuses on the representation of the medical profession. Her legal experience is concentrated in the defense of medical malpractice litigation in state and federal courts. A former registered nurse, Laura has represented hospitals, doctors, nurses and allied health professionals at deposition and trial. She has also tried general and automotive liability cases.

Nicholas J. Kauffman was named a Partner in the Chicago office. His practice focuses on commercial litigation, professional liability and construction litigation. He manages complex litigation for clients in Illinois and nationally. Nicholas previously practiced in the New York City office for many years.

Joseph Laird was named a Partner in the New York office. He has extensive experience in state and federal trial courts, with emphasis on personal injury and property damage defense litigation, primarily in the areas of premises liability (including sports-related cases), automobile liability, product liability and labor law matters. He practices in all areas of defense litigation, with particular emphasis in the defense of personal injury claims asserted against individuals, corporations and self-insured entities. Joe was also a legislative aide to a New York City state senator.

John C. Lee was named a Partner in the Los Angeles office. His practice focuses on insurance coverage, bad faith litigation, professional liability defense and employment practices liability defense. John has wide experience representing major insurers in the areas of directors and officers, employment practices, professional liability, technology and media liability, commercial general liability and first-party matters. Prior to becoming an attorney, John was a claims professional with a large insurance company.

James Rehberger was named a Partner in the New Jersey office. Prior to entering the legal profession, James was an engineer for a worldwide architectural/engineering consulting firm and worked on a variety of projects. During his years with the firm, he has handled virtually every type of litigation. Jim’s practice focuses on general liability, product liability, class actions, construction litigation, premises liability, toxic torts, professional liability and insurance coverage. He is also experienced in handling workers’ compensation claims. James has successfully second-chaired several product liability trials involving ladders, scaffolds and table saws, and one professional liability legal malpractice matter.

Brett A. Scher was named a Partner in the New York office. His legal practice includes litigation in the fields of professional liability, insurance coverage disputes, commercial litigation, municipal liability and international disputes. His practice addresses litigation throughout the United States in both the federal and state courts. Additionally, Brett has handled several appellate matters at both the state and federal levels. Brett specifically handles matters dealing with professional liability practice and insurance coverage. Brett is also part of our European team focusing on complex international disputes and is a former member of the firm’s Associate Focus Committee.

Jason P. Sultzer was named a Partner in the White Plains office. He regularly represents clients in trial and appellate courts throughout the United States in various matters, with a special emphasis on class action litigation, product liability defense and mass torts. Jason has also handled numerous matters before the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation. He has successfully defended clients in a number of highly publicized class action lawsuits in both state and federal courts. Those class actions have dealt with a wide variety of subjects, including unfair competition, breach of warranty, RICO, product-related issues and consumer protection statutes of nearly all 50 states. Prior to joining Wilson Elser, he served as in-house counsel for Owens Corning, a Fortune 500 company.

Wendy D. Testa was named a Partner in the Philadelphia office. Her practice focuses on insurance coverage and defense litigation, particularly in the areas of construction litigation, professional liability, premises and auto liability, product liability, and primary and excess coverage issues. Wendy joined the firm in 2001. Earlier she was affiliated with other law firms in Philadelphia and the Washington, D.C./Maryland area. She also has worked in the Maryland Office of the State’s Attorney, and for the District Attorney of Montgomery County, PA.
Wilson Elser argues state court not allowed to ‘preempt’ federal research

This past fall Thomas W. Tobin (Partner-NY Metro), L. Victor Bilger and E. Paul Dougherty (Partners-Los Angeles) teamed up, bringing to bear multi-office experience for the defense of Bombardier Transportation in litigation resulting from a Los Angeles commuter train crash. The crash took place in January 2003, when a Metrolink commuter train, traveling 79 miles per hour, struck a Universal Studios truck at a grade crossing. The train derailed, jack-knifed and seriously injured many passengers.

The lawyers argued that the state court had no authority to “preempt” ongoing research into railroad safety issues by the U.S. Congress. The arguments focused on an effort to convince the court that any jury verdict with regard to the technical matters would be in opposition to Congress’ intent, acting through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in conducting the ongoing safety research.

The motions filed by Wilson Elser relied, in part, upon a distillation of thousands of pages of crashworthiness research by the FRA. For the purposes of the motions, the research itself became the “authoritative message of federal policy” required for preemptive purposes.

Negligence actions were brought by 19 injured passengers against Metrolink and Universal. Product liability actions were brought against Bombardier Transportation, the manufacturer of the train. The actions against Bombardier alleged that the train should not have been designed for push/pull operation, there should have been seat belts, the tables were not crashworthy, the brakes were defectively designed, and the cab car should have been designed to prevent the derailment.

All of the product liability claims against Bombardier were dismissed through a series of motions by the defense team on the basis that they were preempted by the Federal Railroad Safety Act and the Federal Locomotive Boiler Inspection Act.

Managing Partner is a force in New Jersey from page 1

Youth programs are particularly important to Jim. In fact, his association with Big Brothers began with an interest in another mentoring program for youngsters, called All Stars.

Jim became involved with the All Stars Project a few years ago. This program started in Los Angeles with the mission to help inner-city youth develop in positive ways and to introduce them to career possibilities in the corporate sector. Jim says the program now educates young people throughout the country “how to conduct themselves in the business world.”

In fact, Jim put the program into action by hiring a young woman from the All Stars Project. She joined Wilson Elser’s New Jersey office as a paralegal clerk.

While Jim is not a Big Brother, he is a self-described “Big Father” to his 14- and 12-year-old children. He is always in awe of the people who volunteer to make a hands-on difference in young people’s lives.

Jim says he shares the mission of these volunteers to effect change. He says that effort is paying off. Statewide, the All Stars Project and Big Brothers Big Sisters serve well over 500 youths, according to Jim. “It’s one step at a time, one success at a time,” he says.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest and largest mentoring program for youth, but is pursuing its mission with fewer volunteers these days. The organization’s philosophy is to support young people by matching them with adults who can spend time with them.

Big Brothers Big Sisters’ board of directors disseminates as much information as possible about the program to attract more volunteers, as well as identify more teenagers in need. Jim is the only board member from a law firm. Other board members are from banks, real estate companies, accounting firms and other businesses.

Of course, the role Jim has taken on with Big Brothers Big Sisters benefits greatly from his professional ties. As the Managing Partner of Wilson Elser’s Newark office, he is in contact with major New Jersey companies on a regular basis and is able to use his connections to help get the necessary funds raised for the youth program that is dear to his heart.

Jim has also used his professional background and connections in the arena of higher education. He was recently named to the Dean’s Board of Visitors at Seton Hall School of Law, in Newark.

The most pressing issue for the board is how to bring more students to the school’s urban setting. Competition with law school campuses found in more glamorous locations throughout the region is always a challenge, according to Jim. The law school needs to take a look at what kind of institution it is now, and how it plans to define itself in the future, he says. Historically, the school has drawn students from a pool of local applicants. It may want to establish itself as a national law school in the years to come, and that will require a different approach to student recruitment, he adds.

Jim’s legal experience has come in handy in a more direct way. Jim lives in Llewellyn, a planned community in West Orange, a suburb of Newark. For five years, Jim has served as the chairman of the Board of Community Managers. Llewellyn is said to be the first architecturally planned community in the United States. The community was developed by Thomas Edison, whose homestead is still located there. Edison’s mansion, Glenmont, is listed as a National Historical Site.

Even with the multitude of time demands pertaining to his community activities for the betterment of Newark, Jim is still able to serve as co-Vice Chairman of Wilson Elser’s Executive Committee. He also maintains a busy legal practice involving major insurance issues, municipal liability, libel and slander issues, and environmental litigation cases.
White Plains Partner likes stirring the pot at home to relax

Cooking is not only a hobby for Joseph D’Avanzo (Partner-White Plains), it is a recipe for relaxation and a remedy for job stress. Joe has found that time spent in the kitchen gives him more than the comfort of a good meal; it also is a nice counterbalance to his busy life as a lawyer.

For Joe, there’s nothing like a long, slowly cooked Sunday dinner with family. Producing such a meal is second nature for this New Yorker who considers himself a lifelong student of the Italian home kitchen.

Indeed, Joe has enjoyed being in the kitchen since childhood. One of five children in an Italian-American home, he and his family used mealtime as an opportunity to connect and meal preparation as a method for passing on family traditions.

By junior high school, Joe was already a fan of cooking shows on television, avidly studying the techniques of Julia Child and Graham Kerr, the “Galloping Gourmet.” Later, while earning his law degree at New York Law School, Joe lived in Astoria, Queens, next door to his great-grandmother. As any good Italian “nonna” would, she made sure that he was well fed while he focused on his studies. While hitting the books in her kitchen, he learned the family dishes. His interest in cooking, combined with a heritage rich in culinary customs, created a talented and eager chef.

Joe’s enthusiasm for food has continued to grow. Not surprisingly, his favorite recipe — his family’s version of tomato sauce with meatballs and sausage — is an all-day affair to cook. Joe describes the slow, deliberate method of preparing the sauce with the fervor of an artist. “The sauce gets a red, velvety color and the meat is fork tender.”

Interestingly, pasta with meat sauce is not his favorite meal to eat. While the chef in him loves the slow cooking process of the family sauce, his gourmet side loves a great steak. Of course it must be a steak prepared his own way, with a marinade made from oil, crushed garlic, salt and pepper. Both the sauce and steak recipes give Joe what he desires most, quality time spent in the kitchen, with delicious results.

The holidays play an especially important role in the D’Avanzo family’s cooking traditions. Joe is now the host of the traditional Italian Christmas Eve meal, with a menu that features a varied collection of fish dishes. To comply completely with the custom, Joe prepares seven kinds of fish and serves each as its own course.

While things usually go off without a hitch for this holiday extravaganza, there was one meal that Joe would rather forget. In fact, it was the setting for Joe’s most memorable failure in the kitchen to date. Instead of separating the fish into different courses, he had decided to combine the various kinds of fish into a stew called cioppino. Originally created by Italian fishermen in San Francisco, cioppino uses a variety of fish in a mild and tasty tomato base. Joe’s cioppino, on this particular occasion, somehow managed to cook more quickly than he had expected. The stew burned at the bottom, and Joe, trying to rescue it, stirred it vigorously, bringing all the black bits up through the rest of the stew. The result: his cats enjoyed the Christmas Eve meal, and his family has yet to let him forget about it.

A big part of cooking is, of course, eating. When dining out, Joe is always looking for new dishes that he can recreate at home. While he says he doesn’t travel specifically for a region’s food, he does try the local cuisine on his business trips. He will tailor his food choices to the best offerings of each locale. As he puts it, “You don’t order Italian food in Texas.”

Some of Joe’s favorite dine-out memories include sampling barbeque in Kansas City and trolling the restaurants of Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco. Another favorite, closer to home, is The Culinary Institute of America in Dutchess County, New York.

Joe does the more traditional kind of culinary research, too, poring over cookbooks in his free time. At the top of his list is “The New York Times Cookbook” by Craig Claiborne. Joe’s more whimsical side enjoys Dom DeLuise’s “Eat This … It’ll Make You Feel Better!”

On weekends, he and his wife “will just be reading through a couple of cookbooks and call out to each other, ‘Hey listen to this one.’” Maria D’Avanzo, also Italian and a fellow attorney, boasts abilities in the kitchen as well. The couple will often divide the mealtime responsibilities, cooking their own specialties and enjoying the time together. When cooking a meal just for his wife, Joe makes her favorite, pork chops with hot cherry peppers. Here again, food is a means for bringing family together, something shared and cherished.

Joe wants to take his love of cooking in new directions. Thus far, he has not been as successful at baking as he has at other kinds of cooking. When he attempted to make his grandmother’s cheesecake, the top came out burned black. There have been subsequent efforts, but he says that his cheesecakes just never turn out quite right. In baked goods, only his chocolate cake turns out consistently well, he says. Even though his knowledge of cooking comes from a lifetime observing in the kitchen, he admits he might need a class to tune up his baking technique.

Blending the ingredients of family, tradition and wholesome food, cooking has been a constant joy in his life and helps him unwind from his trial practice on behalf of corporate and individual clients in both federal and state courts and serving as national coordinating counsel for Fortune 500 corporations. With such soul satisfaction and wonderful memories, the food seems almost incidental. Well … almost.
It’s the old story of man v. fish for Chicago-based attorney-angler

Thomas F. Murray (Partner-Chicago) has found his bliss. It inspires him to get up before dawn, drive for hours, and even shrug off Wisconsin’s winter weather. For the Chicago Partner, happiness is leaving the cares of the office behind for a day of fishing on the lakes near his boyhood home.

As a child growing up on Lake Geneva in Wisconsin, roughly 80 miles from Chicago, Tom was immediately drawn to the water and the thrill of the catch. His father bought Tom his first pole. Before long, he was ‘hooked.’

Tom’s father and brothers, however, don’t share his passion for fishing. The other Murray males are more into putters than poles, and play round after round of low handicap golf.

Being the lone fisherman in the family is no problem, though. In fact, it may have helped steer the course of his education and career, keeping him close to the lake country he loves. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1979 and then received his law degree from Loyola University in Chicago. Tom came to work for Wilson Elser in the Chicago office in 1987. He continues to live in his hometown, Lake Geneva, with his wife and three children, only half a block away from the boat launch on Lake Geneva.

While other fishermen travel to exotic destinations to pursue their sport, Tom has focused his passion around the fishing found right in his own backyard. With a hobbyist’s sense of pride, he describes the garage at his home as “a fishing museum,” with tackle at the ready for any lake condition. With his boat and decades spent fishing in the area, Tom sees himself as the perfect candidate to take other eager fishermen out on the water. This includes his own sons and members of his professional community.

As Tom describes it, there is a “core group” of fishermen who join him in excursions as often as their busy schedules allow. Many of these anglers are insurance professionals, whom Tom has met through his legal practice that concentrates in the areas of product liability and general liability issues.

While their professional ties make for pleasant camaraderie, it is the joy of fishing that truly bonds Tom and his colleagues. Many in the group have known each other professionally for 15 years or more. Yet on the lakes they talk fishing, not business.

With a multitude of lakes at their disposal, Lake Geneva included, these Wisconsinites and Chicagoans share a passion while expanding their contacts and friendships in his professional community. The relationships enhanced while fishing, either with members of the insurance business or with his own children, will keep the former lone fisherman on the water as long as there are lakes to lure him.