



# Hobby Highlights: Focusing on “Life” Part of Work-Life Balance

BY JESSICA PERLICK, ESQ.  
AND PATTY L. WALSH, ESQ.

**The legal profession can be a grueling one. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story once said that the law “is a jealous mistress, and requires a long and constant courtship.”<sup>1</sup>**

The statistics are sobering. According to a Bloomberg Law survey, lawyers who experienced a decline in well-being also reported an average job satisfaction of score of 4.1 on a 10-point scale, with 83 percent suffering from disrupted sleep, 81 percent from anxiety, 43 percent from depression, and 79 percent identified an inability to disconnect from work.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, it helps to remind ourselves that we are human and can have a life that exists outside of law. Thus, we wanted to feature some examples from fellow attorneys who have found hobbies and interests outside of our profession, to demonstrate that it is possible. In most cases, those hobbies provide a break from the work we do, while also providing lessons or clarity that can be applied to legal practice. And who knows? Perhaps you can find a new hobby to try or consider one in a new light.

## EDWARD WYNDER

**Current position/Years of practice:** Associate General Counsel at Southern Nevada Health District, 10 years.

**Hobby and length of time doing it:** Triathlons for the last five years.

Wynder said he played sports throughout his life as a fun way to stay physically active, which included playing rugby through college and law school. But while the competitive aspect of rugby was appealing, he wanted to look for something physically challenging, but less rough and tumble. Enter triathlon.

“I love the challenge of trying to master three different sports, each with its own unique demands on skill, strength, and stamina,” he said. “Training and racing, more than anything, clears my head and quiets my thoughts. There is something therapeutic about putting in the miles, whether in the water, on the bike, or out on a run. Afterwards, my mind is clear, and I am ready to tackle the demands of my career and clients.”





## STEVE SIDHU

**Current position/Years of practice:** Senior Deputy Attorney General, 25 years of practice.

**Hobby and length of time doing it:** High performance driving events instructor for 25 years.

A lifetime passion for all things automotive led Sidhu to join his cousin and brother at driving schools at various west coast racetracks in the late 1990s. And that passion

eventually led to him becoming an instructor on those tracks.

“Seeing the moment when a student at the racetrack understands and successfully executes the proper driving technique through a complicated set of corners ... that ‘A-ha!’ moment is the best reward for me as an instructor,” Sidhu said. “The racetrack habit of looking farther down the track instead of focusing on the car directly in front lends itself to seeing the big picture in a case,” rather than getting sidetracked by opposing counsel’s tactics.



## CHARLES FINLAYSON

**Current position/Years of practice:** Appellate partner, 14 years of practice.

**Hobby:** Beekeeping and a hobby farm.

When he watched the documentary “Biggest Little Farm,” Finlayson said he and his husband decided they wanted to leave city life behind and raise animals. For the most part, they’ve achieved that goal, creating a small hobby farm on their property where they grow vegetables, raise animals, and keep bees. The best part, according to Finlayson, is that “You get to literally eat the fruits of your labor.”

Despite the hard work, there’s a certain reprieve that comes along with the labor.

“As a lawyer, I pretty much only use my brain,” Finlayson said. “Having a small farm means that, no matter how exhausted I am, I have to get up and use the rest of my body – go outside, lift heavy things, and get my hands dirty. It forces me to reframe my perspective and remember the simpler things in life, like watching beans crawl up a trellis, or watching a mama hen teach her chicks how to get back into the coop at the end of the night.”



## GABRIELLE ANGLE

**Current position/Years of practice:** Gaming/Regulatory Compliance Attorney, seven years.

**Hobby and length of time doing it:** Teaching dance for 14 years.

Dance has been a part of Angle’s life since she was a persuasive 3-year-old who convinced her mom to enroll her in lessons.

“I did nothing else except school and dance all through school,” Angle said. “I went to college for dance and have a B.F.A. in dance pedagogy (from Brenau University).”

Now, she loves to watch her students bring her choreography to life, even when it feels difficult to create new routines. “It’s a hard process sometimes ... but digging deep and pulling out new, different, or refined choreography, ideas, etc., is such a beautiful part of the process,” Angle said.

As for the connection between dance and a legal career? There is more overlap than may be apparent at first glance.

“It’s a stark contrast to the career I have, and it does help me create a balance,” Angle said. “I also truly believe that being a teacher helps me in my full-time career, as it’s made me want to mentor others, help them grow, and let them try new things or learn new things under a safety net where I can catch them if they fall.”

Angle said that the work she does teaching and choreographing dance helps in other ways as well.

“It also challenges me to be a better communicator at work – when I am teaching, my students don’t all learn the same way,” she said. “I often have to break it down differently or determine what that individual is doing in a step or dance that I can correct them on and help them improve. That has come into play in my legal and compliance career – everyone comes from different backgrounds. It’s my job to meet them where they are and help them learn and understand the topics I’m an expert in.”

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## NICK HALEY and PATTY WALSH

### Current Position/Years of

**Practice:** Staff attorneys with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, eight years of practice.

### Hobbies and Length of time doing

**it:** Zen gardening (six years), and homebrewing (one year).

Haley and Walsh wanted to create a tranquil place that gave them a reason to go outside and have a creative, artistic outlet.

“I found inspiration from places I had seen,” Haley said. “We took the best of each and found a way to make them fit together. To me, the yard took on a life of its own – in some ways literally.”

Walsh agrees.

“When we first moved in, the place was a blank slate,” she said. “We designed the yard ourselves. I felt a sense of pride and joy seeing our vision come together. It gave me self-confidence to try new things and provided stress relief.”

As for homebrewing, “[it] is another outlet that is about creating and learning – all the things that keep you young,” Haley said.

“It pushes you beyond your comfort zone and requires patience, which can help with work and life. Practicing law can seem all-consuming, but humans aren’t meant to be one-dimensional. It keeps matters in perspective,” Walsh said.



## JESSICA PERLICK

### Current position/Years of practice:

Senior Deputy Attorney General, 12 years of practice.

### Hobbies and length of time doing

**it:** Crochet, off and on throughout my life, and reading.

“Count me as someone who wrote off a hobby for years until I was able to reframe my perspective. From the time I was very young, my grandmother always tried to teach me how to crochet, but I could never stick with it long enough to finish a project. I picked it up dozens of

times over the years, but it wasn’t until I discovered mosaic overlay that I really engaged with the process of following a pattern and attaining that repetitive rhythm that can quiet

the stress of the day. Now, one of my favorite pastimes is to set up my yarn and pattern, turn on an audiobook, and finish row after row, watching the design take shape.

“When it comes to work, I know I can fixate on a tricky issue or problem to the point of losing the forest for the trees. Even reading for pleasure wouldn’t always help because my mind would inevitably wander back to the issue plaguing me that day. But the combination of working with my hands in one medium while listening to the story unfolding through my speaker leaves no opportunity to wander back to other issues. If I do, I risk missing stitches or character beats. And in every instance, that break from the problem clears my mind enough to tackle it later, with an improved perspective.”

*Although we’ve focused on the possible ways in which these hobbies can help on the work side of the work-life balance, that is only a minor benefit to consider. Whatever hobby you choose to try next should be one that improves the life side of that balance, and one that brings the most joy.*

### ENDNOTES:

1. Justice Joseph Story, A DISCOURSE PRONOUNCED UPON THE INAUGURATION OF THE AUTHOR, AS DANE PROFESSOR OF LAW IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF AUGUST, 1829 29 (1829), available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101068036142&seq=3>
2. Debra Cassens Weiss, *Surveyed Lawyers Report They Experience Burnout in Their Jobs More Than Half the Time*, ABA (Mar. 9, 2022), <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/journal/articles/2022/surveyed-lawyers-report-they-experience-burnout-in-their-jobs-mo/>.

JESSICA PERLICK is a senior deputy attorney general in the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, where she handles civil litigation and national qui tams. When she’s not working on her latest crochet and reading project, you can find her indulging her other hobbies – watching reality TV competitions and hosting pizza and game nights.

PATTY L. WALSH’s biography can be found on page 6.

