

The Bryan Williams Story

by Richard Vogel, Q.C.

Most people will be surprised to know that Bryan Williams, that famous Campbell River fly fisherman, was born (are you ready) in Calgary. Who knows what it was that was put into his genes that made him what he is. Perhaps it was the altitude. One colleague and friend, without reservation, says: "If there were Olympic medals for persistence and tenacity, Bryan Williams would have as many Golds as Mark Spitz." Another colleague says "When he gets involved, he really doesn't know how or when to stop."

There is a saying in his office (that may be racist) to the effect that one day his partners will come into his room to find that he has got himself into that mythical twirl which caused Black Sambo's demise. The worry is that he will, by his ceaseless activity, actually reduce himself to a pat of yellow butter. Such is the normal frenzy in which he works.

I thought of his partners' concerns on one recent day. He had just returned from both the graduation of his eldest daughter, Lori, from the Law School at Windsor and the most recent Executive Meeting of the Canadian Bar Association in Ottawa (we all know he assumes the Presidency in August). He picked up a file, rushed to Chambers in front of Mr. Justice Lysyk to continue argument on a long-running fight with the Minister of Health in respect of billing numbers for young graduate doctors. At the same time, and on one occasion in this same week, and I think at least once and perhaps twice on the same day, he was carrying a brief for Issy Asper, appearing after 4:00 p.m. before Mr. Justice Bruce McDonald. This dispute involved control of CKVU Television Station in Vancouver. The Lysyk J. matter remains part heard. He won the matter before McDonald J.

His diary indicates that he was, in the midst of all of this, making calls for a friend interested in contesting the Sacred leadership, tidying up the fall-out from his Chairmanship on the Commission of Inquiry on Provincial Wilderness Parks, and lurching, phoning, and carrying on in his usual way.

He presently belongs to the Northwest Territories and Yukon Bars. (In many respects his temperament appeals to both the Bar and clients of these mystical Canadian jurisdictions.) He is the permanent Chairman of Arbitration Boards under a number of collective agreements and a member of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. He has been (1979-84) an active and important part-time Commissioner of one of the best Law Reform Commissions in Canada, that of British Columbia. He has had a number of important offices such as the Chairmanship of the Legal Aid Society and Governorship of the B.C. Law Foundation. He has lectured, published and generally made waves on numberless platforms and podiums.

The one overwhelming aspect of Bryan's charm and success is his ever present modesty. He is perfectly bi-lingual, rarely speaks unless spoken to and never tells a long story. His friends think he acquired these winning traits by nurturing four able, equally energetic children (in addition to Lori there are Jordan, Todd and Shannon), and being married to Audrey, bless her, who in her own time expressed herself by winning Canadian and World skating championships.

A very fine compliment was paid Bryan in the Annual Report of the Law Reform Commission (1984-85) when he left. It speaks accurately to Bryan's qualities as leading counsel:

"Mr. Williams brought to our deliberations a wealth of experience as senior counsel. His intuitive grasp of complex issues combined with a keen appreciation of the practical consequences of law reform measures made him a tower of strength in our deliberations."

We all know that Bryan will be a successful and memorable President of the Canadian Bar Association. We just don't quite know what he will want to do when he is finished this important and daunting task.

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