

MARK DYM

Experienced Counselor Remains on Side of Injured ‘Little Guys’

by Steve Metsch



Attorney Mark S. Dym’s job has taken him around the world—to Siberia, the Middle East, England, Bermuda and many U.S. cities.

He served as legal counsel to the city of Chicago when it hosted the opening ceremony and some of the 1994 World Cup soccer games at Soldier Field.

Dym—a shareholder and longtime member of the management committee at Chicago-based Hughes Socol Piers Resnick Dym, Ltd.—has represented large domestic and international corporations in multimillion-dollar lawsuits. His clients have also included many famous professional athletes, as the autographed photographs in his office attest.

Working the long, tedious hours needed to become a successful attorney has enabled Dym and his family to enjoy a comfortable and exciting lifestyle.

When he thinks of what brings him the most pleasure, it’s not the international glory or big corporations.

“I’m for the little guy, even though I have represented some big companies. I keep a booklet of all of my thank you cards and notes over the years. The reward in helping people who typically are not accustomed to having access to quality legal assistance is immeasurable,” Dym says.

Client-turned-friend Kenny Stern, formerly president of the Chicago Sting pro soccer

franchise, calls Dym “a caring individual.”

“I see it in his work. When he talks about a client, he’s talking about a friend. His clients are important to him,” Stern says from his Las Vegas home.

“It’s very accurate that he cares about the little guy.”

“He came across that way in the first 20 minutes when I met him 27 or 28 years ago. It may sound too good to be true, but that is who he is,” says Stern, who worked with Dym during the 1994 World Cup.

CHICAGO FELT LIKE HOME

It’s a job Dym has been doing since the early 1980s. He helped found the current firm as its first associate in January 1985, “and it snowballed into a very successful practice,” he says.

After his 1982 graduation from law school at George Washington University—he got his bachelor’s degree from the University of Virginia in 1979—Rooks Pitts & Poust (now part of Dykema Gossett) recruited him. It was one of Chicago’s oldest law firms, dating to 1899.

Dym, 61, hails from Toms River, New Jersey, but he felt at home when he visited Chicago and decided to stay.

“The city just seemed to fit my personality. I started representing major steel companies, handling some very big cases in Indiana. I

must have taken 50 or 60 depositions in my first year. I got a lot of experience early on,” Dym says.

“When I started practicing law, one of the attorneys who started with me became a top-flight sports agent, Scott Boras. He’s a good guy and has referred business to me over the years. While sports law is not my main area, for some reason I’ve still ended up representing many professional athletes during my career in a number of settings.”

Dym has had “a varied career, so it’s really hard to brand me.”

One reason Dym became an attorney was that he felt his skills and engaging personality were right for the job.

“It was either being an attorney or a doctor. But I quickly learned I’m not really a big fan of blood, so I thought the law would be a better place for me,” he says.

And, as patients invest their trust in doctors, Dym says the same holds true in the law.

“Being a lawyer, the real root, the essence, is the trust, the unbridled complete, unconditional, total trust a client gives to you. That feeling is payment in and of itself. When you go out there, work hard, and nurture and develop that relationship, you have clients for life. That’s what I set out to do in 1982,” he says.

Dym and some of his clients are very close. “One of my clients early on made me the

godfather for one of their children. That's a big deal in the Latino community. The boy grew into a young man who went to law school and was a lawyer for five years in Wisconsin. This year, I hired him. He's now working here," Dym says of Derek Dominguez.

FAMILY MEANS SO MUCH

When Dym discusses his family, specifically his father, he blinks away tears. His father, Martin, died a few months ago.

"I wouldn't be here if it weren't for him. He was the best. I learned everything from my father," Dym says softly.

"He was 86 when he died. When he walked into a room, you knew it. He was 6-foot-3, Hollywood looks, impeccably dressed, and he had a personality that would knock your socks off. He was not a lawyer but set a strong example of how one should act in any business."

Martin, who went from being a chicken farmer to manufacturing insulated glass and many business pursuits, taught Dym the importance of keeping one's word, of being modest, of working hard.

"Those principles apply to any business," Dym says, "not just being an attorney."

"As my father said, your business comes from word of mouth. If you work hard, people will notice. My father, my mother, all four of my grandparents taught me how to treat people."

His mother Zelda, who is still with us, was a fourth-grade teacher. She was once named Teacher of the Year in New Jersey.

"I take the same fundamentals she used teaching her fourth-grade students to each of my clients. I smother them with love as she did with her students. Of course, nobody hires you because you're a nice person. They want you to go out and fight for them. But I think they respect that I'll give them 1,000 percent."

Dym, wife Janet and their children reside in Lincolnwood. She is half Armenian and half Assyrian and comes from the large, extremely tight and loving Sarkissian family that treats Dym like one of their own.

An avid golfer, Dym enjoys playing at Ridgemoor Country Club in Harwood Heights, sometimes with daughter Sara, 21, "a great golfer" and a DePaul University junior. Sara majors in pre-law and wants to be a lawyer. So does son Ben, 17, a martial arts fighter who competes in national and international tournaments.

LONG LIST OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Dym concentrates on personal injury cases and has a glittering list of rulings in favor of his clients. "I work mostly on the plaintiff's side, but I do defense as well."

He's represented some of the wealthy and the poor, as well as recently arrived immigrants.

He has worked on personal injury, commercial and fraud litigation, reinsurance, international joint venture agreements, probate litigation and employment law.

"Too many lawyers get constrained by knowing a very specialized area. You're not an effective lawyer unless you know a little bit about other areas. Life is not so compartmentalized," Dym says.

Dym says he learns something from every case. It's important to know as much as the expert witness for the other side.

"We don't make up the facts. We have to get the facts. And once you do, you have to present them in such a way that it's a winning theory. Each side has weaknesses. You have to figure out what the other side's weaknesses are and just pound on them," Dym says.

For one case, Dym read 40 prior deposition transcripts given by an expert witness because "he can't remember what he said in all 40."

"I established that I knew the intricacies of his life and his prior opinions. The playing field turned to my advantage, and I was able to get him to essentially agree with my positions.

"My strength is that I think through every case. I never stop thinking about it. You win cases by using what God gave you upstairs."

That has resulted in some very large victories. A few examples are a \$15 million recovery within seven months for an auto crash where his client had bilateral amputations, numerous multimillion dollar recoveries in the United Airlines Sioux City crash, a \$4 million recovery in a commercial damages claim for a power loss, and several recoveries for families who lost loved ones in the Paxton Hotel fire.

FAVORITE MEMORIES

He fondly recalls trying a Florida case before an all-woman jury. "It was nice to say, 'Ladies of the jury.'"

A "wonderful English client" made the case more enjoyable. "He testified in his sophisticated English accent—I remember that day distinctly. It was a bloody nice morning.' The jurors just loved him."

Dym won the case "because we were credible and set forth a straightforward position. Jurors always want to do the right thing. It's very important to connect with them."

At the golf course, some people walk by the landscapers. He knows their first names, has coffee with them, and gives them White Sox tickets. "It goes back to having heart," he says.

Near his desk is a suit of armor, a gift from a court reporter years ago, Dym smiles. "He gives me advice when I need to talk to someone." The armor doubles as a necktie holder.

"You know," he adds, "I never expected nor set out to have the financial success I've enjoyed. If you use that as a barometer of my career, I've

been very fortunate and blessed, but really my main goal was simply to help people."

One case still stands out. There was a drowning at a pool with a sign reading 'Swim at Your Own Risk.' No lifeguard was on duty, "but a towel lady was supposed to be around," he says.

She said she wasn't. The boys in the pool said she was. It bothered Dym.

"Any adult wouldn't let a kid drown. It didn't make sense why an adult wouldn't have jumped in."

It dawned on him, once her whereabouts were determined, to ask the towel lady if she knew how to swim. She did not.

EMPATHETIC AND DETERMINED

The care Dym showed in his work on that drowning case is what he offers all people who approach him looking for help.

"When people walk in, they do so for a reason. You have to be sensitive to them, give them time, devotion and sincerity," Dym says.

Stern knows that. "I'm kind of proud that I can say to somebody, 'This is who you need to talk to.'"

John Hughes says when the other attorneys started the firm, "Mark was the one associate we wanted to come with us."

"He is a fiercely hard worker, absolutely dedicated to the client. He has great empathy to his clients and will fight hard for them."

"He is extremely ethical and won't do anything in any way to bend the rules. But in the context of the rules, he is fiercely determined to help every client," Hughes adds.

"And they're not just clients. They are friends."

Two of those friends are Tomasz and Olivia Szewo of Arlington Heights.

In 2007, Tomasz, then 32, lost both legs in a terrible accident. He was standing behind his truck when a drunk driver plowed into him.

Olivia wasn't happy with their first lawyer. She mentioned it to a man with the company that towed Tomasz' truck.

"He said, 'You know what, I'll give you the name of the best lawyer in town,' and he gave me Mark's number'," Olivia says. "I called, and he came to the hospital to visit my husband the same night. I was impressed."

Tomasz has prosthetic legs and is doing fine, Olivia says. He even trained for years in downhill skiing and nearly joined the Polish Paralympic Team, she says.

They were impressed with Dym's trial skills that ensured they'll receive monthly payments so they'll never want. And they were impressed in another way.

"He visited my husband every night in Lutheran General Hospital for three months. Every night," Olivia says. "I've never met a person like him before. I would recommend him as a lawyer for anybody." ■