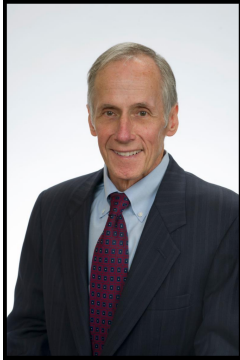


Congratulations to our colleague and friend Ken Glazier on his retirement and transition to Of Counsel with the firm!



Ken Glazier

Below, Ken shares a retrospective of his career, changes he experienced in the legal industry along the way, and tips for law students and seasoned attorneys seeking a rewarding practice.

What prompted you to want to manage your own firm?

As of 1993, I had practiced civil litigation for twenty years at two large firms and at the U.S. Department of Justice. Then, I learned that my friends and former colleagues Bob Sacks, Terry Franklin, Meg Lodise and Bruce Ross were moving their small firm to downtown Los Angeles, and they asked me to join them. I was ready to leave big firm life, wanted to stay downtown, and always had in the back of my mind that it would be fun to be actively involved in managing a smaller firm, so I joined them. Bruce eventually went back to a big firm; our firm became Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise, and I became the managing partner.

How did you approach being managing partner and how did the operation of the firm differ from the operation of your larger firm counterparts?

In my almost 20 years as managing partner, we never had a vote in any partner meetings. When there was a disagreement about how to proceed with something, we just discussed it until we found common ground. We knew we were all headed in the same direction even though we might have had different views. This collaborative approach was very powerful and I think it's the glue that has held the firm together for so long.

Another camaraderie element that has made our firm unusual is that most of the lawyers - partners and associates - eat lunch together in the conference room every day. This allows us to get to know each other as people, not just as lawyers.

In terms of billable hours, I have always felt that the ever-increasing pressure for more hours at every firm isn't good for lawyers or for clients. When I started at a large Los Angeles firm in 1973, the partners assured us that they didn't track hours for associates. In evaluating us, they were just looking at the quality of work and how we interacted with clients and other lawyers. It's a very different world now. However, my philosophy has always been that maintaining lower hours has resulted in better quality work for our clients and better quality of life for our attorneys.

What was your strategy for succession planning?

Succession planning was easy because I wasn't the only one making decisions for the firm while I was managing partner. It was always a group process. It was never the "Ken show." When it came time to pass the baton, my very able partner, Matt McMurtrey, gracefully stepped in to the managing partner role for a seamless transition.

Sacks Glazier Franklin & Lodise LLP

Specializing in Litigation Regarding Trusts and Estates

What drew you to trust and estate litigation and what kept you interested all these years?

I wish I had an interesting story to tell on that, but trust and estate litigation was simply where Bob and Bruce and the others had landed, and I followed them into that practice. I don't know that anyone necessarily grows up wanting to be a trust and estate litigator. However, I have enjoyed practicing in a specialized area after decades as a general civil litigator. Trust and estate litigation offers a good balance of law and real life issues.

What has changed the most since you first started practicing law?

Within trust and estate litigation, a generation ago when people died, they typically had a will and their money went where it went. It was a relatively short and final process. Today, trusts have become more common and the time span for distribution of assets can be stretched out. Trusts can take longer to administer and they're sometimes designed to go on for generations. This longer time frame leaves more vulnerability for arguments and disagreements.

Looking at the legal profession generally, there is an increasingly relentless focus on billable hours and on maximizing profits. The compensation gap between partners and associates is much wider than it was. So overall, it's much more of a grind to be a lawyer today than it was three or four decades ago.

What are your tips for graduating law students or lawyers that want to start their own firm?

My observation for graduating law students: What you learn in law school may not ultimately be a good guide for what kind of practice you will end up enjoying. As you look at practice options, don't focus just on the practice area, but also look closely at the people you're going to be spending a lot of time with.

For lawyers considering starting their own firm - you won't regret it. There is nothing like being your own boss and enjoying the efficiency of not having multiple offices and committees or practice groups to coordinate with. Also, a key benefit of working in a smaller firm is that you know all of the lawyers well and know what they're working on. This greatly diminishes the incentives for posturing.

For lawyers at any stage of their career, I stress practicing with people you trust and in whom you have confidence. Sacks, Glazier, Franklin & Lodise has lasted and been successful because none of us ever doubted that we were all committed to the benefit of the group.

What are your plans for retirement?

I'm still in the office occasionally. Otherwise, I read a lot, spend time with my three dogs and putter around in my garden. I'm really making it up as I go along.