

Personal injury attorney's advice: Never underestimate intelligence of jury

Name: Robert Bingle

Age: 56

Position: Managing Partner, speaker and author

Employer: Corboy & Demetrio, P.C., Chicago, since 1983

Hometown: Hinsdale

Vital Statistics: He and wife Maureen have lived in Hinsdale since 1986. They have three children, Meg and Bobby, who are students at Boston University, and Colleen, a junior at Fenwick High School.

Education: 1973 graduate of University of Notre Dame, B.A.; 1975 graduate of University of Chicago, M.A.; 1981 graduate of Loyola University School of Law, J.D.

Professional credentials: recently presented "Opening Statement — Storytelling with Emotion and the Use of Rhetorical Devices" to the Indiana Trial Lawyers Association; president, Illinois Trial Lawyers Association, 2002; numerous committee and board positions with IITLA, Chicago Bar Association, American Trial Lawyers Association, American Bar Association

Notable cases: Bingle was lead plaintiffs' counsel for the litigation stemming from the collision in 1995 of a train and school bus in Fox River Grove, which settled in excess of \$25 million. In 2004, Bingle was one of the lead attorneys in a \$10 million settlement stemming from an accident at a Union Pacific Railyard in Chicago that resulted in the deaths of three men. A \$6.8 million verdict in one railroad case Mr. Bingle tried was the highest amount ever awarded in Illinois to an individual who suffered the loss of his leg. In 1995, he obtained a \$3.9 million verdict for the family of a 10-year-old girl who drowned at a municipal

water station. He also was the lead trial attorney and directed the mass litigation stemming from the Quantum Chemical explosion in Morris, which settled for more than \$20 million. Most recently he and his partner, Philip Corboy Jr., settled the case of the Estate of Flores vs. CNA for a lump sum of \$18 million. That case involved a Mexican national who was killed by a piece of falling glass from Chicago's CNA Tower in 1999.

What do you do? We're a plaintiff's law firm. We represent the plaintiff in personal injury and medical malpractice cases.

Why did you choose this field? I came to Chicago to go to graduate school. Through people, I got into the hotel business and ended up as director of sales and marketing at Palmer House. It was then that I decided to go to law school. I thoroughly enjoyed the hotel business, but if you move up, you move around. I was like, why not? It can't hurt me (to go to law school). I care about my clients and I care about people. It was very important to me to get into something where I could help people.

What's the best thing about your job? I have the opportunity to help people who are in need while making a decent living.

What's the worst thing? Unnecessary fighting among lawyers across the table. You don't have to be uncivil.

What's a common reaction when you tell someone what you do for a living? A lot of times I'll get a little shot. Until you need a lawyer, it's easy to criticize them.

How do you react to criticism of your field of practice? Most of the time the criticism comes from some aberration of the system. That's what you hear about. What you don't read



Attorney Bob Bingle (Doings photo by Steve Johnston)

about is the cases when justice is done. The jury system works. They take cases so seriously. They try to do the right thing.

What case follows you home at night? I can be anywhere and be reminded of my cases. Every time I go across the railroad tracks I think of those kids (in Fox River Grove in 1995) seeing that train coming and yelling at their bus driver.

Do you turn cases away? In the medical negligence world, we probably turn down 19 of 20 cases we get calls on. It doesn't do a family any good if there's no case.

Do you get paid if you don't win? We always work on contingency. We get paid if we're successful, by a settlement or a verdict. One-third of the (award or settlement) is a typical contingency. From that, there are expenses that we're responsible

for. We have those expenses whether we win or we lose. Sometimes you can do weeks or months worth of work and the case never gets to trial. Ninety percent of cases settle before a verdict.

What does it take to do your job? It takes diligence. The job of a trial lawyer isn't the 15-second clip you see on Law and Order. You have to be a very hard worker. You have to know the case better than anyone else. I'll put in details of the story just to let the jury know that I know this case.

What's the biggest mistake lawyers make when speaking to a jury? People repeat themselves and they do not give credit to the intelligence of their audience. They bludgeon the point. I try to be concise.

You speak to lawyers about how to make an effective open-

ing statement. What's the key? It's been said that a high percentage of jurors make up their minds after opening statements. I don't tend to believe it, but it (the opening statement) is one of the most important things you do. I like this quote from Aristotle. It's a good quote. "The beginning is more than half of the whole." It's the first time you have a chance to talk to a jury. I try to put the case in the present tense, to make it a story. People like to hear a story. I tell the lawyers I talk to hit them at the start with what's important.

What do you do when you're not working? I've always been able to balance my life. I coached basketball and baseball. I coached soccer when I didn't know a thing about soccer. That's what's important. I feel very fortunate.

— By Sandy Illian Bosch

BUSINESS PEOPLE

■ **Diane Morefield** of Darien has been appointed chief financial officer of Equity International, a privately held real estate private equity firm affiliated with Sam Zell's Equity Group Investments LLC. Morefield will have oversight for financial reporting, accounting, finance and investor relations. Before joining the Equity companies, Morefield was with Deloitte, and also held various positions with Barclays Bank. She began her career as an auditor with Arthur Andersen. Morefield is a CPA and holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from the

University of Illinois and a master's degree in business administration in finance from the University of Chicago.

■ **Donald Bezek** of La Grange was the electrical project manager for the Elara Engineering Design team that has been awarded an Excellence in Engineering Award. Bezek is president of Kazor Systems Inc. in La Grange and vice president of Midwest Power Consultants Inc. in Milwaukee. The American Society of Heating and Air-Conditioning Engineers Inc. gave the award to the Elara Design Team for

the design of the new Loyola University Chicago data and telecom switching center, located at the Loyola Lakeshore campus and serving the entire group of Chicago facilities. The new center features the latest technology for high-density system cooling and electrical systems.

■ **Paul Lambert**, of Hinsdale, has been named regional director of Merrill Lynch's mid-America private banking and investment group. From the Chicago headquarters, Lambert will oversee private wealth advisors located in 13

offices in six Midwestern states. Lambert, 38, has been director of the Merrill Lynch New York Capital Complex based in Albany, N.Y. He joined the firm in 1992 as a financial advisor in the Rochester, N.Y., office.

■ **Michael Rockouski** of Clarendon Hills is the new owner of Sunbelt of DuPage, a business brokerage office. Rockouski recently acquired the Naperville office from previous owner John Chesney. Rockouski has been the owner of several small manufacturing and service businesses.



Diane Morefield