



Q: Can you name a person who has had a tremendous impact on you as a leader? Why/ how did this person impact your life?

A: This is a difficult one. It's very hard to choose just one as I've had the incredible luck of working for and with some really amazing people. I'd have to say that the mentor at my first firm, Rick Shaine, really stands out in my mind so I'll choose him for this. Despite being 31 when I graduated law school (since I did the whole CPA and Controller thing first), he told me that the very first thing I had to do was to learn how to be a lawyer. He didn't care about my age or my past experience. He told me that before I could go out and market myself and meet with clients, I needed to be good at the legal work and master "lawyer skills." Not only that but he took the time to work with me to do this. While at the same firm the managing partner's words also struck me as he told me that "when it comes to developing clients, if you think outside the box it just might work." He also impressed upon me his management style in which he believed that sometimes building a consensus in a law firm is more important than one single person being right. I've found that that holds true in much of my work and personal life (my kids and I got tired of losing those 3 to 1 votes all the time).

Q: What are some of your personal interests?

A: Golf is one of my passions. I actually learned to play as a kid but didn't pick it up again until I was older. I was being invited by clients to play golf or attend outings and remembering my game from when I was a teenager I became very frustrated, so I took it up again. My older cousin and I started playing frequently when I was 13 and I'll never forget him saying "Jeff, if we are going to be in the business world, we've got to play golf." And I'll tell you one thing, many deals have been made on the back 9. I got my kids into playing and eventually my wife took it up since she was home alone while the kids and I were out playing. Some of our best family vacations were to golf destinations where the trash talking was the real competition. When I'm not golfing I enjoy spending time with my wife, my kids and my 5 grandkids. I also enjoy taking my boat out. The boat is currently for sale. No really, any takers, it's been for sale for 3 years!

Q: Any words of advice for someone considering a career as a bankruptcy attorney?

A: I think it's important that they have a financial background and also specialize in another "backup" area of law. Bankruptcy as an industry is cyclical and when it's down you've got to have something else to do to keep you busy. For example, I do loan documentation and some of our other attorneys work in commercial litigation. But more than just as a backup, it often enhances your bankruptcy skills having another area. There have been plenty of times when my knowledge of UCC from the loan documentation side helped my client in a bankruptcy situation. While bankruptcy law often prevails in disputes, state laws are relevant and in many cases it comes in handy knowing the law.