



A Past Full of Future

Law school alumnus finds his calling in the world of intellectual property law

Matthew Seiden '86 could argue that he had been preparing all his life for a career in intellectual property law.

But the thought of attending law school occurred to him late in a successful journalism career—a career that began as a foreign correspondent for the *The Baltimore Sun* during the Vietnam War.

After the war, he remained abroad for several years, serving as a correspondent in Tokyo. His return to Baltimore marked the last phase of his journalism career—as a *Sun* columnist for seven years. While attending the School of Law part-time during his last four years at the paper, Seiden decided he was tired of asking the questions. “In journalism, if you ask enough questions, you can figure out what you need to know,” Seiden explains. “I asked plenty of questions, but I was never the expert on a particular subject. I finally reached a point where I wanted to have the answers.”

He had other reasons for leaving journalism behind. “In the later years of my career at *The Sun*, the newspaper writing business was contracting and there were fewer opportunities,” says Seiden. “For example, there were several papers in the Baltimore-Washington area when I started my career. There were three just in Baltimore. By the time I was finished, there was only one paper left. New opportunities in journalism were dwindling quickly. At the same time, law was a growing field with numerous opportunities. The timing was right for a career change.”

Seiden began his legal career more than a decade after he had earned a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. Seiden notes that he wanted to practice a brand of law that utilized not only his skills with the written word in English, but also his command of foreign languages, which include Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Vietnamese and French. In addition to his stint overseas as a foreign correspondent, Seiden also spent time in Brazil, serving with the Peace Corps. He remarks that his ability to

learn foreign languages was a gift from when he was young. In fact, he has an undergraduate degree in classical Chinese poetry from Harvard. He admits, however, that his Chinese is a little rusty. Given his background in journalism and his penchant for foreign languages, international law seemed like the logical career path.

Seiden's legal career began at Arnold & Porter, a firm that currently employs more than 650 attorneys in six offices nationwide, plus one in London. During his early years at Arnold & Porter, Seiden continued his travels abroad as he was selected to help start up an office in Tokyo. During this time, he started to handle a wide range of technology development, transfer and licensing agreements and an array of other technology-based transactions involving complex intellectual property rights issues. When he returned to the

United States, he continued to focus on this kind of work, and is now a partner in the intellectual property group, based in the firm's D.C. office. He still travels frequently, especially to Japan and other parts of Asia.

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“Matthew Seiden is a wonderful role model for individuals who can be successful in another career,” notes Dean Karen H. Rothenberg. I have great respect for his ability to go from a career as a successful journalist to becoming an equally successful lawyer.” She goes on to say, “He is highly regarded for the depth of his intellect and his experience on the international level. Furthermore, his ability to communicate complicated concepts into simple, understandable terms makes him a strong lawyer.”

Seiden has never forgotten his journalistic roots. “As a newspaper writer, I was very much a part of the Baltimore culture. During my seven years as a

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columnist, I had my finger on the pulse of the city and felt connected to the community,” he recalls. “However, the legal world continues to be intellectually challenging to me every day and I enjoy that challenge.” While he sometimes misses his days as a columnist, he has found that he still uses many of those same skills in his daily routine as an attorney. “My writing ability as a journalist is very relevant to my current work. I make deals every day and being able to write clearly and precisely is at the heart of writing a good contract just as it is at the heart of writing a good column,” states Seiden thoughtfully.

“Originally, I thought I would enjoy litigation, but I soon found out that my personality is better suited to making deals rather than litigating,” says Seiden. “My deals involve two basic industries: information technology and related e-commerce and Internet law; and biotechnology—generally pharmaceutical and genomic companies,” he explains. The scope of his work covers technology development, transfer and commercialization agreements, licensing arrangements and strategic business alliances. His clients are international companies and govern-

ments as well as American companies that conduct business overseas. According to Seiden, intellectual property attorneys are currently the fastest-growing group at Arnold & Porter.