

# Lawyers in the Family: Lessons Learned When a Career in Law is Passed Down through Generations

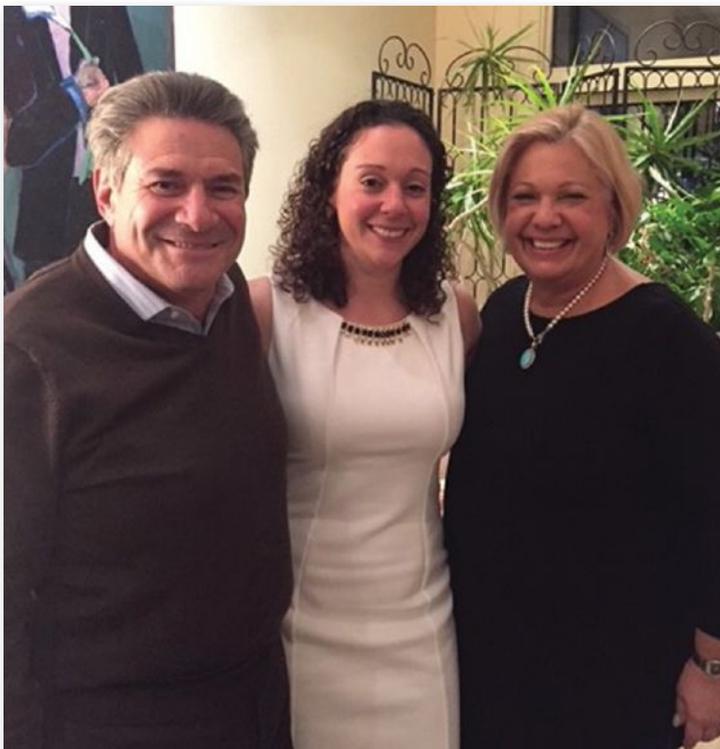
By Members of the Philadelphia Bar  
Association

**F**or these Philadelphia attorneys, law is the “family business.”

The Philadelphia Lawyer recently talked with families in our community where both parents and children (and in some cases, grandchildren, spouses and other family members) are lawyers. Here is what they had to say about what inspired them to pursue careers in law, how having close relatives who are lawyers has impacted them as practitioners, and the other lessons learned—and insights—gained along the way.

# The Ladovs

“Sometimes it’s a joy to be a family of lawyers . . . Sometimes having lawyers in the family is a real pain.”



The Ladovs: (from left): David, Hillary, and Sayde.

**Sayde Ladov** (*mother of lawyer Hillary Ladov; wife to lawyer David Ladov*): After practicing law for 40 years, I changed my status from partner to of counsel at Dolchin Slotkin & Todd. The predominant area of my practice is plaintiff’s personal injury litigation. I was also privileged to help one of my partners in defending medical negligence matters for a major hospital system.

**David Ladov** (*father of Hillary Ladov; husband to Sayde Ladov*): I work for Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel LLP in their Conshohocken office. I have been here for approximately 8 years. Prior to that time, I worked for Cozen O’Connor in their Conshohocken office for approximately 10 years. My area of practice is exclusively

Knowing that I had to earn a living, my mentor suggested I go to law school.

**DL:** During my junior year of college at Penn State University, I thought the best thing for me to do was to apply to law schools and get what I thought would be a very good education. I still was not sure that I was going to be a lawyer but was leaning that way. When I was in law school and started taking Family Law courses, that is when I knew that I would become a Family Law lawyer.

**HL:** Whether by accident or design, my parents began influencing me to become a lawyer from a young age. Growing up in a family of lawyers, I was exposed to the

Family Law and has been for almost all 43 years of my career.

**Hillary Ladov** (*daughter of Sayde and David Ladov*): I work at Goldberg Segalla LLP with a focus in insurance coverage. I realized that I wanted to be a lawyer my junior year of college while studying abroad in Amsterdam.

**SL:** I decided to go to law school when I learned I was too young to take the test for the foreign service.

dynamics of legal advocacy early on. Dinner conversations resembled depositions. My parents’ arguments featured openings and closings. However, my parents never pressured me to become a lawyer.

**SL:** I actually did not know I was raising a lawyer. My daughter has a great ability to learn and become fluent in foreign languages. She has a highly analytical mind. I had hoped I was raising an analyst for the CIA or NSA.

**DL:** During my daughter’s college years, while both her parents were lawyers, she continued to tell us that she was not sure that she wanted to be a lawyer, but that more than likely she was going to go into some kind of business situation. When it came time to apply for law schools, in order to cover both areas, she indicated that she wanted to go to a school that provided a joint JD/MBA program. I believe that this was a good idea as it encompassed both of her interests. Until she announced this plan, I did not think that she would be a lawyer.

**SL:** Sometimes it’s a joy to be a family of lawyers as we all speak the same language and have shared many of the same struggles and joys associated with the practice. Sometimes having lawyers in the family is a real pain. Everyone is always right and simple things, like where to go to dinner or what movie to watch, become a negotiation. Having a family of lawyers helped me to be a better listener and therefore a better lawyer.

**DL:** It certainly is easy for us to communicate with one another as we have many shared experiences and shared friends and acquaintances. It gives us as a family a very easy starting point for any discussion and

it also allows us to see each other socially more than if we all were not lawyers. We are very proud of our daughter becoming a lawyer and how she has been so successful during her early years.

**HL:** Unlike many young lawyers, I began my law career with a deep understanding of the business of practicing law. This has aided my professional development immensely. Also, growing up around lawyers and judges made my first court appearance, deposition, etc. much less intimidating than it otherwise would have been.

**SL:** Believe it or not, my lawyer daughter has taught me that some of the old techniques that I taught her actually do work. On the other hand, some of the ways that she works are far more sophisticated than what I did. Hillary also has a better work/life balance than I did. I think if I was younger and learned these things, I would have been less stressed and more efficient. I hope if I am a lawyer in my next life, I can put these lessons to work.

**DL:** What I have learned from my child is to take the opportunity to talk to young lawyers or law students about becoming a lawyer more than I ever would before. I obviously think about her situation when networking with older lawyers and getting various opportunities. I realize that other attorneys have been nice to her along the way, and I now go out of my way to try to do the same for other young lawyers. I also have learned that her road to becoming a lawyer and being successful as well is a lot harder than it was for my generation. I believe that since there are so many more people aspiring to be lawyers and are young lawyers, the competition is just so much greater and the opportunities are fewer.

**HL:** It is a privilege to practice law, and with this privilege comes the responsibility to serve the community.

# The Torregrossas

“I’ve learned from my [family] to work hard, be organized, and be devoted to your work while still being devoted to each other and our families.”



The multigenerational lawyer family Torregrossa (from left)—Joe, Brennan, Maresa, and Ann Torregrossa

**Joe Torregrossa** (*father of lawyers Brennan and Maresa Torregrossa; husband to lawyer Ann Torregrossa*): I am the Chief Circuit Mediator for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, mediating civil cases appealed to the court.

Growing up, my father had two friends who were lawyers, and I would visit their offices with him. Seeing them and observing what they did sparked my interest in the law.

My wife, **Ann**, has had a long career of practicing public interest law, including at Community Legal Services and found-

ing the Pennsylvania Health Law Project. When my wife, Ann, was arguing a case in the Supreme Court of the United States and was pregnant with my son, **Brennan**, — who currently is an in-house counsel with Glaxo Smith Kline and was formerly a litigation partner with Dechert Price & Rhodes—I said to myself at the argument that my soon-to-be-born child had already appeared before the Supreme Court and should grow up to be a lawyer. After the Supreme Court argument when our son was born, we named him after Justice Brennan. The Justice later learned about this and invited our family to visit him at

the Court.

With respect to my daughter **Maresa**, who was a litigator at Drinker Biddle & Reath and but no longer practices in favor of tending to a growing family of three, it was only when she announced out of the blue that she wanted to go to law school that I knew I was raising another lawyer. Previously, she had frequently told us that at no time would she become a lawyer.

It's great to be part of a family of lawyers. We speak the same language, can share and appreciate each other's stories, and bounce ideas off each other. From my wife, I've learned compassion for others and to devote some of my practice before I became chief circuit mediator to pro bono work. I've learned from my wife, son, daughter, and son-in-law— who my daughter met at Villanova law school where my wife and I also met—to work hard, be organized, and be devoted to your work while still being devoted to each other and our families.



Brennan Torregrossa with his namesake Justice Brennan at the Supreme Court.

## The Langsams

“Education was always the primary priority in our family—nothing was forced, and everything was encouraged.”



(From left) Saul, David, and Spencer Langsam in Saul's pandemic-ready home office.

**Saul Langsam** (*father of lawyer David Langsam*): I work at MyPhillyLawyer of Silvers, Langsam & Weitzman, P.C. For 40 years, I represented clients in motor vehicle accidents. I have been representing clients in estate and real estate matters for the past seven years.

**David Langsam** (*son of lawyer Saul Langsam*): I am a partner at Saltz, Mongeluzzi & Bendesky, PC., specializing in plaintiff's personal injury litigation.

**SL**: I realized that I wanted to be a lawyer upon graduation from Central High School and beginning freshman year at Temple University. I started taking pre-law and business courses.

**DL:** I want to say that my decision to practice law was preordained given that I am the youngest of three boys and neither of my older brothers wound up following our dad's footsteps in law school. In reality, I always enjoyed the opportunity to problem solve and ask questions to uncover truths and to learn about the way things work. I fondly remember growing up and covering reception at my dad's office on days when they needed coverage, and I didn't have school. That early exposure certainly helped orient me in the direction that I ultimately traveled. Later, working as a law clerk in his office during my summers in college cemented my decision.

**SL:** After he turned 10, I took notice of David's extensive vocabulary and hunger to read. His analysis of problem solving went beyond his years.

**DL:** Education was always the primary priority in our family—nothing was forced, and everything was encouraged. I grew up

with the opportunity to see my dad at work helping to give people a voice and access to the justice system that they otherwise wouldn't have had. As a child of Holocaust survivors, my dad exemplified the will to help others and to speak up for those in need because his parents did not have any such advocates. We are the legacy, and what better way to honor our family's will and ability to survive than by paying it forward and helping others.

**SL:** I have been very proud of David's many accomplishments. His first major jury trial resulted in an \$18.5 million jury award. While working towards his master's in trial advocacy at Temple University School of Law, he completed the program with honors. He then became one of the youngest partners in the Mongeluzzi law firm. I am now known in the Philadelphia legal community as the "father of David Langsam."

**DL:** I consider both of my parents great friends from whom I seek nearly daily advice that applies to both my personal and

professional lives. While my dad being a lawyer doesn't per se impact my practice, he does speak the language, so there isn't a need to translate legalese to have a meaningful conversation about something that he or I encounter along the way. I do very much value, though, the opportunity to see his name on my law licenses that hang on my wall as the lawyer who moved me in and afforded me the opportunity to pursue this career.

I think that there are two critically important lessons that both of my parents have taught me: 1) beyond everything else, family comes first; and 2) be nice, smile, and always try to find the good in whatever you encounter.

**SL:** As lawyers, we make a commitment to help our clients. Our clients come from all walks of life. Whether the client suffers a catastrophic injury or something less, they are entitled to the best representation we can provide.

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## The Iheukwumeres

“We have to be the change that we wish to see in both our profession and society at large, bearing in mind that, as lawyers, we are role models—whether we like it or not.”



Jane and Emmanuel Iheukwumere, when Jane was in law school.

**Emmanuel O. Iheukwumere** (*father of lawyer Jane C. Iheukwumere*): I work at Emmanuel Law Firm, LLC, where my area of practice is plaintiff's personal injury litigation, with a special focus on medical malpractice and other catastrophic injury matters.

**Jane C. Iheukwumere** (*daughter of Emmanuel O. Iheukwumere*): I work at Emmanuel Law Firm, LLC in Center City, Philadelphia. My area of practice is plaintiff's personal injury litigation, which includes mostly medical malpractice cases.

**EI:** My consideration of law school happened about one year after suffering the disappointment of missing a GRE test I had paid and prepared for when my old and first car broke down on the morning of the exam. My roommate refused to lend me his car for the two-hour drive to the exam center. Although my original career goal was to become an economics professor, after missing the GRE exam, I was unwilling to register for it again. I realized through research and talking to my friend who was in law school, that there was a chance of gaining admission to law school based on my GPA, which had me on course to graduation with *summa cum laude*.

Additionally, I was encouraged by comments made more than a decade earlier by one of my uncles when I was a teenager in Nigeria. He said that I had the potential to one day become a lawyer, even though that uncle had no formal education beyond the 5th grade. I applied to about half a dozen law schools when Temple offered me admission in 1990.

**JJ:** I realized that I wanted to be a lawyer towards the end of my undergraduate education. My major was English with a minor in sociology, with the goal of teaching English in the future. During this time, I attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church as the Youth Delegate and was part of a committee reviewing Immigration law during which a presentation was made by an immigration lawyer. That presentation sparked my interest in immigration law and was a major catalyst to my



Emmanuel during law school with Jane (on the left) and her two siblings, her twin brother Emmanuel, Jr. (far right), and the youngest, Tyron. All three were born while Emmanuel was in law school, prompting him, among other factors, to take a two-year leave of absence from law school before returning and graduating in 1995.

decision to consider law school. So, after talking with my father about that presentation and doing further research into the requirements for law school admission, I registered for the LSAT and later got admitted to Rutgers Law School.

**EI:** I realized I was raising a lawyer when, in her third year of college, Jane began expressing interest in attending law school. It was a pleasant surprise since she had, since elementary school, talked about being a dentist. She also became more receptive to encouragements to embrace public speaking, and to take leadership roles in our local church. She did that by, among other steps, showing more interest in forcefully arguing her positions when I assigned her and her siblings the tasks of making oral presentations in our family room on chosen topics of interest, and by volunteering to serve as a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and on multiple instances as a Worship Leader within our local Presbyterian Church, as well as a Youth Delegate to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

**JJ:** Towards the end of my undergraduate college education, I started discussing the possibility of going to law school with my father. I asked him what would be required of me and realistically how difficult law school would be. He let me know that while law school admission was difficult, my GPA, community service, and other leadership roles in our local church raised the strong possibility of getting admitted to law school. Thereafter, I decided to take the LSAT, while continuing to push myself to excel in college.

**EI:** It is both challenging and exciting to practice with my daughter. We find ourselves discussing case issues and legal doctrines multiple times in a day. The experience has forced me to not only see her as my child, but also as my colleague and mentee in a professional capacity. I now listen and pay more attention than before to her points of view, taking care to see her as the young, accomplished professional she is becoming, in addition being to the child I am used to taking care of.

**Jl:** Being part of a family of lawyers impacts my practice by forcing me to be extra vigilant with legal analysis and more cautious with making assumptions about what legal doctrines may be applicable. Being raised by a lawyer, sometimes I make assumptions about how the law operates, or how medical malpractice in general operates, or how it used to operate. I've learned to double check, and sometimes triple check, even the basics because I want to make sure I'm up to date and accurate and not just going off my preconceived notions.

**El:** I have learned to place more stress on the role of forceful, but respectful advocacy in changing the trajectory of law and society for achieving a meaningful measure of justice for victims of negligent medical care. I have also learnt to emphasize more that sometimes, we have to be the change that we wish to see in both our profession and society at large, bearing in mind that, as lawyers, we are role models—whether we like it or not. In addition, with more substantive and in-depth discussions than before practicing together, I have learned that I have more in common with my daughter on certain subjects and topics I previously assumed we were far apart.

**Jl:** The most valuable lesson I've learned from my father about being a lawyer is that it is important to be both disciplined and compassionate. Over the years, I've observed how dedicated my father has been to his clients and to the pursuit of justice. Part of that dedication involves showing compassion and empathy to victims of medical malpractice and to their families who are usually going through very difficult transitions in their lives. Consequently, it's important as a lawyer to understand that grief is difficult to navigate; as such, it is important to be a strong advocate who is dedicated to doing everything needed in order to obtain a measure of justice for each client.

# The Grunfelds

“How does a lawyer-parent determine whether a child should consider law as a career? I think the parent should encourage it, but not push too hard—if the child has many of the characteristics which are helpful to a lawyer.”



**David Grunfeld** (*father of lawyer Kenneth Grunfeld*): What does a lawyer-parent do to let a child know what the lawyer does on a daily basis? Does the lawyer tell what it is like to be in court, or what it is like to negotiate an agreement or contract? Or just say “I help people?”

I did not do that. I recall answering those questions more abstractly, by focusing on two approaches. The first was to suggest strongly that there are always at least two sides to every issue, and the inquirer should logically attempt to evaluate all of them. The second is to work toward resolution of every conflict amicably, and to consider compromising toward a settlement.

How does a lawyer-parent determine whether a child should consider law as a career? I think the parent should encourage it but not push too hard, if the child has many of the characteristics which are helpful to a lawyer—organizational skills, a good memory, an ability to absorb writ-

ten and oral material, advocacy ability, and perhaps a flair for connecting with people. Brains and the desire to earn a good living alone may not do it.

One of my sons displayed many of these characteristics early on, and I knew he was headed to law school. How does he remember it?



**Kenneth Grunfeld** (*son of lawyer David Grunfeld; father of Nate Grunfeld*): I do not recall my father either encouraging or discouraging me from becoming a lawyer.

I do recall him telling me that being a lawyer was difficult work and usually a thankless job. He told me that it was a lawyer's job to approach problems logically and without emotion. He also told me that “LA Law,” an incredibly popular TV show at the time, was not reality. But I was stubborn and determined to figure out for myself whether the practice of law was right for me. When it came time to apply to

law school, my father supported the decision unequivocally.

As for my own son, I think it is safe to say I do not promote the idea of becoming a practicing lawyer. While I think the education is a great way to teach people how to learn, and the practice can be rewarding at times, there are easier and less stressful ways to make a good living. There is no doubt in my mind that he has what it takes to be an excellent lawyer. Whether that is the path he chooses, we will have to wait and see.



**Nate Grunfeld** (*son of lawyer Kenneth Grunfeld*): I think my father does not want me to be a lawyer. He frequently describes how being a lawyer is extremely stressful and that the job requires a tremendous effort.

I can hardly remember any times my father has ever talked about his work if I don't first initiate a conversation. He comes home every day and not once mentions how his job went. Even when I pressure him into talking about his work, he mostly says his day was fine and ends with advising me not to become a lawyer. He could have a completely different job and I would never know it. However, I rarely see the negative effects the profession has on him. When he sees me after work, he never seems stressed or tired, just happy to be home.

I just finished 9th grade and I don't know what I want to do when I grow up. Maybe I will become a lawyer, maybe I won't. Thinking about it is neither appealing nor frightening to me. Only time will tell.

# The Lawns

“Always be respectful, you never have a second chance to make a first impression, and there is no substitute for hard work.”

**Timothy Lawn** (*father of lawyer Daniel Lawn*): I work at Raynes Lawn Hehmyer, where my area of practice is plaintiff's personal injury. I realized that I wanted to be a lawyer in the 7th or 8th grade. My father was a non-lawyer who taught college political science and constitutional law classes. I would read and discuss with him the cases he was teaching and was hooked.

**Daniel Lawn** (*son of lawyer Timothy Lawn*): I work at Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP in personal litigation. I don't think there was a specific moment or sudden realization that made me want to become a lawyer. I started to seriously consider law school around my sophomore year of college.

**TL:** Dan always had such a strong moral compass and sense of right and wrong, so I often thought “he'd make a good lawyer,” but I never said that to him. When he was in 10th grade, he had a 30+ page writing assignment that he asked me to proofread. I read it and had zero edits. I saw that he



was already writing better and more persuasively, than I. That's the first time I discussed with him that he should really think about becoming a lawyer.

**DL:** I was never pressured by my parents to become a lawyer. There were a few instances growing up where I was able to see my dad interact with his clients. Their genuine appreciation for his help and advocacy inspired me. His ability to impact lives for the better led me to become a lawyer. When I met other attorneys that my dad worked with, or against, they all struck me as intelligent and talented individuals who were good people. Therefore, I admired the profession and never believed the stereotypes about lawyers. When I ultimately



Daniel Lawn after being sworn into the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania by the Hon. Gerald A. McHugh—a friend and former longtime partner of Timothy Lawn.

decided to go to law school, my parents were extremely supportive and encouraging.

**TL:** Ours was the opposite of a “family of lawyers” until Dan joined the ranks three years ago. I have a large extended family. My dad was one of seven, and my mom one of eight. I have five siblings and about 50 first cousins. I was the first and only lawyer until Dan joined the ranks. So, the nicest thing about now being a “family of lawyers” is having someone to share the multitude of legal questions that arise in big families.

**DL:** Having a dad who has been an attorney for 30+ years in Philadelphia has been helpful for my practice. In addition to the practical advice about being a lawyer that I receive from him daily—solicited or unsolicited—his connections with other

attorneys in Philadelphia sometimes lead to valuable business origination.

**TL:** I’ve learned a tremendous amount from my wife and all our children that has helped me become a better lawyer, especially in the courtroom and in communicating with witnesses and jurors. Dan being a lawyer has helped me appreciate how younger lawyers think and problem solve. I love picking his brain on issues in my cases—and I am a dinosaur when it comes to using technology, so I turn to him for help from time to time with PowerPoints, etc.

**DL:** I think the same lessons my parents always preached growing up are just as applicable to being a lawyer. Always be respectful, you never have a second chance to make a first impression, and there is no substitute for hard work.

## A Family of Lawyer “Lone Wolves”

By Steve LaCheen

There have been eight lawyers in the extended LaCheen family, spanning four generations and almost 100 years.

**Frank S. LaCheen**, my father’s older brother (1907-1988), was in private practice and then worked for the government at the Frankford Arsenal.

I was born in June 1934, admitted to practice in 1957 and am in my 64th year at the bar, specializing in federal criminal defense.

My cousin, **Jerome**, Frank’s son, born in 1935, started practice as a patent agent for the government, spent 10-12 years in private practice with me, and then became, and still is, a solo practitioner personal injury lawyer.

My daughter, **Cary LaCheen**, born in June 1958, has been a public interest lawyer in New York, and spent several years in the office of general counsel for Health and Human Services during President Obama’s term in office.

My cousin Jerome’s son, **Daniel LaCheen**, now in his early 50s, is a personal injury lawyer in Miami, Florida.

My Uncle Joseph LaCheen’s granddaughter, **Abby LaCheen**, is a worker’s compensation defense attorney at the Chartwell firm in King of Prussia.

My daughter, **Alexandra LaCheen**, born in December 1981, is an attorney in general practice, in the office next to mine.

My Uncle Joe’s grandson, **Lance LaCheen**, was admitted to the bar two years ago, and is at a major firm in Philadelphia.

That sums it up for the League of LaCheen Lawyers, except that there is no “league,” and the only one of us who knows all of us is me, and that’s a good clue why I say there is no “story” in the fact that there are so many of us. They are, for the most part, a family of “lone wolves,” fairly content with keeping our own company. But I couldn’t resist the temptation to share the information with my colleagues.

Top that, Mattioli, Mattioli, and Mattioli, if you can!