

Alumni@Dentons

September 2019

IN THIS ISSUE

01

A recap of our recent CLEs, information on upcoming programs

03

**Alumni Spotlight:
Alice Austen Lawton**

05

Risk Tips

07

Recent Laterals

09

Social Impact

10

Im Memoriam

We are pleased to share with our extended Dentons US family the most recent issue of Alumni@Dentons.

Drop us a line at alumni@dentons.com and let us know what you liked about this edition and if you have other ideas. Also, keep us posted on what you have been up to and we will be happy to share it in our next issue.

Recent Events

CLE Seminars for In-House Counsel

Consistently among our most popular annual events, our CLE Seminars for In-House Counsel have already drawn nearly 700 guests in six cities so far this year. This includes our inaugural program in Atlanta, which became the eighth US city to host a CLE Seminar for In-House Counsel. Lawyers, professionals and staff from multiple practice groups and multiple offices collaborate to make every CLE



Seminar for In-House Counsel a rewarding and wide-ranging experience for our clients and guests. We not only share the latest updates and insights on the most pressing legal issues of the day, we also tackle important legal industry concerns, such as eliminating unconscious bias, building diverse teams and addressing the prevalence of anxiety, depression and substance abuse in the profession.

Programs will be held in Dallas, New York and Washington, DC, later this year—check our event calendar below for details.



Other recent programs

Kansas City hosted the 11th Annual Heartland Insurance Symposium, a full-day event bringing together insurance sector executives, regulators and other players from throughout the Midwest.



The Los Angeles and Orange County offices each hosted CLE lunches for local in-house counsel, in collaboration with the Association of Corporate Counsel's Southern California chapter, the organization's largest.

Our Venture Technology group partnered with TechGC and BetterCloud to host a CLE presentation in New York targeting GCs of venture-backed companies on key legal issues involving restrictive covenants.



Our Honolulu office and its Employment and Labor practice hosted a CLE seminar on strategies for preventing sexual harassment and fostering a respectful workplace.



Upcoming events

Inaugural CLE for In-House Counsel

September 12, Dentons, New York

CLE Seminar for In-House Counsel

September 12, Dentons, Dallas

CLE Seminar for In-House Counsel

October 16, Dentons, Washington, DC

Gotham Insurance Symposium

October 24, Dentons, New York

Recent Alumni Events



The New York Litigation group hosted a rooftop reception for practice alums, welcoming back 50 former colleagues joined by 30 Dentons lawyers to network and reconnect over Times Square. Partner Sandy Hauser spearheaded the efforts and led a toast to partners Reid Ashinoff and Michael Barr, who founded the practice in 1984 before joining with legacy firm Sonnenschein in 1990.

Q&A

Dentons alum Alice Austen Lawton



It's no secret that more than a few BigLaw denizens harbor dreams of leaving the profession to pursue other career aspirations. Most never make the leap, fearful of giving up a reliable income for something that might not work out. Dentons alum Alice Austen Lawton is not one of those people. In 2005, Alice left the full-time practice of law to become a playwright, garnering numerous residencies and productions in the US and England. In 2015, Alice decided to pursue her dream of being a screenwriter and filmmaker, by all accounts an immensely difficult road. But a mere four years later, in no small part due to the transactional skills training she received at Dentons, her first feature film, *Give Me Liberty*, a comedy-drama she produced and co-wrote with director Kirill Mikhanovsky, was the critics' favorite at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival followed by a strong showing at Cannes. The film, which chronicles a day in the life of its main character, a Russian-American driver of a medical van, as he shuttles his disabled and elderly passengers around Milwaukee, a city hit hard by deindustrialization and bedeviled by racial division but united by the bonds of neighborly kindness. It hits American theaters this summer, with showcases in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago and Denver.

UPCOMING SCREENINGS

- Aug. 30 – Los Angeles – Monica Film Center (Santa Monica); Laemmle Town Center (Encino); Laemmle Playhouse (Pasadena)
- Aug. 30 – San Francisco – Roxie
- Sept. 13 – Chicago – Music Box Theatre
- Sept. 27 – Denver – Alamo Drafthouse Sloans Lake

Tell us about your time at Dentons?

I joined the Chicago office out of law school. [Dentons partner and noted author] Scott Turow talked me into going. I think he was put onto my case because we both went to Harvard Law School and because it was clear from my transcript that I was also a writer. I had studied under the famed poet Seamus Heaney in the Creative Writing Program at Harvard. Scott said, "You can be a writer and a lawyer here."

I had a quite wonderful learning curve because I inadvertently became an expert on proxy rules at a heightened time of takeovers, so I was on a lot of deals. [Corporate partner] Michael Froy was my great mentor. He taught me so much. One of his most valuable lessons: "You don't have to be the smartest in the room and answer right away. If you give yourself time to think, sometimes you will figure things out in a better way. So never be afraid of doing that." [Senior counsel] Linda Chaplik Harris was also a wonderful mentor. She [impressed on me] to understand the numbers; that lawyers who don't know numbers don't understand the deal, which became important later.

Do you still have ties to Dentons?

This film was really hard to produce and Mike Froy has been advising me throughout. He served as our lawyer when we started the company. Mike believed in what we were doing and has continued to be a great friend, advisor and source of pragmatic wisdom.

How did you know how to write a screenplay, much less produce a feature-length film?

While living in Brussels and commuting to Prague, I met some actors in a pub one night. Although I previously had only written fiction, I wrote a play for them and it was produced. Later, while script-doctoring for a UK film company, I wrote a script that became quite sought after—a biopic about Salvador Dali; Ben Kingsley wanted the role—but it never got made because the production company refused to agree to the producer's not-unreasonable demand for 51 percent control. I had no say in the matter. Lesson learned. Never be just the writer.

I moved back to Chicago and became a "Chicago playwright." I had residencies with the Royal Court, Chicago Dramatists, Goodman and Steppenwolf theaters and was commissioned by Steppenwolf and Goodman. My last big production was the critically acclaimed adaptation of Orwell's *ANIMAL FARM* at the Steppenwolf. Meanwhile, I was commuting back and forth to Europe to do deal work and arbitrations as of counsel to a Brussels firm.

How did you meet Kirill?

A mutual friend who had been trying to connect us sent me a film Kirill shot in Brazil and sent Kirill something I wrote. But the DVD disc was in a format unsupported by my player and Kirill, who was in Cuba at the time, had little time or interest in reading my work. However neither of us closed the door entirely. A year earlier, I had moved to Milwaukee, where Kirill's whole family lived. On his return home, someone brought him to a play reading I was doing there and the next day we met for coffee.

We decided it would be interesting to do something in which Milwaukee would be a character. Kirill had come to the city from Moscow in the early 90s and one of his first jobs was driving a transit express for people with disabilities. He regaled me with stories that were funny and very wonderful and full of humanity. Though the particular anecdotes didn't get into the movie, we thought following a paratransit driver on his rounds would be a wonderful way to thread the needle in terms of getting around the city and meeting characters, as well as a great place to start a story.

What were your greatest challenges in getting this project to fruition?

This film was really difficult to produce for a lot of reasons, not the least of which was that, for me, it was a complete learning curve. Our first producing partners were not the right fit. While they connected us to serious money as well as a superb production and distribution company, they were the intermediaries and very anxious to keep me far from all things legal, contractual and budget-related. I questioned why they couldn't get the budget under the very generous amount of money that the production company was willing to put up. Our request to see the books was rebuffed, and then the investor dropped us – precisely because they didn't have a budget, contracts, or visas for our foreign actors. This was devastating. It was 2017 and we went from the indie film everyone was talking about to being a pariah. But I was still trying to make it happen. While in New York, I went to see a Russian film at MOMA with our cinematographer. He said it's now or never. Kirill and I agreed, and that's when it crystalized that I've been looking for this producer who could magically put the film together—and the producer was me.

How did production go?

From that point on, I'd be up at night, literally reading *Filmmaking for Dummies*, making sure I understood things. Mike Froy was a great help, as was a close friend from law school and former COO of MGM, a straight shooter willing to deliver the cold hard truths about the entertainment business. We didn't have money for anything when we started—which I would never do again—but were determined to make the film. We came up with \$100,000 to get going, then kept raising money (for pickups, for post-production, etc.). We had 23 days of shooting initially, then 7

days of additional photography to make sure we picked up all the plot points. We submitted a pretty long, crazy cut to Sundance not expecting pickup, but they selected us and that put us into a madly accelerated post-production process.

Another challenge was working with actors with cognitive disabilities. We knew things couldn't be perfectly scripted; that we had to be open to some chaos (some beautiful chaos).

After Sundance, we didn't get picked up by a domestic distributor, so we had to go back to the drawing board, creating a shorter cut of the film. Then, people on our team became upset when we turned down an invitation to show at the New Directors/New Films festival at Lincoln Center because we were holding out for Cannes, a long shot because its juries prefer world premieres. But safe doesn't get you anywhere; you have to be bold. And our gamble paid off. Ours was the fourth feature ever to go to Cannes after screening at Sundance.

What was Cannes like?

Quite amazing. It was a big Saturday night screening at Croisette Theater. Dressy, but not formal. No red carpet, which was probably fortunate as it was a very rainy night. There were about a thousand people in audience and the film received a 10-minute standing ovation.

What are some of your proudest moments?

We taped a talent show at the Eisenhower Center. We loved one guy's performance of "Born in the USA" and wanted to include it in the film. But we had to get music rights and were told it would never happen because Bruce Springsteen had never approved it for use—and he'd been offered millions. I researched the reasons why and it was because the intent was always to politicize or commercialize the song in a way that doesn't fit its message. I started a correspondence with "his people" and explained that our performer is a young man in a blue collar city where factories had closed. I talked about his thrill at being able to work and the obstacles he has overcome to do so. I described his love of the Packers, Harley Davidson and "The Boss." Bruce watched the film and, for the first time, approved use of the song, which was a pretty amazing moment.



Risk Tip

Real-life lessons for lawyers from 'Game Of Thrones' Eddie Reich is Dentons' general counsel



Earlier this summer “Game of Thrones” came to an end and a great deal was written about the final season.

Was Daenerys Targaryen, Mother of Dragons, Torch of Cities, Lover of Nephew, treated fairly by Jon (or, for that matter, the GOT writers)? Did dark horse Bran the Broken really deserve to end up on Iron Throne (melted as it was)? Personally, I would have liked to have seen Lyanna Mormont on the throne; she seemed to have the appropriate regal disposition. Or Theon Greyjoy.

But I digress. As fascinating as all of the theories, critiques and second-guessing that have saturated the internet are, as a lawyer, I can’t help but feel a bit left out; the legal profession was not exactly well represented in the series. Sure, Tyrion Lannister was put on trial — twice — but trial by combat doesn’t really have a lot of relevance for lawyers (OK, maybe I’m being naive).

But then I got to thinking: What if the various hands, maesters, council members and other advisers were lawyers? What possible lessons can these colorful characters impart to real-life lawyers? As it turns out, a great many. Provided that we assume — just for purposes of this article, of course — that the Model Rules of Professional Conduct were adopted by each of the Seven (ahem, Six) Kingdoms.

With that, let’s see how some of our favorite Westerosians fare as lawyers:

Lord Varys

From the outset, the Spider claimed to be loyal to the realm, as opposed to any particular monarch. That’s a noble sentiment, but he didn’t quite convey that to any of the various rulers (or would-be rulers) that he purportedly served.

Model Rule 1.13 requires a lawyer representing an organization (or, presumably, a realm) to make clear to the organization’s officers and directors (or king/queen) that the lawyer owes duties to the organization, not the individual. And to the extent that a conflict arose between the interests of the monarch and those of the realm (that is, the CEO and

the company), then Varys should have disclosed that and possibly withdrawn from his counsel role. That said, when he finally was forced to come clean, you could say he got “fired.”

Ser Davos

This guy switches sides faster than you can say valar morghulis. After first serving as Stannis Baratheon’s hand, he joined Jon, then professed loyalty to Daenerys, then ended up on King Bran’s Small Council.

From a conflicts standpoint, we’d have to look at Model Rule 1.9 (duties to former clients) to see whether Ser D would land in hot water again (as if his experience with the wildfire wasn’t enough). While it’s hard to say that the successive representations aren’t substantially related, the better argument against a conflict is that there is no adversity (what with Stannis and Dany being defunct and Jon banished to a place beyond the Wall).

Bronn

This guy also has a serious side-switching problem. But unlike Ser D, Bronn dropped his client (Tyrion) like a hot potato when Cersei offered him a wagon full of gold to off Tyrion and Jaime.

Most jurisdictions are pretty clear that lawyers can’t get around a Model Rule 1.7 current-client conflict by dropping the client in favor of a more lucrative one. And his “ownership, possessory, security, or other pecuniary interest” in Highgarden came at the point of a crossbow, not with “fair and reasonable” terms and written disclosure about the advisability of getting “independent legal counsel on the transaction” as required by Model Rule 1.8.

Tyrion Lannister

In telling the aforementioned Mother of Dragons that Varys was plotting against her, the hand gets high marks for complying with Model Rule 8.3, which requires a lawyer to report the professional misconduct of another “that raises a substantial question as to that lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer.” Not such high marks for patricide.

Jon Snow

Did he violate Model Rule 1.6 when he disclosed to his sisters that he's really Aegon Targaryen, even though he told Daenerys he'd keep it confidential? Probably not, since it wasn't Dany's confidence. And it was already known to Samwell and Bran (then again, what didn't Bran already know?).

And what of Jon's regicide? Well, Model Rule 1.14 does allow a lawyer to take "reasonably protective action" where a client has diminished capacity — she was the Mad Queen, after all — that could result in physical harm. I'm still looking for an ethics opinion that's on point.

Lord Baelish

Model Rule 8.4 defines professional misconduct; Littlefinger just perfected it.

Qyburn

I don't particularly like this guy. But despite his other faults, in the penultimate episode, Qyburn does keep Cersei "reasonably informed about the status" of the dragon attack, in accordance with Model Rule 1.4.

In addition, I have to give him credit for appropriate use of artificial intelligence for bringing the Mountain back to life to protect Cersei (until he didn't).

Missandei

She gave her head for her client. Congratulations to the most ethical lawyer in all of Westeros.

One final takeaway: If you are thinking of practicing law in King's Landing or Winterfell, make sure you stay on the right side of the Rules. I can't be certain, but I'm pretty sure that Westerosian discipline, whether imposed by the Small Council or Drogon, is something to be avoided.

“What if the various hands, maesters, council members and other advisers were lawyers? What possible lessons can these colorful characters impart to real life lawyers? As it turns out, a great many.”

Leadership Appointments

US Chief Executive Officer Mike McNamara recently announced several appointments of partners to advance the Firm's US strategy.

Chicago partner **Mary Wilson** has been named Dentons' US managing partner, becoming the first woman to serve in this key leadership role.

Kansas City partner **Lisa Krigsten** has become the KC office's new managing partner.

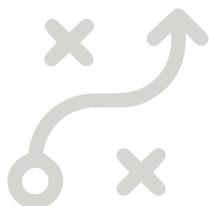
Dallas partner **Don Hammett** has been tapped to lead our **Corporate** practice.

Atlanta partner **Dan Beale** has been appointed head of the **Employment and Labor** practice.

San Francisco partner **Kim Kerry** has been named chair of our **Health Care** practice.

New York partner **Brian Raftery** has become the leader of our **Trusts, Estates, and Wealth Preservation** practice.

Kansas City partner **John Snyder** has assumed leadership of our **Real Estate** practice.



Recent Laterals

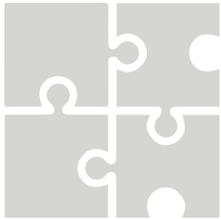
Polly Lawrence, a former member of the Colorado House of Representatives, joined the Denver office as a senior policy director in the Public Policy practice, where she will provide counsel on Colorado's state government affairs.

Cesar C. Mitchell Jr., the immediate past president of the Atlanta City Council, joined the Public Policy practice as a partner. Located in the Atlanta office, he will play a national leadership role as head of our Local Government Solutions practice.

Scott H. Thompson has joined the Real Estate practice as a partner in the Kansas City office. Scott's experience spans banking and finance, real estate and corporate law.

David Quam has joined as counsel in the Public Policy practice, resident in the Washington, DC, office. He will help lead Dentons 50, our multistate public policy and advocacy solution service.

We enlarged our Phoenix office's Litigation and Dispute Resolution practice and White Collar and Government Investigations practice with the addition of a nine-lawyer team: partners **Karl Tilleman, Erin Bradham, Paul Charlton and Quintin Cushner**, counsels **Doug Janicik** and **Jason Sanders** and associates **Erin Norris Bass, Monica Thompson**, and **Debbie Jang**.



Legal Tech

Our Nextlaw subsidiary announced the launch of the **Dentons Innovation XChange**, an internal digital platform/database for all the innovative tools, solutions and initiatives being developed and adopted around the Firm. It includes two primary categories of solutions: Dentons tools, to make our work easier, and client-facing solutions, to help our clients solve problems. [Click here](#) to take a guided tour. This dynamic platform will continuously grow and evolve to reflect our latest innovations and ideas. If you have questions about the platform, or suggestions for new solutions, please contact **Jonathan Chow**, Nextlaw business development and marketing manager.

Always looking for ways to embrace innovation, Dentons launched a new program aimed at cultivating the firm's "intrapreneurs." **Innovation Hours** offers midlevel and senior associates creditable non-billable hours for time spent working on approved projects to promote advances in legal technology and operations. For example, Dentons has an automated document generation solution that enables whole sets of documents to be drafted based on a single, web-based form, reducing from hours to minutes the time it takes to produce good first drafts. Associates are well positioned to identify and collect best-practice documents and assist in the build-out of the automation software.

Dentons Delivers

From Hawai'i to New York, our lawyers and staff work together to make a positive impact on our local communities through our Dentons Delivers program. Here are just a few examples of how our people are giving back across the US.

Many US offices held a spring clothing drive to benefit **Veronica's Closet**, which works to end sex trafficking in the United States and to help empower survivors.

The Chicago office raised more than \$23,000 for this year's **Investing in Justice** campaign, organized by the Chicago Bar Foundation.

Bay Area volunteers gave time at the **Swords to Plowshares Veterans Legal Clinic**.

San Francisco and Oakland volunteers observed National Rebuilding Together Day by volunteering with **Rebuilding Together San Francisco**.

Atlanta volunteers continued to clean a quarter-mile segment of the **Atlanta BeltLine** as part of their monthly commitment to beautify the space.

The New York offices celebrated **Red Nose Day**.

The Washington, DC, and Tysons Corner, VA, offices participated in the 29th annual **Lawyers Have Heart** 5K walk, 5K run and 10K run to benefit the American Heart Association.

The St. Louis office collected more than \$1,100 for the **Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research**, the **Farmington [MO] Pet Adoption Center** and the **National Multiple Sclerosis Society**.



“Our lawyers and staff work together to make a positive impact on our local communities through our Dentons Delivers program.”

Diversity and Inclusion

Courage Project

Earlier this year we introduced the Courage Project, a commitment to face complex workplace issues surrounding diversity and inclusion. The Firm has a responsibility to undertake serious and continual self-examination to ensure we are living up to our core values. At this year's Dentons Partner Meeting, Global CEO **Elliott Portnoy**, Global Chairman **Joe Andrew**, Global Client Development Partner **Kate Broer** and Global Women's Advancement Director **Amanda Jones** established our Courage Commitment:

- We embrace hard truths and welcome difficult conversations.
- We listen to understand and connect.
- We acknowledge and learn from our mistakes and when it is our turn, we speak with passion.
- When we value different perspectives and work together, we are better.

Also women from across our global Firm came together to film a video embracing the theme of the 2019 International Women's Day, #BalanceForBetter. You can check out the video by [clicking here](#).

Pride Month

In commemoration of Pride Month, the US LGBT+ Professional Network and US Diversity and Inclusion Committee held an insightful panel discussion on the Stonewall uprising, its contemporary impact and its lessons for us today. San Francisco/Oakland managing partner **Sonia Martin** moderated a conversation with senior counsel **Evan Wolfson**, who as founder and president of Freedom to Marry drove the trailblazing campaign to win same-sex couples the right to marry throughout the US; Jennifer Lu, chief coordinator of Marriage Equality Coalition Taiwan; and Alex Greenwich, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and a key leader of the campaign that secured marriage equality in Australia. A recording of the program is available [here](#).

Coming soon

PARENT PROFESSIONAL NETWORK EVENT

We invite our DC area alums to join a program with Dr. Steve Silvestro, a Washington, DC-area pediatrician and host of the popular The Child Repair Guide Podcast. With nearly a decade of experience in mindfulness education, Dr. Silvestro has taught medical students, undergraduates, parents, and children how to bring the benefits of mindfulness practice into their lives.

Date and Time: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 from 12-1 p.m. ET

Location: Dentons 1900 K Street NW, Washington, DC



Kudos!



Senior counsel **Harold Hirschman** received *Chambers* and Partners' inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award for Pro Bono Services at its 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Awards dinner. *Chambers* created the award this year specifically to honor Harold's career-long commitment to pro bono service, particularly his advocacy for civil rights and human rights.

Global Vice Chair **Gordon Giffin** is one of the 2019 recipients of a prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the *Daily Report*. Georgia's legal industry publication annually recognizes 12 lawyers who have made a lasting impression on the state's legal community.

Washington, DC, Energy partner **Emma Hand** received the Energy Bar Association's first-ever Diversity and Inclusion Champion Award at the organization's 2019 Annual Meeting and Conference. Emma was honored for her outstanding leadership and contributions in the energy sector and for being a strong champion of diversity and inclusion.

In Memoriam



Partner **Bernard J. "Bud" Nussbaum** passed away on February 23, during his 60th year with Dentons. After graduating from University of Chicago Law School and serving in the US Army Judge Advocate General's Corps, Bud joined legacy firm Sonnenschein in Chicago, where he developed a nationwide reputation in the areas of antitrust and trade regulation, securities law and contract disputes. Bud achieved countless victories for clients across sectors and served as an arbitrator in several significant commercial matters. His outsized personality, combined with his incisive, highly-analytical mind earned him the respect of his peers and opponents alike. Bud was truly one of a kind, and we are lucky to have counted him as one of our own.



Retired partner **Tom Wardell** passed away on June 20 following a short illness. Tom focused on corporate counseling and corporate finance and securities for public and private companies, state agencies and mutual fund complexes. He also counseled public companies on governance matters. As co-chair of the Corporate practice at legacy firm McKenna Long, he also developed expertise in the China market. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Tom worked for several law firms in Chicago and Boston before leaving law to become CEO of a tech company. When he returned to legal practice more than a decade later, it was as a partner in McKenna Long & Aldridge's Atlanta office. He will be fondly remembered for his energy, vitality, enthusiasm, wisdom, intellect—and, of course, his signature bow ties.