

Connecticut **Law**Tribune

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*The Connecticut
Law Tribune
Announces*

*Litigation
Department*
OF THE *Year*

Crosby Law Firm

LITIGATION DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR
Solo Litigation Practice

An Organized Approach To Juggling Cases

THOMAS CROSBY

uses 'quick study' skills to build diverse practice

Last year, the Crosby Law Firm represented a woman who alleged shoddy workmanship related to the construction of her modular home in Branford. That claim resulted in a \$101,000 verdict. The same Guilford firm handled a 20-year-long workers' compensation case involving an injured police officer. And then there was the zoning case, appealed into Superior Court, in which the firm helped a Hamden sports bar win the right to hold live music events.

The same firm defends real estate agents in negligence lawsuits, and neighbors in boundary line controversies. And did we mention the discrimination claims, landlord-tenant disputes, criminal trials and personal injury cases?

Sounds like those lawyers are busy. Except there aren't any lawyers, plural.

There's one lawyer, Thomas Crosby, who flies solo. And he wouldn't have it any other way. For one thing, there's always been the flexibility to take off for a few hours to see his four children's sporting events, to sing in a choir or to coach youth basketball. But there's also the notion of self-reliance.



Thomas Crosby has been practicing law for 30 years, many of them as a solo.

"You're it," said Crosby, who has been practicing for 30 years, many of them as a solo. There is no coasting, he said. "I'm not saying people [at larger firms] coast, but you can miss a day and it doesn't show," Crosby said. As a solo "there's a fulcrum pressing on you."

"I think that a law practice is a business and solos more than people in larger firms have to be mindful of that fact," Crosby said. "So I think if you are going to be a successful solo or a solo contributing to the community ... preparation is absolutely essential."

For his impressive versatility and productivity, the *Law Tribune* has named Crosby the winner of the Litigation Department of the Year Award in the Solo Practice category.

At least one longtime acquaintance endorsed the choice. Scott Gerard, who works out of Murtha Cullina's Stamford office, first met Crosby when they were students at the Washington College of Law at American University in Washington, D.C. From the beginning, said Gerard, it was clear that Crosby was great at thinking on his feet.

When Crosby was called on in law school classes, he was always able to answer the professor's question, even if he hadn't read all the case law. "Tom would maybe, maybe not have read the case the night before," Gerard said. "Tom is reading the case as they were asking the question. They thought he knew the case inside out."

Gerard said that quality has paid dividends for Crosby in the courtroom when he's been peppered with questions by judges. "He's just a quick study," said Gerard, adding that Crosby is also a "spiritual guy" (he goes with fellow church members to Appalachia each summer to help the poor) and is dedicated to his clients' interests.

Switching Gears

Being a quick study, Crosby said, helps him quickly prepare for the wide variety of cases he handles. He bones up on topics by attending continuing legal education classes and reading legal publications. "I research everything that comes in the door. I can quickly analyze a situation and come up with a solution and switch gears really fast," he said.

Crosby said he really enjoys personal injury law because he is good at medicine and loves science. He

finds the medical reports in personal injury cases "fascinating." He also enjoys arguing cases at the appellate level, calling it intellectually stimulating.

One of his most notable victories of 2012 came in a civil rights case. His client was charged with DUI in the Town of Madison. Police had followed his vehicle for about five miles before they pulled it over. Even though the man had only one beer earlier that day, he had difficulty performing sobriety tests because of a prior knee surgery. At the police station, his blood alcohol level was zero. His charge was dismissed in criminal court and, with Crosby handling the negotiations, he received a confidential sum after filing a lawsuit claiming wrongful arrest and civil rights violations.

Crosby may be a solo, but he doesn't work completely alone. Networking is important, he says. Because there is no lawyer down the hall to brainstorm with, he calls other lawyers to talk about upcoming trials. "You call people who are well known and ask questions," Crosby said. "You need to bounce things off other people."

Additionally, Crosby has a trusted paralegal and, at times, employs some part-time student help. "Having a good support staff is absolutely essential because they are the face of the firm when you aren't there," he said.

Paralegal Nonnie Dahnke has been with Crosby for 12 years. She's impressed by her boss's dedication. "He has to know not only the law, but he has an office to run, too," Dahnke said. "As a solo you have to do a lot of everything that has to do with an office — from soup to nuts. It seems that when it's a solo practice it's a way of life, more than a 9-to-5 for some folks."

Litigation Department OF THE Year

CROSBY LAW FIRM

	Total Firm	CT Office(s)
Litigation Partners	1	1
Litigation Associates	0	0
Other Attorneys	0	0
% Total Revenue From Litigation	100%	100%

NOMINATION HIGHLIGHT:

Attorney Crosby's practice spans approximately 30 years of legal representation in Connecticut. His expertise includes many jury and bench trials for personal injury clients, individuals embroiled in boundary line disputes, neighbors battling zoning controversies and construction litigation. He has appeared 15 to 20 times before the state Appellate and Supreme Courts. His trial experience includes civil RICO claims, injunction action, declaratory judgments, landlord-tenant disputes, property tax appeals and criminal trials.

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Trial Notebooks

Crosby also employs technology as his partner. For instance, e-mails sent to the Crosby Law Firm’s website go straight to his cell phone. The office telephone system has a built-in timer so Crosby can accurately compute the number of hours spent on each case for billing purposes. The firm also has networked computers that connect with Crosby’s home laptop.

Crosby believes that the key to a “successful practice is preparation.”

“Each trial is supported by a trial notebook, either electronically or manually created,” according to Crosby. “Maintaining an extensive law library as well as famil-

ilarity and use of Westlaw Next” is essential. His motto: “Leave No Law Unresearched.”

But even using all the tools and resources at hand, it’s not easy to be a solo litigator. There are the opposing counsel who “pile on motions” in an attempt to “weigh you down” and force a settlement on their terms.

Though most judges try to resolve scheduling conflicts that can arise when one attorney is handling many cases, others are not as accommodating. “Occasionally, there are certain judges who think that they are the most important person and they probably are,” Crosby said. “You can’t tell a federal judge

‘I have to move this’” court date to accommodate another client.

Crosby also said that he and other solos sometimes go to court for one another if there is no other way around a scheduling conflict. He views making such arrangements as no big deal. “One of the gifts I have is I’m very well organized and I’m very efficient,” he said. “If you have that, you can juggle a lot of balls.” ■

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