

workhard

She stands at the edge of a 360-foot ravine looking down. She came halfway around the world to New Zealand to make this jump. Her boyfriend is down below, at the river's edge, looking about as big as an ant. She tries to remember why she wanted to do this. But the mental and physical challenge overcomes the momentary doubt, and she jumps into an exhilarating 300-foot free fall until the bungee line catches her and suspends her 60 feet above the water.

It is the longest bungee jump in the Southern Hemisphere and Lori Pegg '86, an employment law attorney in San Jose, did it. Why? To relieve stress—the same reason she scuba dives and completes century (or 100-mile) bicycle rides.

Those of us who favor more gentle diversions such as books and movies may find Pegg's approach extreme. But actually, according to experts, her choice of an all-encompassing activity that requires total concentration is one of the best ways to stay healthy as a lawyer.

Stress, burnout, and depression are by far the most common concerns lawyers bring to the Lawyer's Personal Assistance Program, a hotline provided by the State Bar of California. Hobbies, sports, and other outside diversions are a great way of relieving stress, preventing burnout, and staying excited about life, says Richard Carlton, the program's director.

"It's important for anybody to be able to get away from their job," Carlton says. "The less people bring their work home, the better. To the extent outside pursuits help people put work behind them, they are very beneficial in terms of controlling the amount of stress a person experiences as a result of work."



Charles Barry

Hobbies that are as intense as lawyering reduce work-related stress.

By Susan Vogel



Courtesy of Ron Malone

playhard

He recommends hobbies or activities that require a high degree of concentration such as tennis. Analyzing cases while on the treadmill doesn't cut it. "Aerobic exercise is good for the body but may not take your mind off your work," Carlton says.

Other professionals in the area of work-related stress emphasize the benefit of engaging in activities that are pleasurable. In their book, *Healthy Pleasures*, brain researcher Robert Ornstein and physician David Sobel see a connection between pleasurable hobbies and a healthy attitude toward work.

"Having something you love to do, not for the pay of it but just for the sake of it, is the essence of recreation," they say. "Whether it be sports, collecting material objects (art, stamps, or wine) or experiences (birds sighted, trains ridden, places traveled), or even recreational shopping, some kind of hobby seems an essential complement to healthy work."

To Ornstein and Sobel, a half hour of misery on the exercise bike in a windowless gym pales in comparison to a half hour of enjoyable gardening or chasing your kids around the yard.

The hobbies most effective at relieving stress and providing balance in life are often things that connect with pleasant childhood memories—or that revive interests put on hold while pursuing college, law school, and careers.

Singing might seem relaxing, but just try hitting a moderately high E and holding it before an audience of several hundred—when you're a low bass.

That's what Anthony Da Vigo '63 did in the Davis

Musical Theater Company's production of "Candide."

"When the curtain opened, I walked out and sang a single note—the E above middle C and had to hold it for awhile. I was amazed. I don't think I've hit the note since, much less opened the show with it."

After 24 years of practicing law at the Attorney General's Office in Sacramento, Da Vigo, "on a lark," auditioned with the Light Opera Theatre of Sacramento.

"One day, 12 years ago, I got to thinking about getting back into voice, so I dropped by the Light Opera Theatre of Sacramento. I had the nerve to stand up and audition, and by night, I was being outfitted for a costume."

Since then Da Vigo has appeared in more than a dozen operas and operettas.

"Having an interest like this adds to the dimension of life, to the quality of life by broadening the scope of it," he says. "There's only so much you can do day after day, year after year, with the law. You have to do something else to maintain perspective."

But don't hurry over to the local opera house if the last

Left, Lori Pegg '86 relieves the mental stress of work with physical exertion—from 100-mile bike rides to scuba diving and bungee jumping.

Top, the end of a six-month trial in a \$500 million case propelled Ron Malone '71 into the world of horsemen, where he buys, sells, breeds, and shows cutting horses.

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Chris Tumbusch

time you sang was at your elementary school graduation. Da Vigo studied voice at the San Francisco Institute of Music and Arts and in Florence, Italy. He toured with the Venetian Opera Company before law school. He planned to return to Italy after law school but was detoured by that long-running job with the Attorney General.

Micaela F. Mena Baker '76 also has a hobby that is far removed from the law and that provides a pleasurable connection with her youth. She teaches conversational Spanish at the college level near her home in Stanislaus County. After years of practicing law and raising three children, Baker became interested in reviving her Spanish.

"When I read *Like Water for Chocolate*," she says, "it was like being back in the kitchen with my mother and her comadres [godmothers]. I'll never know if they were her cousins, aunts, or what, but they were always there helping her."

Baker grew up Spanish-English bilingual in Oakland. Her parents had fled Mexico during the revolution of 1910 and had met in the cotton mills in Oakland. "The Spanish I learned as a child," she says, "was very old. It hadn't evolved since the revolution."

Teaching Spanish has helped her learn more Spanish. And reading Spanish literature and works about Mexico has reconnected her with her heritage.

Some lawyers go for years thinking that the law will satisfy all their needs for accomplishment and intellectual stimulation. But just wait. Sometimes it's a big event that causes pesky needs for hobbies and diversions to surface. Like a big trial prep that takes everything out of you and leaves you wondering whether the compromised settlement that left all parties somewhat stunned and unsatisfied was worth the sacrifice of six months of your life. Or whether the satisfaction of taking a good deposition reaches far into your soul or merely gives you some surface affirmation that you are a decent lawyer who can get a witness to incriminate himself—something

you already know. The end of a six-month trial in a \$500 million case propelled Ron Malone '71 into the world of horsemen, something he loved as a child on his grandfather's ranch in Missouri. Now, when he's not working as a business trial lawyer at Shartsis, Friese & Ginsburg in San Francisco, he's buying, selling, breeding, and showing cutting horses—horses that herd cattle.

"I decided I wanted to enjoy life," he says of the decision he made 12 years ago to buy a horse and start riding again. Since then his interest has evolved into a business with four employees, 22,000 acres near Petaluma, 18 horses, and 300 head of Black Angus cattle. ("It's not a hobby," he notes.)

Cutting horses are quarter horses that have been bred specifically to make cattle move—or not move. "They're like sheep dogs," Malone says. "They just love working a cow. It's a beautiful thing to see a horse engaged in what is really a ballet. The horse blocks every move of the cow. When it gets the cow trapped in the middle of the pen, the horse drops down on its belly waiting to see whether the cow will go left or right. It's poised to pounce just like a panther. It sends shivers down your spine."

Malone gets the same thrill from working the horses and cattle that he does trying a big lawsuit. No wonder. They are both highly competitive activities. Cutting horse competition, says Malone, is second only to thoroughbred racing in terms of the prize money awarded.

But there's also a gentler aspect. "When you ride a horse, you feel a connection with the horse that is almost spiritual. The more you ride the same horse, the more your horse and your mind are connected. You think about turning right and the horse turns right. It's magical."

Many lawyers discover hobbies such as writing that stretch their professional skills rather than develop new interests or revive childhood talents. From Franz Kafka to John Grisham, a good number of lawyers have ended up novelists. After all,

what lawyer (given all we've seen) couldn't crank out a novel—if he or she just had a weekend off?

Royce Roberts '85 is finding out the fun—and frustration—of having a passion for writing. If you see him taking notes in the hallway of a Seattle courthouse during a recess, there's a 99.9 percent chance it's about his case. But sometimes someone says something he just has to use in his fiction, like the time he was representing a clueless criminal defendant at his trial. As the testimony against his client grew more heated, his client leaned over and said to him with great indignation: "I feel like I'm on trial here!"

Roberts took up writing fiction as a way of dealing with the emotional issues involved in representing his clients—parents whose children have been taken from them by Washington's Office of Child Protective Services. After a

Several of Roberts' stories have been published in the *Washington Bar Journal*. He has just begun working on a novel.

What does he say to aspiring Grishams? "You have to be fascinated by it. If you aren't continually drawn to it, you won't do it."

Having fun, walking lightly, keeping (or cultivating) a *joie de vivre* can be difficult in a law office setting with the emphasis on long hours and serious work.

I found this out in my first few months of practice at a big firm when I was asked to spend several months working in the firm's branch office in Washington, D.C. I expressed a considerable amount of cheer thinking about old friends I would see and museums I'd visit. As I was talking with a secretary about what to see in the National Gallery, a senior associate called me into his office. In a brotherly way he advised me not to show so much enthusiasm. It was not good for my career.

"It's better," he said, "if you have the attitude that the world rests on your shoulders. That it's a burden for you to go to D.C. because of all your responsibilities here, but that you will do it because you are loyal to the firm."

I looked at him for a while, and saw a man who was single purposed (the law) and had no hobbies and no apparent interests beyond the four walls of his office and the law library upstairs. He had no life in him.

"That's good advice," I said without adding, "if I want to end up like you."

Joie de vivre is one trait shared by the healthiest people, researchers Ornstein and Sobel found.

"Healthy people," they say, "are optimistic and happy and seem to feel that things will work out no matter their difficulties. They enjoy small, simple pleasures and stolen moments: witnessing the sunrise, building a model classic car, or indulging in silly talk with their spouses, kids, and pets. Surprisingly to us, they highlighted minor things that pleased them: a shotgun collection, playing the violin passionately (though terribly), or cooking their favorite meals. These pursuits seem somehow to absorb some of the troubles of their active lives."

Anthony Da Vigo, who delayed his passion for singing opera for 24 years, advises attorneys to "get involved; definitely develop another interest—even if it's not anything to do with financial gain. Have a side interest other than the law. When the possibility presents itself, jump on it. Do something, especially if it's in the area of the arts. If you like to collect baseball cards, do it. But do something." n

Susan Vogel, having let her hobby take over her legal practice, is owner of Pince-Nez Press in San Francisco and a frequent contributor to *Et al.*



Courtesy of Anthony Da Vigo

child is removed, Roberts is the parent's free appointed counsel. Often his clients are suspicious and uncooperative. Just as often they are plagued by extreme drug and alcohol problems.

"It's a release," he says of his writing, which he tries to do in the evening after work. "Law tends to be about rules, whereas writing gives you the chance to structure things dramatically. It gives you a creative outlet that law doesn't allow. It's really satisfying to see the people in the story come alive and to know that I created them."

Top left, Royce Roberts '85 sometimes takes a break from his trial work to scribble notes he will use in his fiction.

Above, Anthony Da Vigo '63 (seated left) plays the principal role of Acting Governor Grande in 'Naughty Marietta,' written by Victor Herbert and produced by the Davis Comic Opera Co.