

Killoran takes onstage experience to courtrooms



Grant Killoran (Staff photo by Kevin Harnack)

Grant Killoran can see the similarities between performing onstage in a play and representing a client in front of a judge and jury.

Killoran, a shareholder at O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing S.C., Milwaukee, and the chairman of the Litigation Practice Group, became involved in theater and debate while in college but chose against making acting a career. A professor suggested he consider law school.

"I realized that instead of performing to a large audience in a play in a theater," Killoran said, "I could use some of what I had learned from my theater and debate instructors to talk to a different audience — the jury and the judge — in a courtroom."

During his more than 25-year legal career, Killoran said, he has witnessed many changes, and one of the biggest is that more cases settle before going to trial.

"With business cases, there is a more of a financial incentive for clients to settle their disputes prior to trial than there used to be because of the cost of the litigation process," he said. "The power of courts to order parties to alternative dispute resolution before trial also impacts the trial process."

"There are significantly fewer civil trials than there used to be."

One case that did not involve a trial, Killoran said, stands out in his career. The late Oakland Raiders owner, Al Davis, had sued the NFL and sought to serve subpoenas on every NFL team

president. The subpoenas needed to be enforced in the counties where the NFL presidents lived. A friend recommended Killoran to the Raiders' California-based attorneys.

A Green Bay native and lifelong Packers fan, Killoran took the job and moved to enforce the Raiders' subpoena on then-Packers President Bob Harlan. Despite the Packers' objection to the validity of the subpoena, Killoran prevailed and the subpoena was enforced.

"So I represented the Raiders against the Packers in a Green Bay courtroom and won," he said. "I was proud of my work and pleased for my client. I think I may have been the only attorney to get one of the Raiders' subpoenas enforced."

"But I fear I'll probably be kicked out of Packers' heaven for it."

Wisconsin Law Journal: What career, other than law, would you have pursued?

Grant Killoran: When I went to college, I thought I would become a high school English teacher, like my father. But my college English professors helped steer me to law school. If I was not a lawyer, I likely would be a college professor or collegiate debate coach.

WLJ: If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?

Killoran: I would like to spend more time with my wife and two young children. The law is a time-consuming profession, with long hours away from home. Finding an appropriate work-

life balance is a constant challenge.

WLJ: What app can't you live without?

Killoran: I use the NBA Game Time and NFL Mobile apps to keep up with sports scores.

WLJ: What is your favorite activity outside of work?

Killoran: Spending time with my wife, my children, and my friends. Also, I am a volunteer DJ at WMSE, 91.7 FM in Milwaukee and like to listen to music and go to concerts. As a Green Bay native and Green Bay Packers season-ticket holder, I also enjoy going to football games at Lambeau Field, particularly the Packers season home-opener.

WLJ: If you could have drinks with anyone, who would you pick?

Killoran: My late father, Grant "Skip" Killoran, who died when I was young. But if we are talking about celebrities, actor Bill Murray, musician Elvis Costello and pro wrestler (the late) Andre the Giant would be in the mix.

WLJ: What was the last movie you saw?

Killoran: I am not ashamed to admit that I watched "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes" on a recent flight.

WLJ: Who did you see at your first concert?

Killoran: The Doobie Brothers, with Toby Beau as the opening act, at the Brown County Veterans Memorial Arena in Green Bay in 1979.

WLJ: What was your favorite toy as a child?

Killoran: Board games like Battling Tops, Bas-Ket and Husker-Du, my Nerf football, Acrobie flying ring and Trac-Ball racket game. And my Mattel Electronics handheld soccer game, which I still have in a desk drawer someplace.

WLJ: Where is your favorite place to vacation?

Killoran: I have been fortunate enough to have been able to travel to a number of places around the world. Queenstown, New Zealand; Paris, France; Vancouver, Canada; Cape Town, South Africa; and Dublin, Ireland, are some of my favorites. But I think you can have a great vacation nearly anywhere.

WLJ: If you could have any super power, what would you pick?

Killoran: Actually, I discuss this issue with my 9-year-old son on a regular basis. Right now, I would choose super speed. But to be honest, at this point I would be happy just to be able to run as fast as I could when I was in my early 20s.

— MaryBeth Matzek