
ENGINEERS AND THE LAW

A New Attorney's Perspective On Engineers And the Law

Some people know early on what their life's work will involve. That choice for others can be a more evolutionary process. The approach taken by Miles Kelson, an attorney for the downtown Minneapolis law firm Meagher Geer, fits the latter category.

For certain, Minnesota born and raised Miles Kelson did not come from a family with a legal background. Mom was a teacher. Dad also taught and coached before retiring from the Burnsville school district. His father's athletic background helped turn his lanky 6-6 son into a good basketball player. Miles attended Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato where he played basketball. Fortunately, the classroom received as much attention as the basketball court. His most significant achievement was being named to the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference All-Academic basketball team.

A business administration major, Kelson's thinking about a possible legal career was influenced considerably by a professor

with a son who was an attorney. Additionally, Sara Edwards who taught legal studies at the school, also encouraged him to consider becoming a lawyer.

First step after college graduation in 2015 was to enroll at Chicago's Kent College of Law, which is part of the Illinois Institute of Technology. "I wanted to attend a school outside of Minnesota. I thought that would expand my opportunities in life," he explained. Kelson and law turned out to be a good match. "I got interested in a number of legal areas," he said. "I also found out there was a lot to learn. I enjoyed the learning process." Kelson also discovered basketball remained a significant part of his life while in law school. Following in dad's footsteps, he spent two years as an assistant basketball coach at the Illinois Institute of Technology, a Division II college that plays in the Northern Athletic Collegiate Conference, which includes Illinois and Wisconsin schools such as the Milwaukee School of Engineering.

"That experience was also beneficial to me," he observed. "I was able to work with players from a variety of backgrounds. It also provided insight regarding the challenges of teaching. It made me appreciate the work my parents did a lot more."

Although Kelson went to Illinois to seek challenge in a new location fate determined he would return to his home state. While at Kent, he was selected to be a law clerk at the Twin Cities-based Meagher Geer law firm. "I knew that would be a great opportunity to learn about a wide variety of legal issues," he said. Kelson notes he was open to exploring all legal areas except one. He knew early on Miles and criminal law were not a good mix.

While at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato he volunteered to help attorneys working as public defenders in the office of the

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Blue Earth county attorney. The one certainty regarding that type of work, he observes is, “there are no dull days. There is plenty to do. But I learned civil law was a better fit for me than criminal law.”

After Kelson graduated from Kent College of Law in 2017, his Meagher Geer job description changed from law clerk to attorney. He notes, however, the learning has continued as much of his early focus has centered on legal issues including work done by engineers. “I am in the learning stage right now,” he said. “I found I like the variety of issues confronting lawyers and engineers. I am able to do something interesting everyday.”

Much of the “interesting” work is connected to the firm’s catastrophic loss department. Describing a “typical day” in that arena involves variety. One morning Kelson might be writing a letter to a client regarding missing property. In the afternoon, he can be out of the office doing an inspection. His work also includes legal cases involving injuries related to accidents, collisions and explosions.

Much of his current legal work concerns cases involving engineers. That connection also adds to Kelson’s learning. “Engineers and

Miles Kelson



attorneys have different roles and different perspectives,” he observes.

Kelson’s scouting report on engineers reveals they are people confident in their judgment and able to back up points made with solid technical information. Meanwhile, however, his area of work tends to be more nuanced. “There is a lot more subtlety in the law than in engineering,” Kelson said. “Engineers are focused on determining why something did or didn’t work. An attorney works to convince people on a jury his presentation makes the most sense. Certainty is not as easy to achieve in my line of work.”

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Dave Conkey, P. E.



Kazimir Mueller

David Conkey, P. E., died June 14. He was 96. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1947 with a mechanical engineering degree. He served in the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. He stood guard duty at the famous Tehran Conference involving Joseph Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill.

He worked for Fegles Construction Company and General Mills. In 1956, he founded the Conkey and Associates Inc consulting engineering firm. The firm worked with businesses related to commodities, food processing, dust collection, materials handling, and construction review. It was sold in 1988. He was a member of several professional organizations. He was a president and director for the Consulting Engineers Council/Minnesota and a National Director for the American Consulting Engineers Council. In retirement, he assisted the U.S. Department of Agriculture

in evaluating ports in Ireland and Mexico. Later he joined the International Executive Service Corp and provided assistance to international businesses as a volunteer executive.

Walter Gobell, P. E., of Minnetonka died June 10, 2019. He was 91. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1951 with a degree in mechanical engineering. He served in the Army from 1955 to 1957. The majority of his career was spent at Honeywell in the Defense Systems Division as a production engineer. He retired from Honeywell in 1988 and moved to Green Valley, AZ before returning to Minnetonka.

Kazimir Mueller 71, died June 26. A German immigrant, his family settled in Little Falls. A U. S. Marine, he served in Vietnam. He had an electrical engineering degree from Weber State and spent most of his career working for Honeywell.



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