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Musings by Special New Lawyers

An Egyptian Man, a Russian Woman and a Small Law Firm

by Mark Oxford and Helena Oxford

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Introduction by Katherine James:

Mark had me at “hello”. In a time when it seems that many people take going to law school for granted, he and his wife, Helen, are true Law Student heroes, working hard and fighting for the chance to study and practice the law. I hope you will find their story as moving and inspiring as we do.

An Egyptian Man, a Russian Woman and a Small Law Firm

Mark Oxford

Helen Oxford

My wife and I met in a birthday party of a common friend. We started dating in beautiful Monterey while I was working for the Defense Language Institute. After dating for almost a year we decided to get married. A year later I got a job in Iraq as a contractor with the United States Army. Everybody thought our marriage was over, specially that we were newly wed and I am in Iraq and my wife remained in the States. However, I managed to find Helen a job with me over there where we will be together. Unexpectedly our first baby daughter was conceived in Iraq, which cut Helen's tour shorter than expected and I had to come back a few months later to be with my pregnant wife.

My wife and I saved a small sum of money from working in Iraq in order to go to law school. To maximize our savings we decided to go to a State where the cost of living is cheaper than California. While we were in Iraq, we applied to several law schools in several States. We got accepted in different law schools, and sometimes even in different States. We both were accepted to a law school in Michigan and we decided to go to a State where we had no connection with at all. However, and after only two years we have created very strong connections with Michigan. Our first child was born there and we are obtaining our J.D. degrees from Michigan.

Mark managed to obtain his Masters Degree with Honor in National Security from the American Military University, which helped in obtaining a scholarship to offset the cost of his legal education. We also have established a small publishing company. We try to bring back to life in digital format rare, historical and ancient books. This includes manuscripts such as: classical fiction, philosophy, science, religion, folklore, mythology, history, literature, politics and sacred texts, in addition to secret and esoteric subjects, such as: occult, freemasonry, alchemy, hermetic, shamanism and ancient knowledge.

Our daughter was born one month before we started law school full time. We had to manoeuvre our law school schedule where one of us watches the baby while the other is at school. Suffice to say that we were studying only when the baby went to bed at night. It was tough for a husband and wife to go to school full time and take

care of a little baby, however, and after only two years, we are one semester away from graduating from an ABA accredited law school.

Given the situation of our economy, we were lucky to spend a year in Iraq and two years studying law while the economy is recovering and no one is hiring anyway. Upon graduation and passing the California bar, we are planning to move to the Los Angeles/ Orange County area and hang our shingles. Law firms are not hiring like they used to do, not to mention that we want to be in control of our career and to maintain a balance between our professional and personal life.

Attorneys don't really need jobs anyway; they need knowledge of law, confidence, marketing, creativity, clients and more importantly strategic planning, not necessarily in this order though. I am originally from Egypt and fluent in Arabic, while Helen is originally from Russian and fluent in Russian. We are planning to offer our service to our respective ethnic communities. The Middle Eastern and Russian communities are very large in Los Angeles. The members of these two communities need to feel the trust, connection and understanding with their attorneys to render better communications and legal service. Being of their religion, culture and race and share the same respective language give us a huge advantage over other attorneys who are not. By speaking their languages we can easily cross the bridge of communication with them. By being of the same religion as the members of these communities, they should feel they are no strangers, actually more like friends right from the shaking of hands. By being of the same culture we have the genuine trust built in our professional relation. After all, what really unify any nation are the elements of one language, one religion and one culture or a mix thereof.

We are planning to practice immigration law, family law, some estate and business planning and civil litigation. Areas that are very sensitive to the Middle Eastern and Russian communities. The average member of the Arab and Russian communities will trust one of their own more than anybody else. They will seek the help of an attorney who can understand the sensitivity of a family matter between an Arab man and his wife and children or the dire need of solving an immigration issue of a Russian family or a Russian worker. For a client to communicate a problem in his or her language knowing that the attorney will understand the deep cultural and religious implications of such a problem relieves a heavy burden of the shoulders of this client.

After 9/11 the average American looks suspiciously at a foreigner or an immigrant and the immigrant community through out the nation knows this, which create the need for clients of these communities to find a competent attorney of their own to help them. This fact creates a hunger among the members of these communities for ethnic attorneys who genuinely go through what they are going through every day. Our plan is to create a client-centred non-profit PLLC law firm.

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