

## Voluntarily Committed: Profile Of Local Attorney Mr. Lish Whitson

By Elaine Conway

*"You get back three times more than you give."* – Lish Whitson.

The list of Lish Whitson's accomplishments as an attorney is truly impressive. After nearly 30 years as a trial attorney, Mr. Whitson has tried more than 50 jury trials and settled hundreds of cases out of court. He is a member of both the American College of Trial Lawyers and the American Board of Trial Advocates. He has recently joined the Seattle firm of Stokes Lawrence, P.S. and has practiced both as a sole practitioner as well as with the Public Defender's Association.

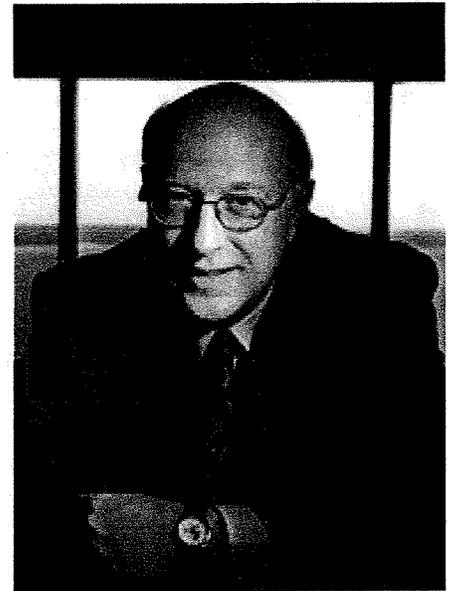
The list of accomplishments is extensive, but what impresses me the most about Mr. Whitson is his commitment to serving his community. In a profession with a reputation for being cut-throat and dehumanizing, Mr. Whitson is an example that an attorney who can be successful and kind at the same time.

I was able to sit down with Mr. Whitson during October, which was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Mr. Whitson began advocating on behalf of women with breast cancer in 1989. It all started with a 29-year-old woman with metastatic breast cancer whose insurance company refused to pay for the one treatment her doctors believed would save her. By the time the judge finally ruled in

favor of the patient, it was too late for her to benefit from the treatment and she soon passed away. This experience moved Mr. Whitson to put together a team aimed at educating lawyers representing clients in similar situations. This work continues today, as Mr. Whitson educates groups of lawyers nationwide.

Besides helping people through his legal practice, Mr. Whitson has been involved in a wide variety of volunteer activities. He and his wife served as Peace Corps volunteers in Afghanistan and he was involved with homeless advocacy at the Downtown Emergency Services Center for 17 years. Mr. Whitson currently serves on the boards of directors for Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center and the Allied Arts Foundation. His contributions have been recognized by the Seattle legal community in numerous ways, including receiving the King County Bar Association's Pro Bono Award in 1993 and the Outstanding Lawyer Award in 2000. For the last four years he has been chosen by his peers as one of Washington's top 100 "Super Lawyers."

When I asked Mr. Whitson what advice he would give to a law student, he responded without hesitation – "Look outside yourself." Look beyond your spouse, your child, your everyday life, and reach out to others." It seems like a tall order at a time of life when time is at such a premium, but this advice is golden. Mr. Whitson then drew a compari-



son between volunteering and exercise (another activity we just don't seem to do enough of in law school). You never seem to have enough time to exercise, but after you do, you feel more energetic and are able to accomplish more. So it is with volunteering, as well. You may not think you have time to help out your neighbor, but once you do it, you feel good about it and find you are able to take on more.

Why profile Lish Whitson? For the simple reason that the profession we are about to enter is in dire need of more people like him. This column advocates getting involved in community activities and volunteering while in law school. We hear over and over how it will help you get a job. Mr. Whitson is a wonderful example of why volunteering is not just about getting a job – it's about a lifelong commitment to improve our community.

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