

Q & A

Q & A with Brian Davidoff



An attorney with Greenberg Glusker LLP in Los Angeles, attorney Brian Davidoff helps middle-market companies and their principals navigate difficult financial waters. He serves as chair of the firm's Bankruptcy, Reorganization & Capital Recovery Practice Group, guiding lenders, creditors, and vendors seeking to maximize their recoveries, while also representing buyers and sellers of distressed assets. Davidoff received his law degree from University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in 1979 and his L.L.M. from the University of Miami in 1981.

Q: Before becoming an attorney, what was your first job?

A: My family was in the retail restaurant food business (retail foods and restaurants), so I worked in their various locations in Johannesburg, South Africa during my summer – December – breaks.

Q: What motivated you to pursue a legal career?

A: I somehow knew from the time I was in high school that I wanted to become a lawyer. My earliest recollection was that a friend of one of my older brothers was an attorney, and that impressed me mightily.

Q: Who was your chief mentor and how did he or she influence your career?

A: Early on in the practice of law, I worked for and then became a partner of a lawyer many years my senior. Lee Petillon was, until he passed away about 10 years ago, a passionate lawyer to start-up companies. I learned so much from him not only about the practice of law, but about being a good human being. While we practiced together for only about 8 years, he gave me a lifetime of lessons. All of us should be fortunate enough to have a mentor that guides and teaches us law and life lessons.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

A: My best advice comes not from what someone told me, but rather from my experience. I set out to be a corporate lawyer and indeed began my career that way. As a young lawyer, along came an opportunity to work on a bankruptcy case. Although I knew nothing about the area of law, I pitched in to assist. I immediately was attracted to the practice: a mixture of deal making, financial acumen, and litigation. This then became the focus of my practice over the last nearly 40 years. So, the upshot of that is: have a career plan but don't be closed to other possibilities that might come your way.

Q: What is one thing you would like to learn to do?

A: As young man I always dreamed of being an astrophysicist. My math skills precluded that direction in life. But of late I have taken to star gazing, and am keen to learn more about our night sky.

Q: What is your proudest career achievement?

A: As a debtor's business bankruptcy attorney, I always enjoy the ability to help restructure or "right size" a business. One of my more memorable cases was a furniture manufacturer in Los Angeles which had run into default with its lender. Through a Chapter 11, we were able to work out the loan default and allow the business to continue to thrive. What I enjoyed most was it was a family business started by an immigrant, who made sustainable furniture and employed dozens of people in downtown Los Angeles. The successful restructure not only saved the business, but also the livelihood of dozens of families. I was proud to be part of that.

Q: What is your most treasured material possession?

A: My most treasured material possession is one that I no longer have: as a young boy growing up in South Africa, I remember

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Brian Davidoff shares a smile with his daughter Cara after finishing a half-marathon run in 2020.

closely following the Apollo 11 landing on the moon in 1969. (We did not have TV in South Africa back then; I listened to it on the radio!). After the landing, I wrote NASA (yes, long hand and by mail), and asked for a picture. Many weeks later, I received in the mail a picture hand signed by each of the astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins. Alas, however it went astray and I no longer can locate it.

Q: What is your happiest childhood memory?

A: I had an idyllic childhood in South Africa. (Easy enough if you were lucky enough to be a white South African in the 1950s and '60s. Fortunately much has changed since then.) My best memories are of the many sports I played: swimming, running, rugby, soccer, cricket, tennis, judo, horse riding, and trampoline competitions.

Q: What is your favorite book?

A: My favorite book is James Michener's "Hawaii."

Q: What is the most awe-inspiring place you have visited?

A: Cape Town, South Africa. Its beauty never ceases to amaze.

Q: What are your favorite leisure time pursuits?

A: I don't relax all that well. When I am not working or with my family or my grandchild, I am out on my bike climbing the beautiful hills of Southern California, out in the ocean swimming, or running along the beach, and then bringing that together in the several triathlon races I do each year.

Q: What is your favorite famous or inspirational quote?

A: The last stanza of Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" – "If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch; If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you; If all men count with you, but none too much; If you can fill the unforgiving minute With sixty seconds' worth of distance run— Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!"

Q: Who is on your guest list for the ideal dinner party?

A: My wife and my kids and their families.

Q: Name the top three items on your bucket list?

A: Riding my bicycle in Europe (which I will be doing this summer). Going to Antarctica. Learning to hold my breath like Wim Hoff.



A triathlete, Brian Davidoff is pictured in the bicycling portion of the competition, which also includes swimming and running.