
Profiles in Progress: Client Stories

Herbert and Barbara Margolis

Herb Margolis grew up in Masontown and attended the one uptown school building in grades 1 through 12, which was not uncommon for that time and setting. Herb's father and mother, immigrants from Lithuania, supported themselves and their four children through the family clothing and hardware store in Masontown, with both parents sharing the managerial, administrative, sales and labor duties.

A few years younger, Barbara grew up in Pittsburgh and attended Taylor Alderdice High School. Her father was the owner of a pharmacy in Pittsburgh's North Side and then became a materials salesperson after selling the pharmacy. Barb's mother remained a homemaker, looking after Barb and her sister.

Herb was drafted into the Navy right after the end of World War II and then subsequently discharged from service along with thousands of other active duty military personnel in the years following the war.

Herb studied pre-med on the GI bill at the University of Pittsburgh and went on, not to medical school, but to Pitt's law school, graduating in 1952, coincidentally in the same class with one of our previously profiled clients.

Barb's and Herb's paths crossed for the first time while Herb was in law school when Barbara transferred to the University of Pittsburgh from Penn State. Herb saw Barbara, thought she was "pretty," and asked his fraternity brother to arrange a date. They married when Herb graduated from law school and Barb graduated from college with a degree in education.

After they married in 1952, Barb taught school for one year to support them. After passing the bar exam in 1952, Herb joined his older brother in the practice of law. Herb continues to practice law today, 54 years later. Barb reentered the workforce as the children grew older and went off to college or high school.

Life for the Margolis family was typical of the times, with Herb and Barbara rearing James and his siblings, Gary, Sara and Tom. James, 53, attended Stanford and Princeton and lives in Colorado, working in medical business management. Gary, 49, attended George Washington University and the University of Pittsburgh. He is now a director of art education in Nevada. Sara, 48, attended Wesleyan University and John Hopkins University. She joined the Peace Corps following graduation from Wesleyan and was assigned to teach school in Zaire, Africa. While working there she met her husband, Michel Pacque, a doctor from Belgium. They lived and worked in the African countries of Zaire and Mali for ten years and now reside in Virginia where they are raising their three children, Derek, a high school senior and twins, Kyle and Malikia, age 15. Son, Tom, attended the University of Pennsylvania and the Harvard Medical School to become a retinal surgeon. He is married to Robin, who he met at the University of Pennsylvania, and they have three children, Rebecca age 15, Joshua age 11 and Jennifer age 8.

Herb described his life as a general practice attorney in Uniontown, a small town and county seat. He recounted the early pre-public defender days of his career when he would receive a request or a demand by a presiding judge to come to the courthouse to defend a criminal defendant. The jury was already being impaneled or already seated in the jury box when he arrived. He had no time to interview his client or make any investigation, so he gathered facts and prepared his defense as the case unfolded. Herb's civil practice began to grow and he was able to provide for his growing family. Herb never lost his willingness to be helpful, informative, and available to his clients and friends. It is an observer's opinion that this trait was the key to his success.

When asked to provide advice to younger parents, Herb said, "In raising a family, you will have money and time concerns. There is no general advice that can be given. It is an individual determination." He became specific though in saying, "Always save some of what you make for family security, and go to the Fragasso Group!" Herb and Barbara have complimented us for over 30 years with their confidence as clients. It is clear that Herb and Barbara's family is their joy, and Herb's gregariousness comes through when he adds, "Tell everyone to stop by for a round of golf," one of his passions.



Barbara and Herb Margolis