In Memoriam: Peter Barnes-Brown

August 22, 1948 – July 6, 2020

July 16, 2020

Peter Barnes-Brown was a quiet iconoclast, an old-school gentleman open to the opportunities held in the unfolding wonders of emerging technologies. A study in contrasts, his temperate demeanor belied the depths of his intellectual curiosity and the fervor of his adherence to his principles and world view. Peter was the exemplar of the saying that "still waters run deep," and his natural modesty often hid his well-earned pride in the eventual realization of his vision of what was possible in the practice of law.

In 1993, after Peter recruited as his partner the gregarious attorney Richard "Chip" Morse, a new law firm opened its doors. Its name was Morse & Barnes-Brown, and its mission was to practice law in innovative ways, refreshing the old and honorable traditions of the legal profession and creating a business model incorporating the intelligent and often bold use of technology in its practices. The standard was excellence in all things, including the choice of colleagues. By 1994 the dream began to expand as Lea Pendleton, Jeff Somers and Charles A. "Chip" Wry joined, and the name became "Morse, Barnes-Brown & Pendleton." Ever forward-looking, Peter continued to recruit all the strong young(er) lawyers he could find, long after sheer numbers inevitably reduced his own influence. Adapting to the inevitable demands of growth and change, Peter proudly saw his grand experiment grow to become the established law firm of today.

Peter always had a taste for travel, and a strong interest in other cultures, so it's no surprise that he encouraged his firm to join the association known as LawExchange International, an invitation-only collaborative of independent law firms from around the world. Peter served on its Executive Committee from 2010 through 2014, and he had the honor of serving as its Chair from 2012 to 2014. One of the great appeals of membership were the annual meetings, held in different countries twice each year, and Peter attended as many as he could manage, making friends across the globe.

Peter's legal work was primarily focused on emerging technology and life sciences companies, with a particular interest in healthcare IT, medical device, and biotech companies. He also took pleasure in representing companies from countries as disparate as England and Norway, China and Germany, and Israel and Ireland in their US operations. His dogged determination was an asset to all the people and companies he represented. Whatever business his clients were in, Peter was inevitably a strong advocate for their interests, a believer in their endeavors, and a champion of their triumphs; in short, he was personally committed to their success.

In truth, however, Peter's actual life focus was on his family. He was, genuinely and sincerely, an openly dedicated husband and father, an authentic family man. No one took more joy from his children's undertakings, or more pride in his wife's accomplishments. No one ever spent more time being thoughtful of family needs and how to meet them. Peter wanted to be prepared for any and all eventualities. Everything you ever wanted to know about Peter could be found in his devotion to the concept and the reality of "family." As fine a lawyer as he was, as materially successful as he was, Peter enjoyed his greatest successes in the context of his biological and law firm families, where he stood second to none.

Contact

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We would be remiss if we didn't mention Peter's sly and subtle (dare we say "quirky"?) sense of humor. He would hang Op-Ed pieces on his office door, alongside his annual "get your flu shot" memo, a motivational quote of the moment, and a choice political cartoon or two. The flavor of Peter's humor was captured in his "Outside the Office" section of his bio on the Firm's website, where he listed as his interests "spending time with his family, traveling, skiing and thinking about things like the future of the legal profession and how to save the world (in case anyone asks him)." Preparing, as always, for all eventualities.

We are proud to have been associated with our dear friend and colleague, Peter Barnes-Brown, a good and decent man in all the ways that matter. We will miss him dearly.

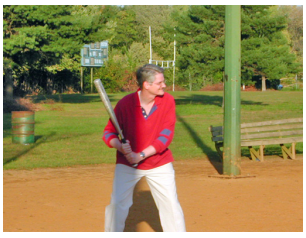
Donations may be made in Peter's name to:

MDA specifying Duchenne National Headquarters
3300 East Sunrise Drive
Tucson, AZ 85718-3299

Or

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
450 Brookline Avenue
Boston, MA 02215-5450

The founding partners.



Softball in the early years.