

Message from President of the Past Presidents of the DTCWV **GET OUT OF THE OFFICE AND BLOW THINGS UP**

By Michael M. Fisher, Esquire

No lawyer ever went to heaven and said, "Damn, I wish I had billed more hours."
– Stephen R. Crislip, Past President of the DTCWV

If you are expecting this article to involve a riveting discussion of legal issues or provide a comprehensive discussion of practice tips, you can stop reading now. The focus of this article will be to suggest that finding some time out of the office to spend with your family or friends or to engage in a hobby or an interest can be a great stress reliever, allow you to recharge your batteries, and make you a more productive attorney.

I actually received the assignment to write this article from Peggy Schulz via email when I was on vacation. My initial thought was that because of the auspicious position and enormous power which I wield as the President of the Past Presidents of the DTCWV, I could surely avoid the assignment and require someone else to write this article. However, in light of the recent indictment of Texas Governor Rick Perry on "abuse of power" allegations, I immediately abandoned this thought and concluded that the safest course of action was to suck it up and write an article.

In my many years as a defense lawyer, I fervently believe that we are extremely dedicated to our profession, our clients, our colleagues, and the practice of law. Because of this dedication, we typically work long and hard hours to protect our clients' interests and to fulfill our ethical responsibilities. While I truly doubt that we can actually achieve the so-called "work-life balance", I do firmly believe that taking some time away from work and enjoying some interests ultimately makes us more content and productive attorneys.

I have always had a wide array of hobbies and interests. About three years ago, I picked up a new hobby, much to my surprise, of shooting clay targets (pigeons) with a shotgun. Several of my colleagues from the infamous and often irreverent Jackson Kelly lunchroom invited me to the grand opening of a new shooting club named West Virginia Clays, Inc., located just outside of Charleston, for a cookout and a tour of the facility. This invitation did not seem to be out of the ordinary, but little did I know that my colleagues were actually heroine-like dealers in disguise. When I arrived, I was immediately loaned a shotgun, shooting glasses and ear protection, a box of shells, and treated to a free round of skeet. Their "first one is always free" approach worked, as I was immediately addicted to the sport. Within a month, I had purchased a Beretta over/under shotgun and all of the necessary equipment, shells, apparel, etc. As my friend, Dave Barnette, always tells me, "The good thing about shooting is that there are always a lot of 'buying opportunities.'"

I now find myself shooting some form of clay targets for a few hours each weekend. While there are many of variations, the three basic disciplines of clay target shooting are trap, skeet, and sporting clays. Typically, trap shooting involves targets which are launched from a single "house" or machine away from the shooter from five different shooting stations. In skeet, the targets are launched from two "houses" or machines in a side to side path and are shot by the shooter from eight different stations. My favorite, known as sporting clays or "golf with a shot gun", involves various stations in which the targets are launched from different directions, speeds, angles, heights, etc. Even when you don't hit every target, you can always find solace in the fact that, as my friend Gary Hart always says, "They all break eventually" (i.e., either from a shotgun blast, hitting the ground, or the normal degradation process).

My biggest claim to fame is that I am the present West Virginia Sporting Clays State Champion – Hunter Class. Before you become too impressed, you should know that the hunter class involves those shooters who are not registered members of the National Sporting Clays Association. As such, I am pretty sure that those who participated in the hunter class were several blind and otherwise disabled individuals and my buddy, Steve Crislip. Nevertheless, this title has allowed me to teasingly give shooting instructions to more experienced shooters because, "As you know, I am the State Champion."

I obviously recognize that this hobby may not be for you. I would urge you, even if you have never shot a gun, to give clay target shooting a chance. Each year, Jackson Kelly holds an outing for our summer law students, most of which have never shot a gun, and they almost unanimously advise us that such outing was the best activity of their summer, hands down. And, so that you know that this is not some good ol' boy event, our female summer law students seem to enjoy the outing the most. Finally, even Santa Claus likes to enjoy a round of skeet at times and who could ask for a better endorsement than that!

Whatever your interest, I would urge you to try to find some time each day, week, or month to take a few hours away from work and enjoy yourself. I know from my experience on those Sunday afternoons when I drive home from the shooting club, I feel relaxed, clear-minded, reinvigorated, and ready to start my week. Enjoy life a little, we all deserve it.

