



JASON TIMOLL '04L AND HIS ASSOCIATES AT SNYDER, WELTCHEK & SNYDER—INCLUDING TOMIKA CHURCH '96L—WON A TOXIC GAS LEAK CASE AGAINST EXXONMOBIL. HE SAID, “IT HAS BEEN AN INCREDIBLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE TO SAY THE LEAST, BUT BEING IN TRIAL FOR FIVE MONTHS WAS ALMOST INHUMANE.”

After graduation, Timoll clerked for both the Hon. Paul A. Smith at the Baltimore City Circuit Court and for the Hon. Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Court of Appeals of the State of Maryland. After that he was an associate for the prestigious firm of Whiteford, Taylor & Preston before joining Snyder, Weltschek & Snyder. Along the way, he evolved a forthright, accessible courtroom style. “I’m not a screamer,” he explained. “I’m a storyteller. I try to extract from my clients that which most truly reflects the human condition.” And when it comes to strategy, even in a case as complex as the ExxonMobil trial, his approach is to “make it simple.” He elaborated, “You can go to a great law school, you can try to show the jury how smart you are, but no one’s really interested in that. You make your best case by telling it like you’re telling a story.”

The Snyder, Weltschek & Snyder narrative obviously convinced the jury gathered in the Towson courthouse that March morning, even if they didn’t quite go for the multi-billion-dollar verdict the plaintiffs’ lawyers sought. For that, the attorneys would have had to prove fraud on the corporation’s part, deliberate intention that’s hard to assert. Exxon is appealing the ruling, claiming in a statement, “We find the amount awarded inconsistent with the verdict in which the jury rejected the punitive damages claims.”

While the victory brought some relief to the plaintiffs, Timoll noted that the case settled another important issue.

It’s gut-wrenching and sad, but eye-opening to hear the cathartic way they told their stories. They described bathing week-old babies in this water, of their homes being devalued, of putting off retirement. One of them said, “If my kid calls me in 15 years and says, ‘I’ve got leukemia,’ I’ll never forgive myself.”

— JASON TIMOLL '04L

most evenings, he strums his six-string, grooves to reggae or singer-songwriter music or chills out with a John Irving or Ken Follett novel. And he pauses to ruminate. “The Exxon case teaches us a few things,” he said. “It’s not that there’s some evil man down in Texas saying ‘Let’s poison people’s water.’ It’s just that in that type of environment, everybody’s job is to maximize profit at almost any cost. It’s built into the culture of corporations such as this. It’s all about the bottom line. And it’s when you lose the personal, the human connection, and when you prioritize money over safety, serious damage can occur.” ♣