



Paralegal at Shernoff, Bidart & Darras Candace McNally

[By Robin Salisian]

Having already received a classical ballet degree from United States International University and a liberal studies degree from Butte College, Candace McNally went back to school for her third. Her original plan was to major in business; however, one legal class later, McNally discovered her new passion for law.

"Initially, I went back to school to develop my business skills and explore new markets to expand my rustic furniture design business. As a part of my business curriculum, I was required to take a business law class, and I was immediately bitten by the 'legal bug,'" she says.

"I spoke to my counselor, found out about the paralegal program, and changed my major to criminal justice," continues McNally. "As I progressed with the program, I couldn't believe what a great fit it was. I was able to meld my creativity, my problem-solving skills, and my love of history into a field of study."

At California State University — San Bernardino, McNally worked hard to not only meet her own high standards but also set a good example for her eldest son, who was off to college in a year. Her efforts paid off. McNally graduated with high honors, a 3.9 GPA, an induction into the National Honor Society, and the Garza Merit Scholarship award.

However, she humbly admits, "Even more rewarding than any of those honors is the fact that now both of my sons are attending UCR and excelling in their studies. I can't help but feel that seeing my hard work and dedication set an example for them to follow."

In other words, making a difference in people's lives is important to McNally. And from the start, she knew that she wanted to be involved in an area of law that would allow her to do that.

"During my senior year I was lucky to be able to do an internship at the San Bernardino Legal Aid Society," says McNally. "With little funding available there wasn't much training, and I was thrown into a 'sink-or-swim' atmosphere. After the initial shock wore off, I knew that I had chosen the right career. I was really making a difference in people's lives and doing my part to ensure that people who didn't have money to pay a private attorney or paralegal were able to have access to our legal system."

For the next six months, she stayed on as a paralegal, working part-time. Then, in

October 2006, McNally joined Shernoff, Bidart & Darras, an insurance bad faith firm, and ever since, she has thrived as a paralegal within the firm. Currently, McNally works with Frank Darras's team.

"In many offices the word 'team' is used to describe a group of people that work together. I am very fortunate to work with a really amazing group of people who truly work as a team."

Regarding Darras, she says, "Frank has built a unique staff of attorneys, paralegals, medical experts, vocational experts, and they are supported by a great administrative staff. He encourages his people to know what everyone else adds to the team, and he stresses the importance of each role in the success of the team."

Shernoff, Bidart & Darras was founded in 1975 by William Shernoff and later joined by Michael Bidart and Frank Darras. According to their site, they are "considered the leading authorities on insurance bad faith law for good reason: [they] invented it."

"Our firm represents clients who have been denied long-term disability insurance benefits," adds McNally. "Many of our clients have lost not only their careers and subsequently their source of livelihood, but they have also lost a large piece of what defined them as an individual when they became disabled and are no longer able to work."

And McNally's passion for others is almost palpable. She admits, "My greatest

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I am very athletic. I played soccer until my knees wouldn't allow it anymore. My husband and I work out regularly and have decided to switch from soccer to biking. One of my coworkers and I are going to walk in the Avon Breast Cancer Walk in September, so I am busy training for that as well.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now, or what music is on your iPod?

A. Collective Soul.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Shape, Prevention, More.*

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *World's Biggest Loser* — I love seeing the transformations!

Q. Who is your role model?

A. My mom. She was an amazingly strong and complex woman.



accomplishment is making a difference, however small, in these people's lives — whether that is writing a brief that is successful in getting their benefits reinstated, being a part of a team effort in preparing the case for a pre-litigation negotiation by issue spotting and diligent research, or just lending a compassionate ear to a lonely client."

"Considering the fact that many of our clients have no source of income without the disability benefits they had counted on, they are sick and oftentimes depressed as a result of their situation," she continues. "I am continually amazed at the resilience of the human spirit. I know that I have done my job and given that person the care, respect, and assistance they deserve when I still get a call or an email after a case has been

resolved just to let me know they are doing okay and that we have helped them to turn things around."

But McNally doesn't only express her joy for aiding others; she also graciously extols those who have helped *her*, particularly the individuals at her current firm.

"I came into this firm with no experience in this area of law, and every member of this team has been extremely patient with my seemingly endless stream of questions. I have been given great guidance and been allowed to take on challenging projects. The support of my colleagues and the strength of my education have allowed me to achieve professional growth and will help me to continue to learn."

With a passion for the law and a passion to help others, it's no wonder that McNally has this piece of advice to offer:

"I would advise anyone just starting a career to find what you are passionate about and make that a part of your professional life."

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