

A Heart to Heart Story

There is a lawyer I know who has one of the most successful practices on the East Coast. He early on became the lawyer of choice for many high tech companies and has ridden that wave of growth for more than 30 years. Deeply involved in politics, he even took a year off to run a presidential campaign. This same man is equally involved in many not-for profit organizations, especially his college.

In talking about his life, two stories stand out. The first is the fact that he was a poor boy from Maine and needed a full scholarship to go to college. After his freshman year, the Registrar told him his scholarship was not going to be renewed, and he almost dropped out. At the last minute, a foundation from Boston came through with enough funds for him to continue. He went on to make Law Review, to a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford, and a very successful career. He has never forgotten how important that help was to him.

The second story grew out of that early success and is even more personal. After a few years of practice, he married and began a family. He worked, as is often the case in high-powered careers, very hard. One night he came home and his wife was clearly upset. To patch things up, he took her out to dinner, and after enough wine, she told him the following.

When I married you, you were the most interesting man I had ever met. You talked about literature, about books, about ideas, about politics, and now you are boring. All you talk

about is the law, even your jokes are about the law. But what bothers me the most is you don't pay any attention to the community where we live, you are not involved, you expect others to do your share.

It was all that he needed to hear and it convinced him to alter his life. After many years, the lawyer has concluded that his extensive, sometimes overly time-consuming, political and community work has been in fact what has made him successful in his work. Not as a way of getting business or making contacts, but as a way of staying fresh, keeping relevant, of revitalizing his energy, of maintaining his own *self-respect*, of satisfying his yearning to be a good person, and providing a release for his imagination.