

M. Stacey Bach

BACH DRAWN TO LAW TO SERVE OTHERS



Although M. Stacey Bach, Esq. '97 and Todd West were married in October 2009 in Washington, D.C., the wedding had a distinct Scranton connection. Rev. Ronald McKinney, S.J., Bach's philosophy professor at the University, officiated the nuptials.

From the beginning, when her attraction to the law first developed, M. Stacey Bach, Esq. '97 was clear about the discipline's link to the firmly rooted Ignatian call to be a person for others.

"I was drawn to the law because it is, at its core, a service industry," says Bach, an attorney-adviser in the Office of the Legal Adviser at the U.S. Department of State. "Being able to help any client who calls is very satisfying to me. I take my advice-and-counsel role very seriously."

Bach, a thoughtful woman, clearly has reflected often and deeply on her vocation. Her role at the State Department, where she serves as in-house counsel on labor and employment issues, reflects that outlook and is the latest stop in a very natural career progression.

After graduating from Scranton with a double major in political science and philosophy, she earned her J.D. from the Villanova University School of Law and completed a one-year federal appellate clerkship with the Fourth Circuit. A stint in private practice with a Washington, D.C., firm followed, and then she shifted into government work. Bach started at the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education; from there it was on to the U.S. Senate as in-house counsel for five years. She

then joined the State Department last fall.

"When I started thinking about a career, I was interested in working in a service industry and working with people, but I wanted a career that would provide me with new and constant challenges and the ability to effect change on a broader level," Bach says. "Law provides that opportunity."

Furthermore, Bach notes, her federal government role allows her to take on more responsibilities than she would have in the private sector.

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"Working in an in-house role and also as a litigator really allows you to effect the types of changes that drew me to the law," she says. "You're ensuring compliance and you're educating people about their legal rights and responsibilities."

Bach credits her time at Scranton as pivotal in preparing her for working in law. In particular, she cites her participation in the Special Jesuit Liberal Arts (SJLA) program as providing "the

fundamental skills I use every day: the ability to analyze critically, to communicate effectively, and to advocate for your position while taking into account various viewpoints."

It's no wonder then that she sees herself as "an advocate for the University," someone who makes herself available when the call for help goes out. Just last year, Bach arranged a tour of the Capitol for a group of Scranton business students who were in Washington, D.C.

Given the obvious influence Scranton has had on her life and career, it's no surprise that at Bach's wedding last October, her college roommate served as an attendant, and Gretchen Van Dyke, Ph.D., associate professor of political science, was in attendance. In addition, Rev. Ronald H. McKinney, S.J., professor of philosophy, who headed SJLA during Bach's time at Scranton, was the celebrant at her wedding mass.

"My four years at Scranton were really formative," she says. "Some of my best friendships were developed there, and Scranton's education provided me with the skill set I needed to succeed in law school and throughout my legal career. I'm very grateful for my time at Scranton." ❧