

THE DAILY RECORD

MARYLAND'S BUSINESS & LEGAL NEWS SINCE 1888

Steven VanGrack

Steven VanGrack's pursuit for legal excellence runs in his family, something that makes him very proud, as well as hopeful about the future of the profession.

"My three sons are all committed to the pursuit of legal excellence and the role of public service," he said.

VanGrack began his own legal career while still in law school, interning at the U.S. Department of Justice. When he graduated in 1974 with his J.D. from the University of Maryland, he clerked for the Hon. Joseph M. Mathias at the Circuit Court for Montgomery County before becoming a successful trial attorney in private law firms.

Since 1980, he has been practicing at VanGrack, Axelson, Williamowsky, Bender & Fishman P.C., where he is now partner.

He also has been an active participant in local, county and state government, including serving as the mayor of Rockville from 1985 to 1987.

VanGrack is quick to point out that while he was mayor, his city was "one of the first to distribute the Surgeon General's Report on AIDS to every household; we developed an award-winning "Say No to Drugs" campaign; we implemented major election reform, and I made a dramatic increase in the appointment of many Afro-Americans and gays and other minorities to boards and commissions," he said.

He has shown the same kind of initiative and dedication to bettering the legal profession. VanGrack works to improve the quality of continuing legal education programs and publications and to encourage greater lawyer participation by giving his time to the Bar Association of Montgomery County and the Maryland Institute for the Continuing Professional Education of Lawyers.

"This serves to improve the quality of legal services, which benefits the lawyers and the individuals or organizations we represent," he said.

Additionally, VanGrack now is serving his second term as president of MICPEL, where he "has been an outspoken advocate of the need for a continuing legal education requirement for all Maryland lawyers," said Brenton Burry, the institute's executive director.

"Steve's belief in the benefit to all lawyers of regular participation in training/mentoring programs — not only on substantive and procedural law, but on the rules of ethics and the principles of civility and professionalism — reflects his personal commitment to excellence in his own practice," said Burry.

Besides the hundreds of billable hours he logs at his firm each year and the time he dedicates to professional boards and committees, VanGrack still finds time to commit to providing *pro bono* legal services.

"I do *pro bono* because it makes a difference in the lives of others and because it makes a difference in my life," he said. "I love being a lawyer."

After Sept. 11, 2001, VanGrack served as counsel to the families of victims of the terrorist attacks. "We all remember where we were on Sept. 11, and our lives will never be the same. This applies even more so to the families of those whose loved ones are forever lost," he said.

In addition to doing *pro bono*, VanGrack gives to the community by devoting time to causes such as the Montgomery County March of Dimes Walk America, where he has served for the past six years, and the Maryland Real Estate Commission, where he has been a commissioner since 1999 and chair since 2001.

VanGrack enjoys exercising; scuba diving;



PROFILE

Name: Steven VanGrack

Organization: VanGrack, Axelson, Williamowsky, Bender & Fishman P.C.

Law School: University of Maryland School of Law

Region: Suburban

County: Montgomery



ing; and collecting old political buttons, autographed books, baseballs and legal figurines.

— Haamid M. Ali
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