

Peggy Smith Bush

Positivity Matters: In Business, In Law, In Life



Peggy Smith Bush (2002) has a perpetually positive outlook that serves as a guiding compass in her law practice, in her professional activities and in her personal life – which now includes the recent addition of newborn twin sons into the daily experiences she shares with her husband of 32 years.

“I am incredibly blessed,” says Bush, a founder and current managing partner of Southern Trial Counsel, PLC in Orlando. “Having practiced law for 15 years, and having worked in and for businesses for over 30 years, I now have the flexibility and support to continue to run a successful practice and business while enjoying this very exciting new adventure with our twins!”

Bush and her husband feel a deep appreciation for having children at this moment in time. “I was prepared for the long nights from being a trial lawyer, but I wasn’t so prepared for how much fun babies are,” she says with a laugh. “Although our pediatrician calls us ‘non-traditionally-aged parents’ we feel it’s the perfect time in our lives!”

Bush learned such qualities of optimism and positivity from her parents while growing up in Alabama. “Mama was a quilter,” Bush says. “And I remember when I was unhappy she would encourage me to be positive; telling me that life is like quilting – you really can’t see how it will turn out until the pattern is finished.”

Bush says her parents, who each had a sixth grade education, also taught her the value of hard work and instilled the quality of gratitude in her. “So I look at everything – good or bad – with gratefulness for the good and finding opportunities in the challenges,” she says.

And, Bush recalls, “some of the best advice I ever received was from a friend who taught me the importance of being optimistic, and remembering that going into difficult situations with a positive attitude is not naïve or a weakness – it is the backbone of leadership and confidence.”

“So now,” Bush says with motherly pride, “I look forward to sharing these things with my own boys as they grow up.”

Bush also has deployed her trademark qualities at Southern Trial Counsel. “I believe it is important to foster a positive, collegial and professional relationship with everyone,” she says, “whether it is the client, opposing counsel, opposing counsel’s receptionist, or the court deputy.”

Additionally, Bush acknowledges that she enjoys the business aspect of running a law firm as much as the practice of law itself. Perhaps because she spent years in the business world prior to beginning a legal career.



“My path to law school didn’t include legal experience, and law was not my first career,” says Bush. After earning a B.S. in Marketing from the University of North Alabama in the 1980’s, she set out on a career in the advertising departments of several Alabama television and radio stations before earning licenses to work in a stock brokerage for several years. Then, the idea of a legal career began evolving. “I had developed an interest in law, thanks to my brother who was an attorney,” she recalls. “He would always talk about the law being such a noble profession, and over the years my interest melded into a decision – yes, law is something I want to do.”

With her family relocating to Orlando at that time, Bush’s focus turned to Barry Law School. “When I was selecting law schools, I considered those in my home state of Alabama and various other locations in the

southeastern United States,” she says. “But I chose to attend Barry because it gave me an opportunity to obtain my legal degree close to family.”

As a Barry student, Bush jumped right in, determined to make her experience as positive as possible. She became an active member in the Student Trial Advocacy Team, was graded onto Moot Court and won the First Year Oral Advocacy Award. She was a founding member of Law Review and served two terms as Managing Editor of Law Review. Additionally, she was selected Outstanding Female Student by the faculty. “I learned skills from each of these activities that I have built on throughout my career,” she says. “I certainly received an excellent legal education at Barry and developed lifelong personal and professional relationships.”

After graduating in 2002 and passing the bar, Bush practiced at a mid-size defense firm before deciding in 2010 to co-found Southern Trial Counsel. Today, she practices with her brother and her niece – another Barry alumna – at the firm, which represents corporations and businesses in litigation and trial-related matters. “Some of my cases involve complex business issues and others involve defending minor personal injury claims; but all are for businesses,” says Bush. She has defended cases at trial involving personal injury and claims of wrongful death, and has spent much of her legal career defending cases involving catastrophic injury and property damage cases involving alleged product design and manufacturing defect claims.

Bush has earned numerous accomplishments in her legal career, including selection as a Rising Star for three consecutive years by Florida Super Lawyers, induction into the invitation-only International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC) and selection as a Florida Legal Elite. Bush is also a member of the Florida Bar’s Senior Lawyer Committee, the Animal Law Section of the Florida Bar, the IADC In-House and Law Firm Management Committee, the Central Florida Association for Women Lawyers, the Florida Association for Women Lawyers and the Transportation Lawyers Association where she serves as Chair of the Diversity Sub-Committee. Additionally, she is a Barrister member of the George C. Young Inn of Court and for most of her career has been an active member in the Women In Products Liability Subcommittee of the ABA Section of Litigation. “I credit those more senior women attorneys who helped me along the way,” says Bush, “and I strongly encourage all young attorneys to find mentors and sponsors as they begin their careers.”

Another important achievement occurred in 2014 when Bush was sworn in to practice in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, *en banc*. “It was one of the most incredible moments of my life,” she says. “To see the justices in person and to stand in those halls was very reverent, very beautiful. I will treasure that experience always.”

Bush also feels great affinity for social justice efforts. “I am honored and proud to be part of a profession intrinsically grounded in working toward social justice,” she says. “Rather than limiting efforts to a specific cause, I prefer to look at it as an overall commitment to making our community and our world a little bit better.” Bush has put that commitment into practice by participating in numerous service activities – ranging from literacy programs, food / clothing drives, diversity efforts and mentoring programs to disaster relief efforts, domestic violence shelter support and serving the homeless, senior citizens and first responders.

In the legal arena, she has volunteered to coach trial teams, judge moot court and trial team competitions, filled in for attorneys who needed help, and offered advice and counsel to young attorneys.

And Bush has served as a national and regional panelist / speaker / moderator on various issues, including food law defense, federal guideline issues, marketing for intermediate level attorneys, discovery and document production, professionalism and diversity.



Now, Bush and her husband – who last year juggled his full-time career with earning a Master’s in Software Engineering from Penn State – are finding their new lives as parents to be even busier with activity. And even more rewarding.

“I am blessed by so many things that are important in life,” Bush reflects, “so it’s important to prioritize, and wake up every morning and look at challenges as opportunities and something you can succeed at.”

Successfully prioritizing such qualities as optimism and positivity certainly seems likely to remain a part of the mix for Peggy Smith Bush – and in the life of her growing family.