

PERSONAL TRAGEDY INSPIRES LYNN PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEY

BY THOR JOURGENSEN | July 13, 2018



Lynn attorney Michael Mahoney. (Spenser R. Hasak)

LYNN — Michael F. Mahoney lives life on two wheels, and don't think for a second there is any place in the world where he is afraid to roll.

He has visited all but four Major League Baseball parks with son Paul. He will add Eastern Europe and Russia in late summer and fall to an extensive list of travel destinations and he is more than willing to roll into a courtroom on behalf of the clients he represents.

Monday is the 38th anniversary of the diving accident that left Mahoney, a Somerville native who spent most of his life in Lynn, paralyzed from the shoulders down at the age of 21. Forced to relearn tasks most people take for granted like getting dressed and driving, he relied on close friends to help him get through despair, pain and frustration.

"My buddies from the Mystic Avenue projects in Somerville would come over and watch the Celtics with me. It was the camaraderie that got me through," he said.

Today, Mahoney is a father of four and 22-year veteran attorney who works in a Seaport Landing office with a view of Lynn Harbor and teaches litigation skills at Boston College. Baltimore attorney Rachel Mech took his class and remembers resisting the urge to skip it on cold February nights when she wanted to stay home.

"It was the fact that he was there every week. Mike is really an inspiration. You felt that every time you were in his class," Mech said.

Law was not a calling for Mahoney. He often found himself in trouble, undirected and unsettled as a kid. He stopped drinking when he was 20, earned a general equivalency certificate and enrolled in North Shore Community College.

His Lynn Shore Drive diving accident left Mahoney hospitalized for months. Rebuilding his life led him to disc jockeying under the name, "Dancing with Mr. M." DJing filled up his evenings but left him with time on his hands during the day.

He enrolled in Salem State College and when a Salem professor urged him to apply to Boston University's master's degree program in communication, Mahoney accepted the challenge. But earning a master's didn't fill a void inside him.

"I would drive down the street asking myself, 'Why don't I have a passion?'" he said.

He bounced that question off his uncle and mentor, and the no-nonsense confidante came back with a straight-talking answer. He urged Mahoney to try the law and Mahoney applied to Boston College Law School.

"I knew the minute I was there that this is what I wanted to do," he said.

Mahoney's law office website features a photo of Lynn Harbor crowded with boats and a long list of cases he has won with multi-million settlements and verdicts. His first big personal injury case centered around a Winthrop teenager struck by a car. Mahoney won the case and continued working with his client to structure the sum awarded by the court so that it would meet the teen's long-term financial needs.

"I saw a way to get people out of a terrible situation," he said.

Mahoney's legal expertise and experience with paralysis helped Tom Simpson of Lynn rebuild his life following a catastrophic fall in 2010.

"I went from being a young guy with a job and spending time umpiring to someone who basically was not able to move. Knowing all he went through was a real inspiration," said Simpson.

Living "paycheck to paycheck" at the time of the fall, Simpson said the award Mahoney secured for him and his family helped convert their home into an accessible, liveable residence.

Mahoney said his legal strategy is to get a trial date for his cases and get the attention of insurance company attorneys. Slap him with the "ambulance chaser" label and he takes the slight head on.

"An ambulance chaser takes the quick easy money. We litigate 90 percent of our cases," he said.

He said he picks lawyers to work with him who don't look down on clients and who bring a "good work ethic and character" to the job.

"We're blue collar lawyers in a blue collar city," he said.

Between practicing law, teaching, traveling and spending time with wife, Edina, and children Paul, Michael, Joseph and Lilyen, Mahoney said he has a busy life that won't include retirement any time soon.

"I'm having too much fun," he said.