

DAILY BUSINESS REVIEW

PROFILES IN LAW

How a TV Binge Led Litigator Lawrence Kellogg Down the Most Successful of Rabbit Holes

by Raychel Lean

As a teenage theater major in 1970s Illinois, Lawrence A. Kellogg didn't realize he'd make a good lawyer until he caught an epic legal drama on the small screen one day.

"It was a riveting, must-see TV scandal," Kellogg said. "I got sucked in."

But it wasn't fiction. Five men had broken into the Democratic National Committee headquarters at Republican President Richard Nixon's request, and a string of televised hearings ensued.

LAWRENCE A. KELLOGG

Born: October 1955, Hinsdale, Illinois

Spouse: Catherine A. Roth

Children: Jason Kellogg, Sandra Rath, Laura Kellogg, William Kellogg, Benjamin Kellogg

Education: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus, B.A., 1977; Florida State University College of Law, J.D., 1981

Experience: Founding partner, Levine Kellogg Lehman Schneider + Grossman, 2010-present; Founding partner, Tew Cardenas, 1990-2010; Partner, Tew Jordan & Schulte, 1988-1990; Partner and associate, Finley Kumble Wagner Heine Underberg Manley Myerson & Casey, 1983-1988; Associate, Mershon Sawyer Johnston Dunwoody & Cole, 1981-1983; Law clerk, Akerman Senterfitt & Eidson, 1979-1981.



"Every trial I'm in is a little drama or a comedy, where I can be the writer, actor, director, producer, up to a point," said Lawrence A. Kellogg. "It's a little world that happens for a finite period of time."

Kellogg, who worked nights at the time, spent his days enthralled by the Watergate scandal, and the testimony, espionage, cover-up and political implications that came with it.

"At one point I just realized that everybody involved in this Congressional hearing, every witness, everybody questioning, everybody around was a lawyer," Kellogg said. "And there were some good lawyers, there were some bad law-

yers. There were good guys and bad guys in this story."

Kellogg noticed how the lawyers could take what seemed like clear law, then twist, spin and interpret it until it grew into something else.

"When people think of law, they think of old law books, things written in stone like the Ten Commandments on a tablet," he said. "But in reality, it's society's way of trying to deal with conflict. And the laws are living, breathing

things, and people are living, breathing things.”

From then on, the idea of lawyering fascinated Kellogg, who'd been trained in theatrics. He'd planned on being an actor and playwright — ideally, a funny one — but it turned out the stage and the courtroom weren't all that different.

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ROOTING FOR AVERAGE JOE AND JANE

But the road to law school wasn't a clear shot for Kellogg, the first in his family to go to college. He'd married at 19, worked full-time and had a newborn son to look after.

“It wasn't expensive in today's world but in my world it was very expensive — the thought of moving to Florida, going through law school and to continue to support my son and my family,” Kellogg said. “There were times when I was like, ‘All right, I have enough gas to get through Wednesday, but I also need food for the baby, and what about that electric bill?’”

Many long nights, a clerkship, a teaching gig, multiple odd jobs and a few babies later, Kellogg managed to pay his way through Florida State University and graduate. One of those babies eventually became his law partner, Jason Kellogg, after going to the same law school.

As a parent getting reacquainted with his old college, Kellogg had a brain wave.

“I decided to create a scholarship for people like me who could've used it,” he said. “Why? Because that school gave me an opportunity that really made a big difference in my life and in my family.”

FSU's Kellogg Family Endowed Scholarship isn't an academic scholarship. Instead, it gives cash to students who need it — whether it's for the electric bill, groceries or gas. Often, it's women with kids returning to school after a divorce, or men trying to improve their career prospects while supporting a family, Kellogg said.

“I just felt like there are plenty of scholarships for people who are at the top of their class, and plenty for the affirmative action,” Kellogg said. “I just wanted it for the average Joe or Jane who needs some practical help while they're trying to better themselves and their families.”

Kellogg — a partner at Levine, Kellogg, Lehman, Schneider + Grossman in Miami — specializes in litigating a variety of civil fields, including securities, fraud, employment law, contracts and class actions.

He's worked on the Bernie Madoff fraud case, stemming from the biggest Ponzi scheme in global history, recovering a settlement of about \$15 million after filing a class action for investors against a Swiss bank.

“The loss was a little more than that, but that's what settlement is, and we got their money back fairly quickly,” Kellogg said.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

Kellogg also represented various widows of NFL football team owners. One of them, involving the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, became a huge fight, as the owner had cut his wife out of his estate plan before he died.

According to Kellogg, that case was a huge draw for Tampa media — taking precedent over O.J. Simpson's televised civil trial.

“I'm just getting ready the day before the trial starts and I'm watching TV, and the news organization is conducting a poll on whether my client should win the case,” Kellogg

said. “Should she get her money?” and the poll was overwhelming, she should get her money.”

In 2018, Kellogg and his son brought a class action lawsuit against investment management company Merrill Lynch over claims it charged small businesses fees for retirement plans when it shouldn't have.

His team landed a \$25 million settlement — almost three times the amount of the plaintiff's losses.

“How do you ever get more than 100 percent? Because not only was it the money they took, it's what did they earn, what did they do with that money?” Kellogg said. “They invested it here and there, and they made money on it.”

His practice involves complicated cases, but that's why Kellogg likes them.

“You have to be able to take complex subjects and turn them into something understandable for the common person, who's serving as a juror, or for a judge for that matter,” he said.

It comes in handy to be a theater major at this point, according to Kellogg, who finds he can't persuade anybody to agree with something unless he can understand it enough to make it entertaining, even humorous.

“Can you imagine if one day you're sitting in class and the next day you get a notice to serve on a jury and you're thinking, ‘Oh, maybe it's a murder case,’ and you come in and it's six weeks of financial transactions and professional malpractice involving complicated subjects?” he said.

Kellogg's best advice: “Try to make sure that you're watching the jury to see if they've fallen asleep, and give them a break when they need it.”

Raychel Lean reports on South Florida litigation for the Daily Business Review. Send an email to rlean@alm.com, or follow her on Twitter via [@raychellean](https://twitter.com/raychellean).