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Backgrounder

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Vancouver lawyers recognized: Bruce Clokie, Art Demeulemeester, and Phil Rankin

Bruce Clokie started his career as a lawyer in 1988 at the old Vancouver Stock Exchange, policing brokers and listing public companies. He shifted his career focus to family law in 1993, when he opened his own practice to take advantage of his passion and expertise in psychology.

Since then, Bruce has practiced family and child protection law, and devoted much of his career to serving the needs of legal aid clients. He has accepted almost 500 child protection cases and over 450 family cases from LSS since January 2000. He is known to our intake staff for his experience and the fact that he gets results for his clients. He also practices as a family law mediator and collaborative law lawyer.

Bruce has given a variety of legal presentations and has been on a number of expert professional panels regarding child protection and family law through Continuing Legal Education, the Trial Lawyers Association, and UBC Law School. Topics have included the expanding use of mediation and collaboration in child protection law. An advocate for both mediation and collaboration, Bruce has also addressed the annual Provincial Court Judges' Conference on the evolving collaborative approach in case conferences used to settle child protection cases. He was raised in Vancouver and is a graduate of UBC, where he completed his BA with a psychology major, and his law degree. He is the proud father of three young children who live with him and his wife Lisa in West Vancouver.

Art Demeulemeester has been a sole practitioner, sharing premises with other lawyers and practicing exclusively in criminal law, ever since he was called to the BC Bar in 1971. The bulk of his practice is at the Provincial Court level; however he has represented many clients in Supreme Court on a range of cases, including murder, and also at the Court of Appeal.

He volunteered with Judge McGivern's UBC Criminal Clinic for 17 years, from 1989 to 2005, an experience which he greatly enjoyed. He also enjoys acting as a mock court judge once a year with the Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC). Since January 2000, Art has accepted 826 criminal cases from LSS. He is known by our intake staff for his thoughtful and kind attention to his clients.

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Art and his family emigrated to Montreal in 1951. From 1960 to 1964, he attended McGill University under the Regular Officer Training Plan Canadian Army and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1964. He served in the Canadian Army in New Brunswick from 1964 to 1967, and then attended the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Law School.

He married in 1970, during his final year at UNB. Later that year, Art and his wife moved to Vancouver, where he articulated with Cowan & Company. Both of Art's children are UBC Law graduates; his daughter is a family law lawyer and his son is a teacher at VCC.

These days you will find Art at the Main Street court four days a week because he spends one day a week babysitting his 20 month old grandson — “which is real work.”

Phil Rankin says he resists bios and resumes, as they remind him of “how parochial my life has been, how little I do, and how long I have been doing it.”

Phil was called to the bar in May 1979, bought the law practice owned by Ken Scherling (later Judge Scherling) on the mezzanine of the Ford Building — and opened up his law firm the same day. He originally practiced as a partner with Paul McMurray and Dave Stone. In 1980, he moved to the 2nd floor of the original legal aid offices on Alexander Street.

He has a general law practice, concentrating on criminal and immigration law, but does some civil litigation and some administrative law, including judicial reviews. Lately he has been doing police complaints and some general areas of police law. Since January, 2000 Phil has accepted almost 600 criminal cases and almost 100 immigration cases from LSS. He is known for speaking his mind fearlessly — a quality he brings to the representation of his clients, but always in a professional manner.

Phil was a Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE) school trustee in Vancouver from 1979 to 1988. He has been a member, and is a former president, of the Vancouver Refugee Council; is a past member of the national executive of the Canadian Council for Refugees; and has been an active member of the BC Immigration Section of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) since 1979. Phil has also been a member of the Vancouver Criminal Section of the CBA and, from time to time, a faculty member for Continuing Legal Education's (CLE) criminal and immigration law courses.

He has three children and two grandchildren and practices law with his wife, Ellen Bond. He grew up in the Commercial Drive area of Vancouver and still lives there. Phil has been a habitué of Main and Hastings all his life, as his father practiced law in the Ford Building.

Phil graduated from SFU in 1974 with a BA in Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology, with honours in political science and a minor in history. He attended law school at the University of Victoria from 1975 to 1978, and did summer articles with the Surrey legal aid office.