



Peter D. MacDonald, Esq.

Call me Pete. Oh sure, Peter D. MacDonald, Esquire sounds more learned and powerful, but I live in a political world, not a legal world. The big dogs in my world fancy themselves as humble servants of the people, and when they live up to that, its great. At a Planning Commission meeting, a good joke can be worth more than a Supreme Court opinion. And yet, with a few more IQ points, or a little stronger work ethic, I could have been a Partner in a Law Firm, or even a Judge.

But, my world is far more exciting, and possibly even more rewarding, financially and otherwise- at least until their retirements kick in. Such is the economics of solo practice that you get to keep what you earn, or to be accurate, more of what you earn, and you get to laugh more too.

I always knew I was headed for a shingle on Main Street, since when I glimpsed my old man's stylish sign on Main Street in Glendive, Montana with a metal silhouette of a dentist leaning over a patient. Dad made the joys of running your own life and practice evident, but the joys of dentistry were not quite so enticing.

Mom was the town Librarian, though not so quiet and unassuming as that vocation is unfairly reputed to be. She ran for and won a seat on the City Council, and gave those republicans (other than her husband) the old whatfor, while voting for higher taxes at every opportunity. She wrote books, like After Barbed Wire, and Glendive, History of a Montana Town, that are hidden masterpieces of Western History.

Mom marveled at how wonderful her six children were, and even Dad was a little surprised. Just like Lake Wobegone, my sibling clan were all above average, and frankly a bit too achievement oriented for my taste, because I was more comfortable stopping to smell the flowers, and hanging out in my cave in the badlands reading books, usually adventure books.

School came easy, leading to a B.A. in Economics With Honors from the University of Montana in 1969. Kathleen Bourke and I married in 1969, and settled into a quaint little quonset hut in Polo Village, a married student suburb of the University of Arizona. Kathleen graduated and became a successful journalist for the Tucson Daily Citizen, and Arizona Daily Star. We continued on with me as a student and Kathleen with a good job for a few more years, (which got us the cheap rent of the married student huts and let us stay around friends we loved, and still do). I finished my Masters in Urban Planning, and then ploughed straight into law school at the University of Arizona, finally ending my student years in 1975 at age 29.

I wanted to be a planner who happened to have a law degree, and actually landed my first job out of law school in the City of Salinas Planning Department. After a couple years in which I updated many of the planning ordinances, the Planning Director, City Attorney, and I agreed that the planners needed someone in the City Attorney's office who understood them, to approve their schemes, rather than lobby the City Attorney for approval.

As a side benefit, I got to be the City Attorney of Gonzales, which Salinas handled by contract, and learned the ups and downs of working for five politicians. I learned that part of the City Attorney's job is to be adroitly apolitical, helping each of the Council members to plot their next initiative.

While in Salinas, our son Bourke was born in 1977 and our son Evan was born in 1981, Kathleen worked for the Salinas Californian, parlaying a two day a week part time job into promotions to Wire Editor Saturday morning, and Assistant City Editor Monday morning, by the time we left.

In 1982, at the tender age of 36, I was hired as City Attorney for the City of Pleasanton, which needed a land use attorney, because Pleasanton was using land at a ferocious rate in the 1980's, and they needed it to be well planned. In the first couple years there were multiple environmental lawsuits, but after we got our processes buttoned down, there were hardly any environmental lawsuits, and we won those.

In 1988 I entered private practice, as a land use attorney, and in 1989 moved to my current location at 400 Main Street, Pleasanton, with a shingle sign on Main Street. Kathleen became an English teacher at Dublin High School, who loves what she does, and has school stories just as riveting as my client stories. The kids grew up - a young urban professional and a searcher for his destiny. Both sons live in Campbell and both stay in touch.

My practice is challenging every day; my clients are precious people; and my work is almost always fun. I have diversified into land development, having recently processed my own 60 unit apartment project to approval in Tracy. I enjoyed the liberation from the billable hour. I do like the idea of taking it gradually easier over the next five years.

