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DI BELLA TO THE FOURTH POWER

By Hollie Gantzer

Frank Di Bella didn't know what he was starting when he graduated from DePaul University College of Law in 1973.

But 30 years later, when all three of his children decided to attend law school simultaneously, he realized he'd been the first in what was to become a family tradition. "I wish I could say I orchestrated the whole thing," the eldest Di Bella said of his children's law school careers, "unfortunately, I did not." Joe, 29, is an evening student, while Mike, 25, and Gina, 24, are both second-year, full-time day students.

While the two youngest Di Bellas were still undergraduates, the three siblings made a pact to attend law school together. Joe worked as a certified paralegal for Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom while he waited for his brother and sister to finish their bachelor's degrees. Later, Mike earned his degree and worked as a paralegal for Susan E. Loggans ('74) waiting for the final member of the team to finish her degree. Upon Gina's completion, the trio decided that they would attend DePaul. Frank credits a positive meeting with DePaul law admissions director, Dennis Shea, as the final deciding factor. "After talking to Denny Shea, they said 'We've got to go to DePaul.'"

Frank saw his children's passion for law while they were still in high school. They all enjoyed assisting their father with his cases and gained valuable experience that helped lead them to their decision to attend law school. After graduating, all three Di Bella siblings hope to work for top-notch law firms. But this doesn't mean a family firm is out of the question. For now, Frank finds the experience and education his children are gaining to be most important and knows the foursome will regroup later. As for a name for this future family firm, Frank laughingly commented, "Di Bella, Di Bella, Di Bella, & Di Bella, seems repetitive, so maybe Di Bella⁴."



The Di Bella Family, pictured from left to right: Mike, Gina, Frank and Joe.

While their areas of expertise vary, Frank notes that an interest in litigation is shared by all three of his children. "They enjoy the courtroom the best and love the idea of trying cases," he says of his children. The Di Bella clan doesn't always share the same opinions, however. The discussions during the family's weekly Sunday brunches, for example, can get interesting. "It's unbelievable what conversations take place," Frank explained with a laugh. "We're not always going to agree."

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Di Bella is impressed with how much his children have matured and the amount they've learned while attending DePaul. More often than not, he feels that he is learning from his kids rather than the other way around. "They all have laptops and are on the cutting edge of everything," Di Bella said. "Now I'm the one saying, 'Could somebody give me the rule [for a certain case], and in a minute, they've got everything.'" Despite the change in roles, the elder Di Bella's pride hasn't been hurt. "I have a lot to offer them, and they have even more to offer me." **d**