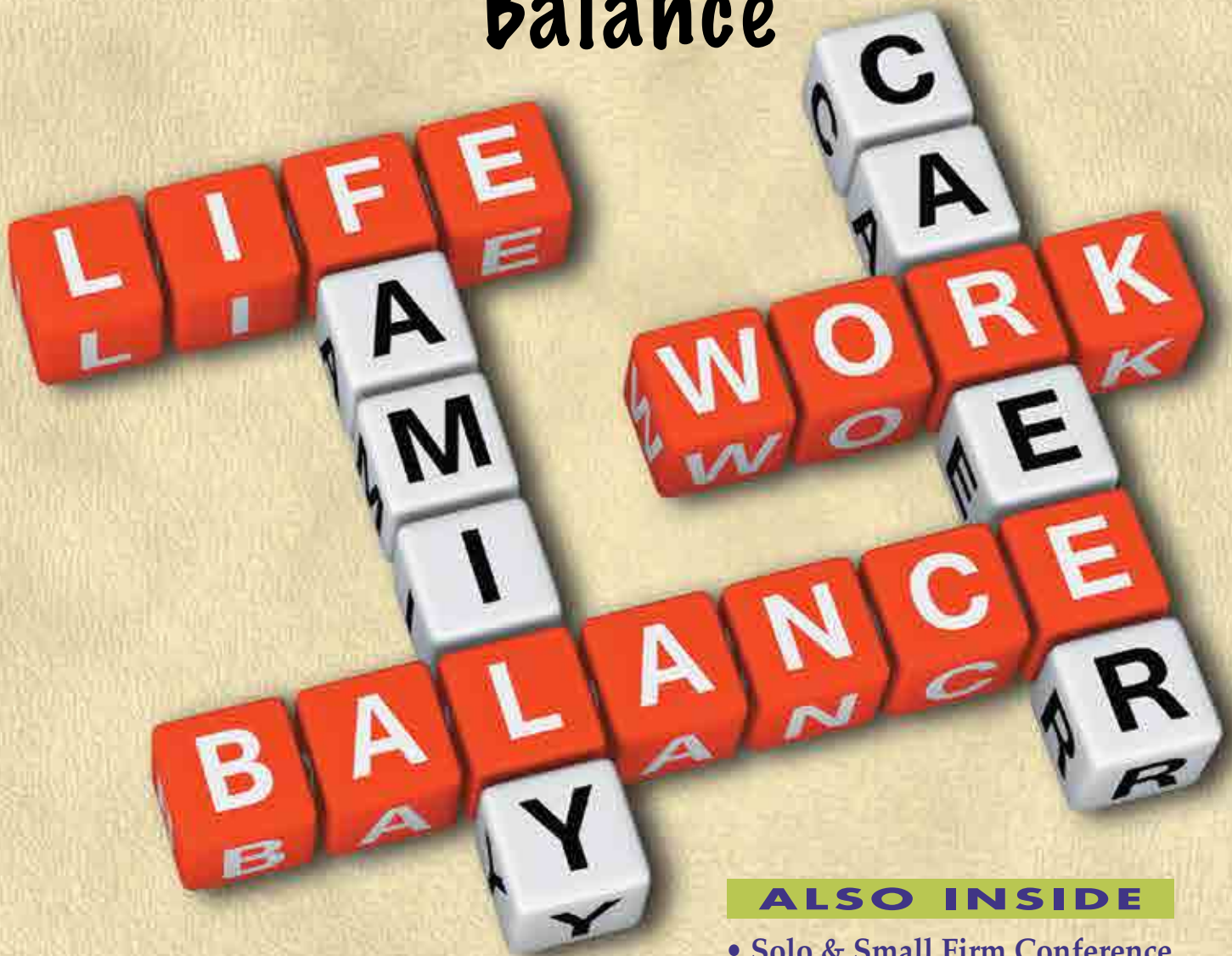


# W E T H O K L A H O M A B A R J O U R N A L

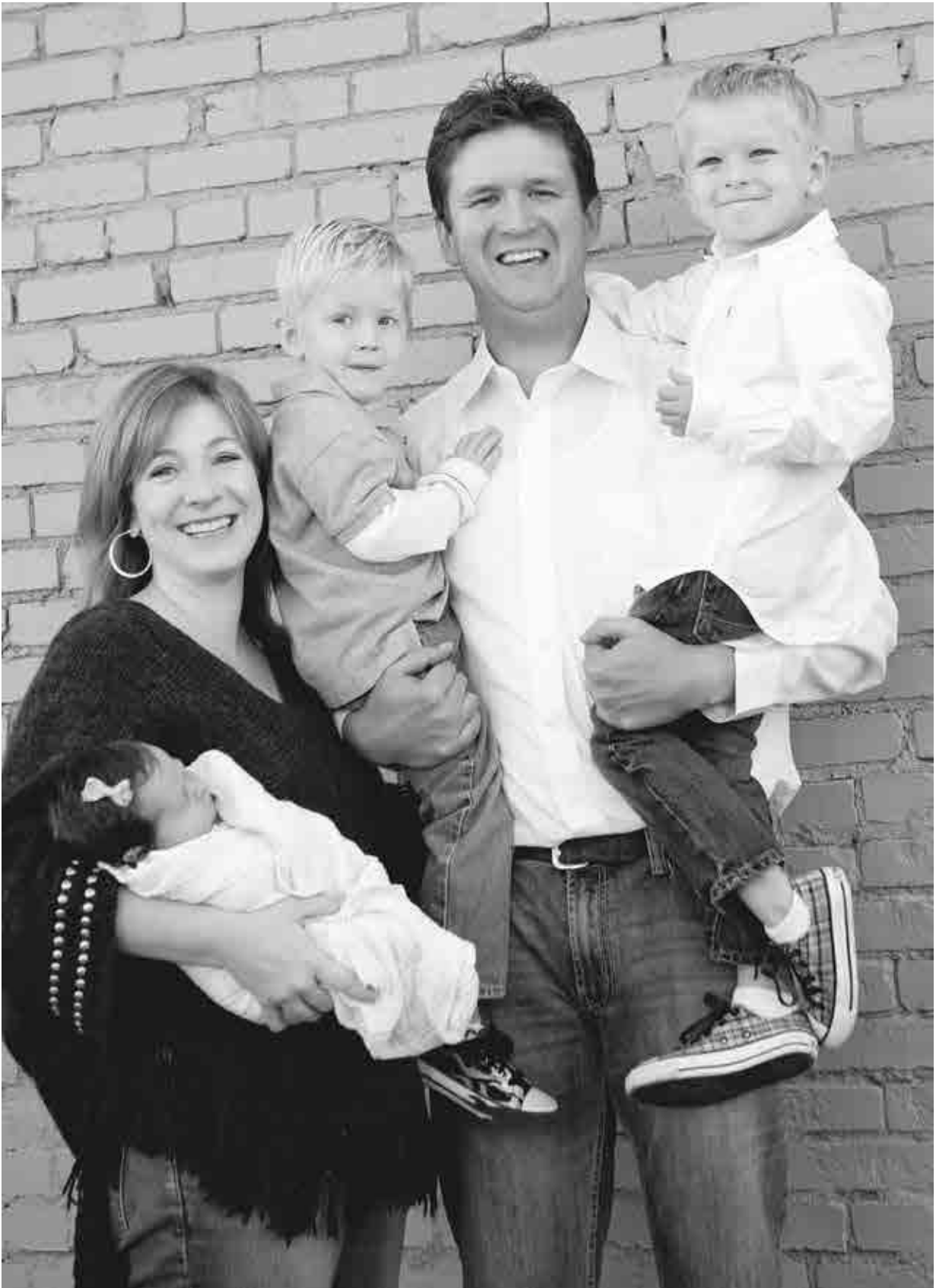
Oklahoma Bar  
**JOURNAL**  
Volume 83 ♦ No. 8 ♦ March 10, 2012

## Work/Life Balance



### ALSO INSIDE

- Solo & Small Firm Conference
- OBA Legislative Monitoring Committee Report
- OBA Day at the Capitol



*Author Luke Adams and his family. Photo taken by Goodlight Photography*

# Work/Life ‘Balance’ – No Such Thing

By Luke Adams

**W**ork/Life Balance. The very phrase implies that one can expect to spend an equal amount of time with your family and at work on any given day. In my experience this is never the case. Some days you get dressed in the dark, leave before your spouse and kids wake and do not return until they are fast asleep. Other days you get up with your family, feed them breakfast, take the kids to school and return in time in the evening to play Optimus Prime vs. Megatron or Hulk vs. Wolverine and get some face time with your baby. You might even get to enjoy your favorite libation with your significant other — after the kids are all asleep. Both days are rewarding and both days, for me, are riddled with guilt. The question is not how you balance these aspects of your life because imbalance is inevitable. The question is how does one deal with the guilt and accompanying stress of this not-so-routine existence.

I am an associate with a private firm in western Oklahoma. I am happily married with three kids: two boys ages 5 and 3 and one 4-month-old girl. I have been practicing law for a little over six years and have come to realize that, in my situation, there is no such thing as balance or routine. (For me this is not a bad thing. When people ask if I enjoy practicing law I always say, “Yes, because I do something different every day.” Grandiose? No, but true). My constant struggle is the aforementioned guilt. For example, on a recent Friday afternoon my wife asked me to come home for lunch because our middle child was not doing what he was told, which is often the case. He is the middle child in every

sense of the word. When I walked in he was sitting on the stairs (time-out) looking like someone had just destroyed Optimus. See *Transformers*. When I asked him what was wrong he looked at me and said, “I want to hold you.” So, of course, I picked him up immediately and proceeded to eat lunch with him on my lap. (My wife hates this. She had been dealing with a kicking and screaming kid and I come home and am the “hero” effectively wiping away all disciplinary proceedings and making her look like the bad guy). As soon as I come home for lunch, which is seldom for the foregoing reason, I explain to my boys that I will have to go back to work shortly so as to attempt to prevent the inevitable meltdown.



This day was no different and as soon as I walked out the door both boys began crying while asking me to stay. I had to take care of some business at the courthouse and on the way home I convinced myself that I didn't have that much to do and could afford to go home for the afternoon. The boys were elated and the guilt was washed away until I laid my head down that night and thought of all that I had to do at work. Needless to say, I spent half of the day Sunday at work catching up on all that I had missed, thus the cycle of guilt continues.

The guilt works both ways. When I am home, especially when I know everyone else is hard at work, I feel guilty for not servicing my clients' needs. So, the question still remains, how does one deal with this guilt and accompanying stress? I am no expert and can only speak from experience, but the best way for me to deal with these issues is to keep everything in perspective and stay busy. With a wife, three children and a relatively successful law practice staying busy is not an issue. However, staying busy does not encompass only work and family. You must reserve some time for yourself and the community at large. I have many hobbies, just ask my wife: golf, basketball, racquetball, hunting, fishing, etc., but the most beneficial alone time is exercise. There is nothing that frees the mind more than a vigorous workout. Luckily, my office comes equipped with a workout room. It is simple, but it serves its purpose. If you are not so lucky, just get outside and do some yard work, play with the kids, etc. I like to go for a run with my boys loaded in a jogging stroller and take them to the park. You get the benefit of a good run by adding an additional 65 pounds of children and transformers, *supra*, and some good quality time with the kids.

Serve your community. I admit that at the present I am not doing as much as I could to serve, but I have in the past and can tell you that service to your community helps not only your local city or town but is yet another way to free your mind and possibly gain some perspective. Your local chamber of commerce is a good place to start. My wife was the president of our local chamber of commerce when we first moved to town, so I was encouraged

(forced) to participate. I was reluctant in the beginning because I felt that I needed to be at the office as much as possible as a rookie lawyer. I soon found out that my participation would pay off in spades. I was asked (ordered) to become a chamber ambassador and began attending all of the local events: new business ribbon cuttings, business after hours, morning mixers, membership drives, you name it. I met all the local movers and shakers, made some friends, gained some new clients and helped some people along the way. From my participation with the chamber, I became active in many other community organizations and charities. As a new member of a small or large community, there is no better way to introduce yourself than by participating in local organizations.

Perspective. I have two favorite sayings. The first, "Don't cry over spilt milk." This works on many levels, not to mention the literal interpretation which, as you can imagine, happens on a daily basis at my house. This idiom teaches us that there is no use in worrying about unfortunate events which have already happened and which cannot be changed, or in other words, to quote a more recent Eagles song, "Get over it." I preach this on a daily basis. It seems that most people cannot seem to simply clean up

“ So, the question still remains, how does one deal with this guilt and accompanying stress? ”

the milk and move on. They would rather wallow in their mistake and talk about what might have been. Every evening, usually on the drive home or over a cocktail in front of the TV, I reflect upon the day. I usually find that I made some mistake while at the office. I think about what I did, what I should have done and file it away. If it was a mistake of import, I might discuss it with a friend or mentor the next day. I always resolve the mistake in my mind, *i.e.*, figure out what I should have done, before I file it away. Now, you may say, "Luke, you're crying over spilt milk." I say that I'm thinking about how the milk was spilled so that I don't spill it the same way next time. The difference is in the crying. The criers wallow and think about what might have been when they could be learning something.

Second, "Don't sweat the small stuff." We have all experienced traumatic events, good or bad, that have made us stop and smell the

roses: your wedding day, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one; but the morals of this mantra are not reserved for the obvious. Your third wedding anniversary, your great-grandmother's 91st birthday, your wife's family's family reunion (seriously) are all events that should make us pause to realize that nothing else matters except our relationships with friends and family, especially that pending discovery deadline. So, perhaps, a more apt saying would be "Don't sweat the small stuff, and it's all small stuff."

These "remedies" of staying busy and perspective are temporary fixes, simply freeing your mind from the guilt and stress for short periods of time after which the guilt inevitably returns. However, the guilt is both the problem and the solution. While working, the guilt

brings your mind back to where it should be, at home. While at home the guilt forces your mind back to where you "think" it should be, at work. The guilt helps to bring a semblance of balance to an imbalanced existence.

In closing, be home every second that you can. Be at work when you must.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Luke Adams is an associate attorney with Tisdal & O'Hara PLLC, with offices in Clinton and Edmond. His primary area of practice is in general civil litigation. He and his wife Erin have three children: Parker, Ryder and Leah.

## NOTICE OF JUDICIAL VACANCY

The Judicial Nominating Commission seeks applicants to fill the following judicial office:

**District Judge  
Seventh Judicial District, Office 9  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma**

This vacancy is due to the resignation of the Honorable Tammy Bass-LeSure, effective March 1, 2012.

**To be appointed to the office of District Judge, Office 9, Seventh Judicial District, one must be a registered voter of Oklahoma County Electoral Division One at the time (s)he takes the oath of office and assumes the duties of office. Additionally, prior to appointment, such appointee shall have had a minimum of four years experience as a licensed practicing attorney, or as a judge of a court of record, or both, within the State of Oklahoma.**

Application forms can be obtained online at [www.oscn.net](http://www.oscn.net) under the link to Judicial Nominating Commission, or by contacting Tammy Reaves, Administrative Office of the Courts, 2100 N. Lincoln, Suite 3, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105, (405) 556-9862. Applications must be submitted to the Chairman of the Commission at the same address **no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, April 13, 2012. If applications are mailed, they must be postmarked by midnight, April 13, 2012.**

Jim Loftis, Chairman  
Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission