

The American Dream

The story of
Umberto S. Davi



By Jan Davi

The American Dream . . .



Umberto S. Davi (far left) with family In Sicily, 1962

. . . is alive and thriving in the state of Illinois!

It is the life of Umberto S. Davi,

139th President of the Illinois State Bar Association

by Jan Davi

There is still something in the American spirit that attracts us to the stories of citizens who immigrated to this country carrying nothing on their shoulders but the hopes of opportunity and success. Or perhaps many feel the inclination to cheer for the underdog to prevail in spite of all odds.

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While both of these statements more than accurately depict Umberto's early years, many who know him might agree that it goes well beyond that when they think of him. Rather, it is the overwhelmingly positive passion and zest for life which he brings to everything, whether it's family, friendships, or his profession! Perhaps it is because of his humble beginnings and the journey which brought him to his life today that he has carried this passion proudly for five decades now.

Umberto S. Davi was born in the quiet, picturesque Italian village of Monreale, Sicily. He spent the first thirteen years of his life residing with his parents and surrounded by the comfort and support of numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Some were so nearby that they even lived upstairs or downstairs in the same building. This is not only indicative of the Italian culture but it is also by necessity, since excess land for housing in many mountainous villages throughout Sicily is not readily available. After all, this close family network is what Italians are known for. And, of course, don't forget the great food and wine!

Life for Umberto as a pre-teen in 1960 was good, somewhat predictable, and definitely comfortable – his loving, extended family and friends were all around him. It may have been a modest life, but he certainly had all he needed. Good employment was scarce so Umberto's young father, Emanuele "Nino" Davi, started a trucking business, which, in time, became quite successful. He was experienced in trucking since he served as a courier and drove a supply truck in World War II. In 1940, when he was seventeen years old, Emanuele enlisted in the Italian Army by forging his parents' signatures. In 1943, he was taken prisoner in Africa by Allied troops and sent to Scotland as a prisoner of war. This is where he met Renata, who later became his wife. Once reunited at the end of the war with Renata, and soon after their first child was born, Nino saw the need for a trucking business in his small Sicilian village nestled within the mountainside. Many other small villages with similar needs also existed in the outlying area. He would deliver goods to these many villages from the main train station and the port in Palermo, Sicily's capital city.

There was a definite need for this service and Nino's trucking business grew. Oftentimes, Umberto would go with his father, including going on longer, over-night deliveries, to assist and keep his father company, and to learn the business. Of course, as a boy, Umberto wanted to be a truck driver, just like his dad and he cherished the opportunity when he was asked to go with him. Umberto always kept ahead of his school studies so he might be able to accompany his father more often. This was a requirement set by his Mother, who valued education as a top priority.

Although most likely not aware of it at the time, when Umberto was with his father, he was learning at a young age about how to interact with people and conduct business. Nino was always impeccably dressed and Umberto recalls that his father had the utmost respect when dealing with all types of clients. Nino's business grew quickly as he became known as an honest, reliable, and fair businessman throughout the area and Umberto admired his father for this. He recalls that these excursions with his father were some of the best times of his life.



Umberto with his father when he first started his trucking business in Sicily, circa 1953.

Unfortunately, little did anyone know that this simple, seemingly wonderful life would take a sudden and tragic turn for the Davi family in 1963. With no warning, Umberto's father died instantly as a result of an accident while on the road home from one of his journeys. Umberto, then thirteen years old, was in the truck with his father on that fateful night and life as he knew it would never be the same again.

If the shock of losing his father wasn't enough, the next drastic change in Umberto's life would certainly be equally as dramatic! Soon after her husband's untimely death, Umberto's mother, Renata made a bold, life-altering decision for her immediate family. She wanted better

opportunities for herself and her children so she packed up what she could and relocated with her three boys to America. Umberto was 14 and his brothers were 11 and 3 years old when they arrived in Chicago on July 24, 1964.

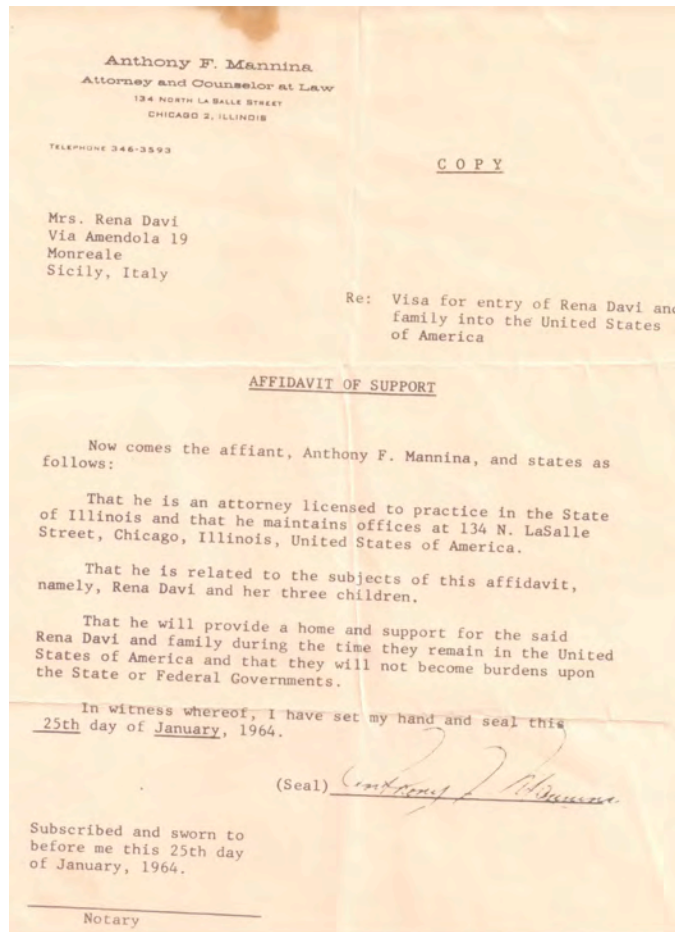


Umberto with his brothers and original 1964 passport – bound for America!

Those early years in America were challenging. Renata did not settle in one of Chicago’s “Italian neighborhoods” where she might have found life a bit more similar to living in Italy. She may not have known about the Italian neighborhoods in Chicago. Besides, she felt her children would learn the American culture better if they were fully immersed in it. When she first arrived in the U.S., Renata and her boys initially stayed with Renata’s sister, Pola Mannina, who had also immigrated to America and was married with three children, living in Berwyn at the time. Umberto’s uncle, Anthony “Skippy” Mannina generously opened his home to his wife’s widowed sister and her three young children. He even signed an Affidavit which stated that he would accept responsibility for the four persons, if they should become a burden on the U.S. Government. Among other things, sponsorship was a requirement at that time in order to enter the country. Mr. Mannina, a John Marshall Law School graduate, was a well known and respected lawyer in DuPage County for many years. He is now retired in Florida with his wife, Wendy Kay and Umberto remains grateful to this day for his uncle’s generosity. Tony Mannina reminisces, *“In the 1960’s the Davi family contacted the Mannina family and asked us to sponsor them for their immigration from Sicily to the United States. Umberto was a teenager at the time. Now he is a lawyer. Only in America*

can a teenage immigrant work hard and one day get to be President of such a significant organization as the Illinois State Bar Association. I am very proud of him. Congratulations from an Uncle to his Nephew!"

Living with his aunt and uncle and cousins in America was fun for Umberto and his brothers at first and even brought back the carefree days of living in Italy with family all around. However, it was only a temporary situation until Renata could find a place of her own to live and get her children settled in school. Fortunately, Renata found an apartment in the town of Brookfield, which she could afford until she found full-time employment. While our society is much more diverse now than it was back then, one can imagine what it must have been like for Umberto to be a teenager in the 1960's, showing up for his first day of American high school in a white shirt and tie (his mother insisted!). Furthermore, he didn't speak any English! As if being an adolescent just trying to "fit in" isn't enough for a teenager to handle! The high school really didn't know what to do with Umberto. There was no such thing as bi-lingual education back then, especially in the western suburbs of Chicago. So the high school officials decided to relocate Umberto to the local grade school in Brookfield (S.E. Gross School) where he attended first grade for ten weeks, along with the other first-graders and until he learned how to speak and read English. Needless to say, he learned quite quickly! Umberto fondly remembers that the first grade students were much more fun and accepting of him than the high school students turned out to be!



Regardless, Umberto returned to high school (Riverside-Brookfield High School) in the late fall of 1964. He and his family tried to acclimate to life in America, but those early years continued to be a challenge. It was not easy for Renata to find work or childcare. She met with much opposition with her situation, even though both were necessary for her family to survive. Working full-time with young children was simply not the “normal” accepted lifestyle for women living in the suburbs back in the 1960’s. Fortunately, the Davi family’s apartment in Brookfield was right next to a local restaurant which was owned by two Italian speaking brothers. Therefore, since he was the oldest, Umberto worked at the restaurant when he was not in school. Instead of participating in sports or clubs, after school Umberto would wash dishes (\$1.00/hr.) until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., every night, in order to help his mother make ends meet. He remembers that there never seemed to be enough money for what was needed but, somehow, his mother always managed to provide a delicious meal for her family every day. His mother was a very proud woman and would not ask for help from anyone. She was also not aware of any available resources to assist her in providing for the family. So she worked two jobs and would rely on Umberto to help out with caring for his younger brothers. She even took classes in the evening to improve her skills and was able to obtain a full-time, key-punch job (the early data entry system for computers) with Sears, where she remained employed for over twenty years. The family continued to persevere and work hard to create their new, better life in America.



Renata in Scotland, 1943 and in America, 1966

Time passed and after graduating from high school, Umberto worked many jobs and attended a local junior college, part-time, from where he eventually received an Associate degree. Life was getting better and a bit easier in America by this time. He now spoke English quite well, learned how to dress like his peers, had a decent paying job, lived on his own, and had a nice group of friends, with whom he maintains contact to this day.

One of the first people he met in America, who is still one of his closest friends today, **Bob LeGros**, has this to say about Umberto, *“I met Umberto shortly after he arrived here from Sicily in 1964. I recall the day we met and noticed his poor English and said ‘you’re not from around here, are you?’ Who knew, that over 51 years later, we’d still be friends? It would be impossible to express all that I feel about Umberto, Jan and their family in these few sentences. Knowing Umberto for over 5 decades, has been my genuine pleasure and privilege. I have had the honor of witnessing his pains and triumphs over the years. His success is hard-earned and well-deserved! He leads with his character and engaging personality and backs it all up with honesty, passion and integrity. His boundless energy is amazing and he has a real knack for making ordinary moments, extraordinary. He is living a full life and I am blessed to be a part of it. I enjoy our motorcycle rides when he finds the time. I wish him the very best as President of the ISBA.”*

At that time, however, Umberto realized that another drastic change had to again take place in his life; but at least he now knew that this time he was in control of the change. He realized the importance of devoting his full energies to his education in order to pursue a profession which would serve him well for the rest of his life. Much like his mother did so many years earlier, he did not hesitate to sell all his belongings, quit his job, leave his friends, and was even prepared to go into debt in order to pursue his dream of getting a college degree.

Umberto applied and was accepted at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. Here is where I begin to include myself in Umberto’s story... Although he and I had resided in the same suburb of Brookfield for a few years and I knew of him, he was five years older and we did not exactly have the opportunity to date. I was already a student at Western and was in my sophomore year when Umberto also came to WIU. Like all true stories, it has its variations, depending on who tells it. Many would say Umberto went to Western to pursue his true love first and his degree, second. However you interpret it, I like to think that he certainly accomplished both goals! And it was just the beginning of many more accomplishments to come. I do recall many a Saturday (date) night spent in the library studying with him. This, of course, was Umberto’s idea and I realized early in our relationship that he was truly grateful to even have

the opportunity to be at college and to finally be able to have the time to concentrate on studying. It had been a struggle and taken him a long time to get to this point in his life so he fully realized the significance of it. Even back then, he never took anything for granted and was committed to achieving his goals. He was also genuinely passionate about his studies and was keenly interested in both Psychology, which was his major and Law Enforcement Administration, his minor. According to **Dave Ross**, *“I met Umberto when we were college roommates. We had similar interests, like cars and music. His interests came a close second to his studies, family and now his profession. He was then and still is today, over 40 years later, focused, driven, fun, and he has more passion for life than anyone I know”*.

Spending this time together in college is when I first observed Umberto’s unshakeable dedication to learning and working tirelessly to achieve his goals. His sharp analytical mind and sound judgment combined with his kindness, charm, warmth and extraordinary sense of humor are among the reasons I first fell in love with him. These are also among the reasons Umberto has earned the trust, admiration, respect and, very often, the affection, of colleagues who have come to know him. It sounds crazy but it was actually fun going to the library on a Saturday night! (The promise of pizza and a drink afterward also helped!) And I have to say that my grades also improved once we started dating. Being with him was actually improving my life overall. He was and is very supportive of all my endeavors and always respectful. He graduated with high honors and was an active member of both the Psychology and LEA campus organizations. Umberto soon realized that he wanted to go to law school.



Jan & Umberto dated in college at Western Illinois University, 1975

Perhaps because I am five years younger than Umberto and lived a relatively “normal” life compared to his, I have to admit I did not have the same sense of urgency as he did in settling down. I think he was always aware of the tragic events which shaped his life and that there are no guarantees of tomorrow. He still lives his life today with a sense of urgency, determination, and purpose. Umberto had become an integral part of my family and we loved each other so since I could not imagine my life without him, I also came to the same conclusion, what were we waiting for? Thus, our lives converged, along with a clear vision of the goals which were ahead of us. I will tell you that Umberto has always had a clear vision and has always been very goal-oriented. Whether his goals relate to his personal or family life or that of his profession or his clients, he knows how to identify the appropriate goal and what it takes to go about achieving it. In my opinion, this is an essential quality of a good leader and it will serve him well as he assumes the role of ISBA President.

Less than a year after we had both graduated from WIU, we married in August, 1978. Umberto started the evening session of law school the day after we returned home from our honeymoon. It was the beginning of another interesting journey. He attended evening classes at The John Marshall Law School and worked full-time as a Felony, Adult Probation Officer for Cook County, during the day. I was a 4th grade teacher and also did part-time office administration and secretarial work for various Chicago-based companies during school breaks and summers. This helped defray the law school expense and provided Umberto added “guilt-free” study time away from his new bride. Fellow lawyer, longtime friend, and law school study partner, **Mark Becker** shares his thoughts, *“In law school Mike [Simmons, the third member of the study group] and I came to appreciate Umberto’s determined desire for the knowledge of the law and his achievement of graduating with honors. He was our mainstay of the study group. In working with him for twenty-five plus years I recognize his relentless energy for maintaining a successful law practice and his commitment to best represent his clients. In knowing him as a friend, his love of family and belief that a father should be a provider and educate his children by example are obvious.”*

Umberto's first legal experience while attending law school was in **Judge Louis Garippo's** courtroom in 1978, in the Criminal Courts Building at 26th and California, in Chicago. Judge Garippo is a great lawyer and a wonderful judge, man, and mentor. He strongly encouraged and influenced Umberto to study, stay focused, and never give up in pursuing his legal aspirations. He convinced Umberto that there is much good to be accomplished in our legal system and Umberto still believes and practices that today, as he works with his clients and the various legal organizations. Besides being such a wonderful first law-related learning experience, being in Judge Garippo's courtroom also enabled Umberto to daily attend the disturbing, yet highly publicized 1979 case of John Wayne Gacy, a monster who had victimized and murdered what turned out to be 33 boys and young men. To think that had Gacy somehow received Probation for his crime, Umberto would have been his Probation Officer!

Upon graduation from The John Marshall Law School, with Distinction, in 1982, and passing the bar, Umberto began doing criminal law with the law firm of **DiNatale and Montemurro**, which at that time was a small firm in Oak Park, Illinois. Working closely with Joseph DiNatale, Umberto learned the basics of what it took to be a lawyer and to run a law practice. Umberto assisted with some high profile Chicago criminal cases, however, he realized that criminal law was not the area of law best suited to him. He amicably parted company with his first law firm experience and opened his own solo law practice in 1984. **Attorney** and former **Mayor of Riverside** for twelve years, **Joseph DiNatale** shares his thoughts about Umberto's early years as a lawyer: *"Umberto was an outstanding law clerk and lawyer right from the start. He always worked very hard, did what he was told, and did it very well. It was always a pleasure having him around because I think of him like the little brother I never had. We are still in contact to this day."*

From the very start of his law career, Umberto recognized the importance of contributing to the profession and building relationships through active involvement in the **Illinois State Bar Association**, the Chicago Bar Association, as well as various other professional, civic, and

community organizations. He has continued to do just that over the past 30 years. Umberto's continued professional involvement in organizations, outside of running his law practice, has culminated in his upcoming 2015-16 ISBA Presidency. At the ISBA Annual Meeting on June 19, 2015, Umberto will be introduced by the **Honorable Timothy C. Evans, Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County**. Judge Evans has known Umberto and our family for many years and will share his comments regarding that personal and professional relationship as well as Umberto's credentials which led to his presidential election. It is a privilege and an honor for our family to have the **Honorable Timothy C. Evans** be there and to introduce Umberto. Also on that night, Umberto will be sworn in by **Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas Kilbride**. Umberto and our family have also come to know Justice Kilbride and his family over the years. His participation in the ceremony is also a distinct privilege and honor for us. **Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas Kilbride** comments, *"Umberto is not only the lawyer's lawyer, he is the gentleman's gentleman. He brings to the presidency a classic combination of leadership, professionalism, humor, compassion, and the heart and soul of a hardworking small law firm lawyer."*

Umberto continues to be an active member in numerous organizations, such as the DuPage County Bar Association, the West Suburban Bar Association (he's on the Board of Governors), and the DuPage Association of Women Lawyers, to name just a few. Naturally, he is very proud of his affiliation with the Cook County Justinian Society of Lawyers. He has been an active member since 1982, is a past president (1995/96) and currently serves as co-chair of the Scholarship Committee. It was **Leonard Amari, ISBA Past President, Justinian Past President, and current President of The Board of Trustees of The John Marshall Law School**, who first approached Umberto back in the early 1980's outside the law school and suggested he join the Justinians and the ISBA. Umberto did join and he has had a strong bond with both organizations ever since. However, it should be noted that the Justinian Society of Lawyers proudly accepts members of all heritages into their organization. **Leonard Amari** has this to say about Umberto:

"Umberto Davi, as his wife put it so well, embodies the American dream. He also embodies the agenda and the mantra of the Justinian Society of

Lawyers. Founded in 1921 to provide a vehicle for Italian-American lawyers, at that time mostly foreign-born, to mainstream into the legal profession and, therefore, into the legal community.

Umberto is respected, charismatic, bright, and articulate and serves as a wonderful Bar association and community leader. As many of those that have preceded him in the Justinian Society, he is a wonderful role model for those that follow him from The Justinian Society, The John Marshall Law School, after graduation, and all those coming into the profession.

He is a wonderful father and husband, highly respected, revered and truly beloved. I don't know anybody that knows Umberto that doesn't consider him a friend. That is the impact and the effect that he has on people and especially those in our ethnic bar association. He makes us proud, he gives all of those that follow him hope and, as we often say about leaders such as Umberto, he climbed the ladder of the American Dream and makes sure that the ladder is there for those that follow him. I am proud to call Umberto my protégé, brother and friend."

Over the years, Umberto has received various awards for service, mentorship, and excellence in his profession. Among others, he served on the Board of Trustees for The John Marshall Law School, received the Distinguished Service Award and was the Alumni Board of Directors President in 2005/06. He received the Anthony M. Peccarelli Award of Excellence from the DuPage Justinian Society of Lawyers, the Justice Sbarbaro Mentoring Award from the Cook County Justinian Society of Lawyers, and has been selected as a SuperLawyer for the past five years. He has also been the President of the Willowbrook Police Pension Board, since 2000, and has been a Village Trustee since May, 2010. **The Village of Willowbrook Mayor Frank Trilla** comments, *"Umberto has always offered himself to me as a friend and co-board member, selflessly. His kindness and thoughtfulness on village issues has been incredibly valuable. I wish only the best for him. I'm proud to be his friend."*

Umberto has partnered with our local high school offering internships in his law office for students interested in civics and the law. **Hinsdale South High School Guidance Counselor Hank Eubanks** says: *"It has*

been a privilege and a pleasure to know and work with the entire family. Mr. Davi is one of the pillars of our community. His contribution and involvement with the school, students, and mentorship program is what makes our community a special place.” **Marie Sarantakis**, a **John Marshall Law School honors student** currently in her third year, has the following thoughts about her mentor, *“I first met Umberto during my first year of law school. I always knew that I wanted to be a lawyer, but at that time, I had little idea of what the practical work in the profession entailed. I am ever grateful for Umberto’s mentorship. He taught me how to draft a pleading, present a motion in court, but above all else, he taught me the value of one’s reputation in the field. I witnessed first-hand that no matter how busy Umberto was in a given day, those around him could always rely on him to not only meet, but exceed, expectations. He has imparted to me the indispensable lesson that our interaction with others is what distinguishes a good from a great lawyer. Umberto is a testament to the success one can achieve when they combine hard work with integrity.”* Umberto has also provided pro bono legal assistance over the years to many clients when he knew there was a definite lack of financial means.

Umberto joined the ISBA in 1982 and has been an active member ever since, serving as Secretary and Treasurer of the organization and serving on numerous section councils, committees, the Assembly, and four Board of Governor terms over more than 30 years. As a solo practitioner, Umberto’s involvement in the ISBA was always and continues to be extremely beneficial to him both professionally and personally. He has met and maintains a valuable network of colleagues through the ISBA. **2014/15 ISBA President Rick Felice** has this to say about Umberto: *“I am proud to call Umberto Davi my friend and look forward to his great year as President. He is committed to the advancement of the Illinois State Bar Association and truly cares about lawyers. I have watched Umberto throughout the years work in the trenches, so to speak, as a practicing attorney, he has proven himself on a daily basis in his efforts to serve his clients and for the betterment of the legal profession. He truly understands the concerns of Illinois lawyers as he has been and will continue to be a practicing attorney dealing with the same issues that lawyers confront on a daily basis.”* Another longtime friend and colleague, **2006/07 ISBA Past President Irene Bahr** also comments, *“As a colleague and friend Umberto shines. He is always willing to help, to ask about your family and to pitch in*

on any project. His commitment to the lawyers of Illinois is long standing and genuine.”

ISBBA Past President (2008/09) Jack Carey met Umberto through the ISBA over fifteen years ago. Jack is from downstate Illinois (Belleville). He and Umberto became good friends and since their first meeting, they still find time every year to go downhill snow skiing together in Colorado. According to Jack, *“Umberto takes both his profession and his position as ISBA President very seriously. However, he also enjoys the camaraderie of the profession, along with an excellently prepared Italian dinner. All these qualities will serve him well during his ISBA Presidency. I wish my very good friend and colleague all the best in the upcoming year.”* **2000/01 ISBA Past President Herb Franks**, friend, colleague, and fishing partner, whom Umberto also first met through the ISBA, shares his sentiments about Umberto, *“We went fishing perhaps twenty years ago for the first time. We have been friends ever since. After I had a heart attack and went on the next fishing trip anyway, Umberto took the trouble to learn and say the prayers for the sick in Hebrew for our group. I literally broke down in tears. He is a great friend and an inspiration to me for his values and kindness to others. I have never heard him say an unkind word about anyone nor anyone about him. Whenever I hear his name – it makes me smile.”*

Umberto believes that the ISBA is relevant to young lawyers now more than ever and he hopes to convey this message loud and clear to the many young lawyers in Illinois throughout his upcoming ISBA presidency. In spite of society’s technological advances, he believes that good, old-fashioned face-to-face interaction is still valuable and essential in the law profession. According to **Jean A. Kenol, Past Chair of the ISBA Young Lawyers Division**, *“Umberto Davi’s charisma and enthusiasm are remarkable. He is a true champion for our Bar Association and I’m excited to watch the ISBA’s progress under his leadership.”* One-on-one networking through various Bar organization events is essentially how Umberto grew his law practice over the years. He and I have both thoroughly enjoyed the time spent and the people we have met through the ISBA, the Justinian Society of Lawyers, and the many other legal organizations and events over the years. We truly consider them all as our ‘second family’ and it is

part of Umberto's mission that young members may also come to realize the importance and personal benefit of this aspect of Bar membership.

Umberto's practice is primarily focused on family law. He also has many cases where he serves as a Guardian Ad Litem, representative for minor children of conflicted parents in the legal system. These are the exact areas of study (Psychology and Law) which Umberto was first drawn to in his undergraduate studies. This area of the law requires keen insight and empathy when dealing with the daily, emotional changes and challenges families may be experiencing. **DuPage County Judge and 2015/16 Illinois Judges Association President Robert J. Anderson** shares his thoughts, *"Umberto Davi represents all that is great about lawyers. He is hard working, honest and ethical. He vigorously represents his clients while remaining civil and courteous to the other side. He has a great sense of humor and love of family. He is a great role model and will be an outstanding President of the ISBA. I am proud to be his friend!"* **DuPage County Judge Linda Davenport** adds, *"Umberto makes difficult situations easier. He brings a calming influence to every case he works. He knows when to push and when to pull back. You can't teach that to someone."*

I work with Umberto in the law office and I am continually impressed how he reaches out and truly connects with his clients. He always provides the voice of reason no matter how difficult the issue. The life of a solo law practitioner is truly 24/7, especially with today's technology. To me, it has always been comforting to know that he is willing and able to help his clients no matter when they need it. I realize the benefit of possibly being able to avert a client's crisis simply because he is available and willing to take the call at almost any time of the day or week. I would certainly want that for any family member or friend if the circumstances were reversed. Our family has always understood and respected this aspect of Umberto's law practice.

Rose Wisniewski, Paralegal for thirty years in Umberto's office comments, *"For thirty years it has been my honor and pleasure to work for Umberto. He is not only my remarkable boss, he is my teacher, he is my*

'family', and above all, he is my dear friend." **Judi Colvett, Umberto's Legal Assistant** adds, "*The honesty Umberto shares with his clients when dealing with the facts and emotions of their case is exactly what they seem to need to help them through their rough time. He is always cordial and respectful to other lawyers, and is persuasive by being reasonable. I am impressed by his dedication and empathy with his clients, and how strongly he is motivated by his desire to help others.*" It is not unusual to open the daily mail to find a handwritten thank you note and sometimes even homemade cookies (or something similar) sent to the office from a truly grateful client. A former client from 2005 and successful professional in the medical field, had two other attorneys representing him in his troublesome divorce before he found Umberto. He and Umberto are still in contact with each other today, long after his case has been resolved and he even plans on attending the ISBA Installation Dinner for Umberto on June 19, 2015. Umberto's client, "**the Dr.**" was willing to share his comments about Umberto: "*I have known Umberto both personally and professionally and I remain impressed by his professionalism and grit. He will make a great president.*" Umberto brings the same amount of interest and detail to all of his cases, whether it is a real estate transaction, a divorce, a GAL, drafting of a will, or settling an estate.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Umberto's other passions in his life. The key to a successful lawyer has a great deal to do with balance in life and finding time to also do those things which bring you happiness. I know for a fact that spending time with his family is at the top of the list for Umberto. Needless to say, he is very proud of all his boys.

Dion, who has followed in his father's footsteps and has a successful family law practice of his own in Wheaton; his wife, **Kelly** and our two grandchildren, **Tia and Nico**, also provide boundless pride and joy. Dion has served on the ISBA Assembly and on the Board of Governors under 37 seat. When Dion was on the Board of Governors with Umberto, it represented the first time in ISBA history that a father and son served on the Board of Governors at the same time.

Michael, next in line and like his parents, graduated from Western Illinois University and is now employed by the Child Parentage Services Department for the Circuit Court of Cook County at the Daley Center.

Ryan, third in the order, is an Eagle Scout, graduate of Augustana College and works part-time while pursuing a Masters Degree in Industrial Organizational Psychology at Elmhurst College.

Evan, who will graduate from Purdue University in August, 2015, also plans to attend law school. He has worked for the DuPage County Circuit Court Clerk for the past four summers, currently works for the Student Legal Services Dept. at Purdue, and also had an internship with the Tippecanoe County Court Services in Indiana.

We are a very close-knit family and have always enjoyed doing things together. It is the Italian custom to always include the children; therefore it was not unusual to find one or more of Umberto's boys accompanying him to an ISBA event or Justinian dinner when they were young.



Umberto received the 2006 Justice Anthony M. Peccarelli Award for Outstanding Service and Dedication as a Trial Attorney



Dion Davi and Umberto Davi (from left) at the Dec. 10 Assembly meeting.



Besides his family, Umberto's other passions include music, reading, bicycling, cooking, travel, auto racing, motorcycle riding, and spending weekends at our lake home in Wisconsin. Umberto ran his first marathon at the age of 50 with his good friend, **Len DeFranco**, also a fellow **Past Justinian President, ISBA member and Chair of the ISBA Investments Committee**. He ran two more marathons after that and enjoyed running for many years. In **Len DeFranco's** words: *"Having just completed the Lake County half marathon in 1999, Umberto and I made a pact to run our first Chicago Marathon together. We trained the best we could that summer, and on the day of the race we were set. The first half was exhilarating. Unfortunately at mile sixteen I developed a severe plantar fascia on my left heel. It felt like I was running on the point of a spike; in actuality I was skipping, slowly, to keep the weight off. For two miles I implored Umberto to go on without me and he refused, saying that we made a pact to finish together. Finally, I threatened to stop altogether, which would make his gesture futile. Hard to find friends like that. But we did both finish the run and now have the 'medals' to keep the special memory."* These days, Umberto finds the elliptical machine more user-friendly for his knees. Regardless, I continue to be amazed every day by his energy, positive attitude, and continuous efforts to be relevant in our ever-changing world.

I could not end my story without one final friend's input. He has both a medical and a law degree, met Umberto many years ago at a Justinian event and we have become dear friends with his family since that first meeting. We are particularly grateful to **Dr. Richard Balsamo** for his counsel and input when, on two separate occasions, we were faced with somewhat out of the ordinary yet very serious medical events for Umberto. Although he would be humble about it, Umberto and I strongly valued and relied on Rick's guidance as we navigated together through it all. **Dr. Balsamo** says, *"For as long as I have known him, Umberto has shown a remarkable, and quite admirable, combination of energy and devotion for both his work and his family, with a passion for fast-moving, beautifully-designed motor vehicles thrown in. Especially viewed through the eyes of those who first see them from afar, the opportunities open to all in this country are a special blessing, and Umberto has seized upon them*

with focus and perseverance and good humor, and in doing so has fashioned a better place for all around him. His hard-working and practical-minded nature has served him well in his law career.”

In conclusion, I felt compelled to share my husband’s story with you because I personally believe it is unique. When I met him, his background was vastly different than mine or anyone else I had ever met. Yet, over the years I have come to realize that his story actually relates to many others who have also had to overcome an extreme hardship, an obstacle or tragedy, or some other form of serious adversity in their life. It is the strength of character, perseverance, and discipline in overcoming such events that shapes who we are and how we chose to direct our future. In fact, many people I have come to know who share this strong work ethic and desire to give back, are fellow ISBA members. For the past 40 years, I have observed Umberto work tirelessly to improve life for those around him, his clients, his family, and his work within our village and schools. He continues to do this willingly and generously. I also wrote this brief story as a tribute to Umberto’s parents, Renata and Emanuele. Their lives, however long or short, definitely made a difference. Umberto attained the education and better life his mother dreamed of for him and he conducts his law practice with dignity, honesty and respect, just as he learned from his father at an early age. **The American Dream has been realized.**

I hope to have provided an interesting and inside glimpse into the life of the next **ISBA President Umberto S. Davi**. Believe me, if he hasn’t met you yet, he wants to get to know you. I know he is truly honored to take on this responsibility. In looking back at over four decades with Umberto, and ahead to his leadership in 2015, I believe Umberto will lead the ISBA with a clear and true vision. His genuine passion and love of the profession will guide him, not only when dealing with the profession’s current issues, but also in reaching out to the members so that they may be better served by the **ISBA**, providing resources to help them be the best Lawyers and Judges they can be, not only for the clients they serve, but for the public that comes in contact with the legal system and for our communities as a whole.

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“America was and is the immigrant’s dream.”

-Don DeLillo, Author and Novelist

“I really feel that my life story is a continuation of the Great American Dream – the immigrant who comes to this country and is allowed to excel. How many other countries would let me do that?”

-Friedrich St. Florian, Architect

Friedrich St. Florian Architects Designed the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC

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Dedication

My sincerest and heartfelt thank you to all who are and have been a part of our lives, especially Umberto’s and my parents. Without each and every one of you and the impact you have had on our lives, I might not have been able to write this story and Umberto might not have become President of the ISBA. In the end, we are the sum total of all of our experiences and personal relationships. I am truly grateful for our wonderful family and friends—you know who you are.

This story is dedicated to all of you!

Special thanks to **Ilene LeGros** for her creativity in designing the cover.

Special thanks to **Ryan Davi** for his IT assistance and support.

Jan Davi