

Billy Martin on Becoming a "Celebrity Lawyer"

By Carl Stern

Based on Billy Martin's Oral History for the D.C. Circuit Historical Society

Washington “celebrity lawyer” Billy Martin’s own description of what he does is “triage” – part crisis manager, part “front” man, part strategist, and always ready to apply a lifetime of legal experience to aid a client. He says the key is “preparation, preparation, preparation,” two weeks of preparation for every anticipated week of trial.

In a Historical Society oral history now available on the Society’s website, Martin reveals that an auto accident near his home in the Pittsburgh area launched his legal career. A local lawyer who rear-ended Martin’s car was so impressed with Martin’s dressing down that he advised him to go to law school. Martin also tells how he was helped along the way by Georgetown basketball coach John Thompson, sports agent David Falk and legendary lawyer Johnnie Cochran.

One of his most memorable moments, says Martin, was serving as attorney and adviser to the Monica Lewinsky family during the inquiry into the conduct of the White House intern and President Bill Clinton. He also represented the mother of Michael Jackson after the famed entertainer’s death, and the parents of slain Congressional intern Chandra Levy. He represented athletes Michael Vick, Alan Iverson and Jason Williams. Actor Wesley Snipes is a client. *USA Today* described him as a lawyer with “unique skills for assisting people in big trouble.” *Washingtonian* magazine ranked him among the five top lawyers in Washington.

Martin says he is amazed by the title “celebrity lawyer.” In truth, he says, he has been “fortunate to have so many clients who were, in fact, true celebrities.”

In August 2015, after his oral history was recorded, Martin moved his practice to the Baltimore-headquartered law firm of Miles & Stockbridge. The firm announced that Martin would run the white collar criminal defense and internal investigations practice in its Washington, D.C. office. It said he would also deal with regulatory enforcement, lobbying rules and the Federal Corrupt Practices Act.