

Q & A

Q & A with M. Jansen Voss

A partner and Executive Committee member of Christian & Small, LLP in Alabama, M. Jansen Voss has developed a diverse defense litigation and appellate practice in both state and federal courts in Alabama and Mississippi. He represents a wide range of businesses and individuals involved in complex personal injury and wrongful death lawsuits, as well as business disputes and breach of contract matters. Jansen helps small businesses with business formation and transaction matters, as well as contract drafting and risk management, in addition to his representation of businesses facing EEOC complaints, employee discrimination lawsuits, and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complaints.

Voss, a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College and the University of Alabama School of Law, regularly represents mental health facilities, psychiatrists and psychologists with business matters, regulatory issues, risk management, and lawsuits. His representation also includes doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals in medical malpractice lawsuits, handling matters before professional licensing boards.

Q: Before becoming an attorney, what was your first job?

A: Laborer for a landscape irrigation company.

Q: What motivated you to pursue a legal career?

A: I grew up in a small town in Alabama. Local lawyers were highly respected and relied upon in the community – both for their professional expertise and for their involvement in nonprofit and civic organizations. Several family friends were lawyers and I saw early on how lawyers had a positive impact on local businesses and individuals in need.

Q: Who was your chief mentor and how did he or she influence your career?

A: My dad is my chief mentor. He barely graduated high school (his words, not mine) and has no college or trade school

education. He worked in commercial construction for many years and later built a successful landscape irrigation business on Lake Martin, a regionally known retirement and vacation spot in Alabama. My dad's work ethic and dogmatic ethos of doing what was right even though it might be painful has had an immeasurable impact on almost all aspects of my life.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

A: Do right and fear no man.

Q: What is one thing you would like to learn to do?

A: I'd like to learn to make everyone happy. Right now, I have plateaued at about 51 percent.

Q: What is your proudest career achievement?

A: An insurance company sent me a claim with instructions to pay policy limits of \$2,000,000. I reviewed the file, questioned the logic of paying policy limits, and later resolved the case for \$200,000, saving the carrier \$1,800,000. I never got a rate increase, or a thank you from the insurance carrier, but it was nevertheless the proudest moment in my career.

Q: What other career path might you have chosen?

A: I would have been a college history professor, or I would have owned and operated a cattle ranch.

Q: What do you do to give back to your community?

A: I have been a board member for Jefferson Blount St. Clair County Mental Health Authority (JBS) for more than 10 years. JBS is a \$47 million public nonprofit community mental health provider. I was appointed to JBS's Executive Committee in 2019 and continue to serve in that role. I also have been a board member for LifeSouth Community Blood Centers since 2016. LifeSouth is a \$110 million nonprofit providing blood and



Q & A with M. Jansen Voss

blood products such as platelets, plasma, and cord blood to hospitals in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. I was elected a member of the Executive Committee in 2022 and continue to serve in that role. As a member of the Board's Governance Committee, I help ensure the nonprofit has adequate internal controls for the efficient, effective, and ethical operation of LifeSouth's mission.

In addition, for more than 15 years, I have volunteered with state and local bar association committees and task forces. I also volunteer as a mentor to young lawyers through the Birmingham Bar Association's Mentor Program. Lastly, I have represented indigent defendants pro bono in federal court at the request of the Clerk of Court for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama.

Q: What is your most treasured material possession?

A: A green 1972 Toyota Landcruiser FJ40 with an 8-cylinder Chevrolet V-8 350 Mercruiser engine (yes, a boat motor), and a Merkel side-by-side shotgun with 16-gauge and 20-gauge barrels.

Q: What is your happiest childhood memory?

A: Spending time at the family farm.

Q: What is your favorite movie and book?

A: Movie: Martin Scorsese's 1978 concert documentary "The Last Waltz," which features the Canadian-American rock group, The Band.

Book: Anything by Ernest Hemingway. Also, "Last of the Breed" by Louis L'Amour. I'd also have to add a short volume titled, "The Enchiridion" by stoic philosopher Epictetus.

Q: What is the most awe-inspiring place you have visited?

A: The operating room where my first child was born.

Q: What are your favorite leisure time pursuits?

A: Quail hunting, freshwater flyfishing, and backpacking.

Q: What is your favorite famous or inspirational quote?

A: The following excerpt from Theodore Roosevelt's "The Man in the Arena" speech:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Q: Who is on your guest list for the ideal dinner party?

A: All of the judges in my pending cases—steak and lobster for everyone—as long as opposing counsel doesn't find out!

Q: What are the top three items on your bucket list?

A: Learn how to build furniture using 18th and 19th century hand tool woodworking techniques. A trip to Africa with my family for a big game hunt. Clear out my e-mail inbox.