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# Walking the Walk:

## Tim Kelleher of Cooley Manion Jones Discusses What It Means to Be a Trial Lawyer

Cooley Manion Jones (CMJ) partner Tim Kelleher has vivid memories of tagging along to work with his father, an Irish immigrant who labored as a meat cutter in a butchery under Faneuil Hall to support his wife and four children. The sounds, the smells, watching the butchers work—all of these have left an indelible mark on Kelleher, a trial lawyer at the firm since 1990. “He just tried to instill in me the value of hard work,” says Kelleher. “And that if you believe in something, you can be impactful.” It’s a tenet that Kelleher abides by every day in his practice, where he serves clients who are facing catastrophic injuries as a result of life-changing incidents.

So it was a bit like coming full circle when Kelleher stood in the historic Faneuil Hall for the very picture that accompanies this piece. For Kelleher, it felt like the past and the present colliding, the skinny kid who stood wide-eyed in the marketplace returning to the location where he learned the value of a hard day’s work.

But Kelleher will be the first to tell you that the work he does isn’t all about him—it’s about his clients and doing everything he can to make them whole again. Take for example a recent case involving a worker seriously injured in a propane explosion. Kelleher and his colleagues at CMJ were able to craft a \$7.5 million settlement in mediation (one of the largest of 2012), but he also knows it was far from a singular effort. “Our firm worked with two other firms that represented two other people who were in the explosion,” Kelleher says. “This was really about attorneys working together to bring about the best results for a group of plaintiffs.” The total settlement exceeded \$22 million.

Recovery aside, that’s not quite where the story begins and ends. In some ways, it’s also about the good work of the Massachusetts Academy of Trial Attorneys. Kelleher, the President of MATA this year, says the lawyers who came together on the propane case—which is likely to bring about change in the propane industry’s safety standards—are all members and knew each other

through the organization. MATA’s members work tirelessly to have defective and unsafe products removed from the market and to enact broad-based safety changes, Kelleher says, as well as work with state legislators to ensure that proposed bills don’t chip away at the rights of individuals and their families. “That part has been very rewarding,” says Kelleher, who has been the Legislation Committee Chair for the past seven years and has testified at the State House about issues impacting consumers on many occasions.

It is the national End Distracted Driving campaign (started by Joel Feldman, a Pennsylvania-based attorney who lost his

daughter due to distracted driving) MATA is currently participating in that will likely end up being the defining program of Kelleher’s presidency. The attorneys—all volunteers—visit high schools around the state to give a presentation on the dangers of distracted driving. “I knew that this was a program we had to be doing in Massachusetts,” says Kelleher. “So I talked to Joel about bringing it here. It’s great to see our members out there helping educate kids about the real dangers of distracted driving. These kinds of programs are what the spirit of MATA is all about.”

For the service-oriented Kelleher, getting out and making a difference with his peers in the name of safety is simply an extension of what he does at CMJ—and is illustrative of the firm’s culture as well. “Pat Jones, who is my partner and the person who taught me how to be a lawyer, is always

out there in the community, and I try to take my lead from him and the other attorneys at the firm who give freely of their time outside of the office. It’s self-motivating,” he says. “And not only is it good for our community, but it helps give the public a sense of who we are.”

Indeed, Kelleher says that at the end of the day it’s about not only talking the talk, but walking the walk as well—the very epitome of what being a trial lawyer is all about. “I couldn’t be more proud to be in this noble profession,” he says. “We try to do everything we can to truly make a difference.” ■



Tim Kelleher