

POISED

BLAIR N.C. WOOD has been there, done that. She's traveled the world, worked as a police officer and meth-lab technician, and graduated top of her law-school class—all by 33.



THESE DAYS, Wood has established a new niche: litigator. Tall, confident, and quick-witted, Wood not only looks the part, she thrives in the frenetic environment of civil practice.

Following a tour de force through Appalachian School of Law—valedictorian, law-review editor, and prestigious clerkships—Wood joined an intellectual-property powerhouse, the Blacksburg, Va.-based Creekmore Law Firm.

The drive to excel in competitive arenas is often the byproduct of several self-defining experiences. Wood's past is littered with them.

The native Californian has lived in eight states, been married 12 years, and toured more than a dozen countries, including Ecuador, Luxembourg, and Zimbabwe. Professionally, she held multiple positions at a Tennessee police department: patrol officer, crash- and death-scene investigator, methamphetamine-lab technician, and dive-team-training officer. Sprinkle in a stint at a county coroner's office. Despite these diverse pursuits, Wood long expected to make law her calling card.

What motivated you to enter law school after seven years in law enforcement?

I always wanted to go to law school. After taking time off from school, with all intentions of going back after only a few years, life has a way of keeping you very busy. However, I never let the thought leave my mind. After being out of school for nine years, I applied to the Appalachian School of Law. Because ASL offered me a full scholarship, I was able to leave my career and embark on my new adventure and my never dying dream to go to law school. It was a perfect fit for me, and I have never once regretted my decision.

Do you notice overlap between the professions?

I suspect that most people expected me to go into criminal law. This was not an area that I desired to work in. I wanted to work in corporate law with an emphasis in energy and mineral law work.

What role does mentoring play in the legal profession?

I believe finding competent and trustworthy mentors is one of the most important things a young attorney can do. Attorneys who have 'been there, done that' are an invaluable resource. They will provide you with information that you will not find in any treatise. I have been so blessed by being surrounded with so many experienced attorneys who have guided me in my practice. My mentors include first, Mr. Creekmore, who is so extremely knowledgeable—I can go to him with any question I have in any aspect of the law. If he does not know the answer, which is rare, we together come up with a plan to find the answer. Next, a number of my law-school professors, including Stewart Harris and Priscilla Harris, among others, have made themselves available in guiding me to becoming a capable and knowledgeable attorney. I have picked up the phone on numerous occasions and called attorneys whom I have met and others whom I do not even know. Every single one has happily provided me with assistance. Being an attorney is truly being part of a family that I will now carry with me for the rest of my life.

What have been your biggest challenges as a new attorney?

Because I work on complex commercial litigation matters, it requires knowledge in the specific subject matter of each case. Thus, it has been quite a steep hill while learning the subject matter of our litigation. I had a professor who once told me, 'He who knows the rules, wins.' Of course, he was my civil-procedure professor. Nonetheless, I honestly now know what he means. I have found his statement to be very profound because procedural law is so very important. You can always research the substantive law, but, procedurally speaking, you better know the rules because this is where cases are so often won and lost.

Did Mr. Creekmore assign you a specific role in his firm?

Because we are a small firm, for the most part, all of our attorneys assist with all cases. I, and other attorneys, handle our firm's coal and gas cases, which consist of complex commercial litigation in both state and federal court. With regard to our oil and gas cases, we currently have two class actions in federal court and another case in federal court. We have numerous cases pending in state court as well. Although I was not assigned a specific role, my responsibilities and roles continue to increase as my knowledge base and experience increases.

Have you seen differences between IP and traditional litigation?

Most of my focus has been in federal practice, but I have practiced in state court as well. Because so much of my practice has been in federal court, there has not been much difference in preparing for IP litigation. Our IP litigation has been in federal court.

Are there certain skills and traits that make a good IP lawyer?

Attention to detail is very important for an IP attorney; however, attention to detail is very important for any attorney. I think that you truly must have a passion for IP law in order to practice it every day.

—DW