Alumnus Seeks Best Results for Families

**FIRM:** David Littman PC, Denver
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**ATTORNEYS:** David Littman, JD ’80, and Joshua S. Wohl

**AREA OF PRACTICE:** Family Law

**BRIEF BACKGROUND:** David Littman founded his firm in 1981. The flexibility of his small practice has allowed him to serve as a part-time magistrate; engage in leadership roles with the Colorado Bar Association, including president of the 900-member Family Law Section; and serve as a pioneer in bringing collaborative law to Colorado.

**Q:** Why did you choose to practice in a small firm?

**A:** My personality is better suited to being the captain of a small ship rather than a sailor on a big boat. Few large firms handle plaintiff’s medical malpractice, plaintiff’s employment law, and family law matters. I have been drawn to these areas as a result of my enjoyment of direct contact with my clients who are human beings rather than “corporations.” Early in my career, I was lucky to obtain an extremely successful outcome for a client in a wrongful death case. In hindsight, it was foolish for an attorney with less than two years’ experience to take on four insurance defense firms, but the experience provided me with the boost of confidence that I could handle anything to which I put my mind and heart.

**Q:** Do you feel that your firm size is a plus, a minus, or a nonfactor in your practice?

**A:** The small size of my firm, either two or three lawyers, has enabled me to continue to practice in the restored Victorian house I purchased in 1984. This has provided our clients with a sense of continuity and comfort. I also am able to bring a dog to work. Presently, Lily, a five-year-old golden retriever, plays an active role in meeting, greeting, and keeping clients’ stress levels modulated. Being in control of my practice has allowed me to be involved in a variety of professional activities. My small firm practice has enabled me to create an environment of innovation and progressive thinking.

**Q:** Why did you choose your particular area of practice?

**A:** With a master’s degree in counseling psychology from Washington University, working with people was a natural. I represent parties involved in family law issues, engage in alternative dispute resolution, and conduct Child and Family Investigations (custody evaluations). Being able to spend my time professionally doing things I enjoy brings great satisfaction.

**Q:** What are your views on the role of collaborative law?

**A:** Collaborative law offers a significant option for resolving family law issues without litigation. It creates an environment in which both parents work together, with the assistance of experienced and skilled counsel, to seek mutually acceptable outcomes and to use family resources (financial and emotional) to meet the greatest number of needs possible. The model serves divorcing families well, as it does the least harm to the parents’ abilities to work with one another once the dissolution of marriage is final and the attorneys have stepped away.

**Q:** What has been the most rewarding case you have handled?

**A:** Two cases come to mind. In one, I started as a guardian ad litem for an infant whose parents were accused of shaking her and causing traumatic brain injury. However, my meetings with the parents, observations of their interactions with the older siblings, and their repeated efforts to obtain care for their daughter suggested they were unlikely to have caused these injuries. After I consulted with a friend who is a developmental pediatrician, the infant underwent some tests. A $15 urinalysis led to the diagnosis of a genetically related metabolic disorder. The court action was dismissed, and the child was returned to her parents. The resulting malpractice suit led to a multimillion-dollar outcome, which enabled the family to meet the child’s needs for the future.

In the second case, as a young attorney, I bucked the recommendations of two experienced custody evaluators and advocated leaving a 10-year-old girl with her schizophrenic mother. The child had begged me not to place her with her father whom she viewed as a bully. About 11 years later, I ran into her, and she thanked me for “saving her life.” Her brother who had been placed with their father in prison, but she was graduating from college, engaged, and in the process of buying her first home.

I have learned to blend diligent investigation with a gut-level instinct for coming up with the best recommendations. The feedback over the years has suggested that this combination has served my clients well. It is very satisfying to look back at my career and feel that I have made a difference.