Crabtree, Carpenter & Connolly, PLLC

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A Tasty Stew

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One ingredient in a kettle by itself is okay but when you add lots of ingredients and stir them all together you've got a pretty tasty stew,” said Durham Attorney Charlie Carpenter. “We decided that Guy Crabtree, Ryan Connolly and I practicing together made for a tasty stew.”

Crabtree, Carpenter and Connolly, PLLC (CCC) was formed at the start of 2015. All of the attorneys had worked at Pulley Watson King & Lischer, P.A. which was dissolved at the end of 2014. The iconic Durham firm was one of North Carolina’s leading plaintiff’s firms for over 30 years. Former Pulley Watson partners Malvern King and Tracy Lischer now serve as Of Counsel at the new firm.

CCC focuses on litigation, handling personal injury cases, toxic torts, commercial transactions and business disputes. And while the three partners are litigators and relish trying cases, each understands and appreciates that often a fair and reasonable settlement is preferable to going to court.

The partners are leveraging the benefits of operating a smaller law firm. “Because of our new business model, we can handle cases more expeditiously with less out-of-pocket costs assigned to a particular case,” said Guy Crabtree. “At the end of the day, I want to be able to hand the client their bill and they don't get sticker shock. Every dollar we spend on a case is a dollar that the client is not going to get in their net recovery. It’s all about maximizing the recovery for our client.”

“We are dedicated to being a lean, efficient firm. While larger firms with experienced attorneys are struggling to find alternative pricing structures, we can provide seasoned attorneys with reasonable costs that are already baked into the cake,” said Carpenter. “Another plus for us is that at a big firm, everyone is off work-

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By Bob Friedman
ing on their own cases. There is little team work,” said Carpenter. “We’re small enough that we can sit down and collaborate on each of our cases. Because we have attorneys of various ages, experiences and practice areas we can craft a more broad-based strategy for our clients.”

“I think Guy is the most compassionate member of the firm. He has the greatest feel for what his clients are going through. He’s a very good story teller and great with juries,” Carpenter continued. “Ryan is a younger lawyer who brings a lot of vigor and spirit to his cases. I’m the technical guy in the office, the rules guy. I’m good at organizing and outlining so all of us can get the same overview of a case.”

Charlie Carpenter

“I’ve been practicing for 33 years. Over the years I do feel like I’ve gained some insights and have been able to practice my craft a lot. I am a certified mediator and I have been able to employ those skills frequently in my litigation practice,” said partner Charlie Carpenter who litigates commercial business cases, medical malpractice and personal injury cases.

“I understand business,” Carpenter said. “My wife is in business, lots of my friends are in business. I always have my eyes and ears open to what they say about small and large business issues, so I’m up to speed when we get a new client with a business matter.”

“I never ask people to put away their principles,” he continued. “When it’s a business matter, I ask them to look at their cases a little differently, and approach things more from a rational business perspective. Lawsuits can cripple small businesses. They need to be out of litigation. Small businesses need to get past the emotional aspect of a case and get to the business aspect of it.”

Guy Crabtree

“I enjoy cross-examining more than anything else I do in the courtroom. I especially like cross-examining expert witnesses,” said Guy Crabtree of his 37-year personal injury practice.

Crabtree is soft-spoken and sincere. He has a way of drawing you in to listen to what he’s saying.

“I like the game of wits and I like to plan it out and make the points that I need to make and show the jury there is another side to the story.”

Crabtree litigates cases involving tractor-trailer and auto wreck injuries, environmental pollution, medical malpractice and nursing home negligence.

“I think a good, just settlement is always more beneficial than going into the arena, from my client’s standpoint,” he said. “I try to explain to them what it’s going to be like in the courtroom but until they are there, they don’t have a clue what could happen. But don’t get me wrong, I enjoy trying cases and do not hesitate to go that route if necessary to get justice for my client.”

Crabtree notes that it can be a challenge to get jurors to part with their cellphone and tablet mentality. “We are in the micro-information age. You get your information quickly and you move along. So I like to try to entertain the jurors. I like to use visuals to break up the testimony of my witnesses; to give them something to see and feel and experience.”

“Many years ago a friend of mine had my astrological chart done for me and the person who did my chart was surprised to hear I was an attorney because he said my chart was more of a teacher than an attorney,” said Crabtree. “I think when I am in the courtroom I try to teach and explain to the jury what they are about to see and what has happened to my client.”

Ryan Connolly

Connolly, an active cyclist and triathlete, is always excited to share his passion about bicycle safety, and speaks locally about legal rights and responsibilities as a cyclist. Bicycle accidents are among the kinds of personal injury cases he handles, along with business cases.

“Litigation is a huge source of stress for clients,” Connolly said. “I’m not sure clients fully appreciate that when we first get started. It can consume their lives and be like a cloud hanging over them. I try to give them some perspective so they can get back to their normal lives. We peel apart the onion and see what’s really important to the client.”

“I enjoy helping them get through that tough chapter of their life and begin to heal,” he continued.

Connolly said biking, running, gardening, cooking and spending time with his wife and three young children provide him with an important work/family balance. “For me to be an effective attorney I’ve got to be an effective husband and father,” said Connolly.

Malvern King

Malvern King was one of the founding partners of Pulley Watson. He handles primarily commercial transactions and process and estate planning and administration but he describes himself as a business lawyer. King works with small businesses through...
their entire lifetimes, from formation to transition.

“I really enjoy working with small business clients of all types. I admire what they do because they are creating new jobs and I think that’s really important,” said King. “I also enjoy assisting individual clients in planning for potential lifetime problems and disposition of their estates through Advance Directives and with Estate Planning and Administration.”

Throughout his law practice, King has been actively involved in the community, including the Durham Bar Association and the NC Bar Association, where he was chair of the Young Lawyers Section and Member of the Board of Governors.

Tracy Lischer

Tracy Lischer has spent 30 years handling cases of birth injury, untreated jaundice, injury from delayed cancer diagnosis, wrongful death, surgical mistakes, and other injuries caused by improper medical care.

She is devoted to representing children in cases around the country involving Kernicterus, a preventable neurological disorder in newborns that can cause brain damage.

“In 1990, when early discharge of mothers from the hospital began, then the jaundice didn’t peak until after the babies were discharged,” Lischer said. “It was caused by managed care and trying to cut down on hospital stays and for the insurance companies to save money.”

“The cases go undiagnosed and since there is liability attached, their parents aren’t told what the child has,” she continued. “They’re told their child has cerebral palsy or deafness but not why because it’s preventable.”

“These children have normal IQs,” Lischer finished. “They are just such wonderful, appealing children and all this happened when they were in their first five or six days of life. It’s rewarding to help these kids and it’s something we can help eradicate.”

Change is Good

“Sometimes change is an extremely good thing,” said Carpenter. “It’s opened our eyes to a lot of new things, new technologies. It’s been really refreshing and I think we are creating something that is very good.”