



# AMERICA'S GREATEST PLACES TO WORK WITH A LAW DEGREE

AND HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF  
ANY JOB, NO MATTER WHERE IT IS!

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FEATURES HUNDREDS OF  
TRADITIONAL & NON-TRADITIONAL  
EMPLOYERS NATIONWIDE!

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By Kimm Alayne Walton, J.D.

#### WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WORK THERE . . .

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When I was interviewing law school administrators, learning about the employers who ought to be included in this book, I heard an incredible story about McAndrews, Held: "They had a guy who had a two-year judicial clerkship, and everybody knows how wonderful *those* are. He gave up the second year of the clerkship to get back to the firm, he likes it so much there."

You don't have to spend much time talking to lawyers at MH&M to figure out what it was that made that judicial clerk such a rabid devotee. Associates rave that "People are really happy here," "The quality of life is really good," and "The lawyers here are very funny, just great to work with." It's a place where "there's a very casual atmosphere, every day," and, according to one associate, "The partners are incredible with families. My little girls all love George McAndrews"—the managing partner—"They run to him like he's their grandfather."

One standout feature of the firm is its diversity of personalities, which you wouldn't necessarily expect from a firm where almost all of the lawyers have either an undergraduate or graduate degree in science or engineering. Some associates affectionately refer to themselves as "Double-geeks—engineers *and* lawyers." Associates say that, "There are two different kinds of people who will be happy here, two totally different standards. Of course you've got a few of your studious types, the technonerd, the ones who like to hole up and write patents for 30 hours at a time. There's room for them here." But "On the other hand, you have lots

of very outgoing people, the kind who will be comfortable taking a deposition”—which is fortunate since 90% of the firm’s business involves litigation. As managing partner George McAndrews said in an interview with *Chicago Lawyer*, MH&M is the kind of place where lawyers who are also engineers and scientists can be comfortable, since the firm belies “the cobra-mongoose college history where the ‘Arts and Letters’ or business students derisively referred to engineers and science majors as ‘nerds.’”

The firm’s outstanding atmosphere stems from its recruiting philosophy. It makes a point of looking for people who have “more than a technical paper under their belt. *Everybody* here has that. That’s not what makes people stand out.” One associate speaks enthusiastically about “A candidate I interviewed who had flown Top Gun jets in the Navy! We love that kind of stuff. We look for interesting life experiences that people can weave in, other than jobs and papers they’ve written.”

*“The senior partners have a wealth of knowledge and experience and really seem to enjoy sharing it with you.”*

Much of the training at MH&M is a matter of “learning by example” with the guidance of more senior attorneys,” although the firm “also holds weekly CLE discussions over lunch.” Those CLEs, however, aren’t confined to lectures about evidence and procedure from local law professors. They have been far-ranging, including “stress management workshops, recent developments in patent law, and even a golf workshop!”

The firm makes a point of giving junior associates responsibility early on. They are assigned to “practice teams,” with most of their work flowing from their supervising partner. Lawyers report that you often find “first year associates taking depositions, doing presentations to clients, arguing motions, and writing appeal briefs.” One junior associate commented that on smaller cases, “We get substantial responsibility in our second year,” and another said that “it’s not unusual to do depositions within a few months of starting here.”

Associates rave about the quality of the work they get. One associate commented that “The work is much more interesting and exciting than I expected when I was in law school. I had a law school professor who said that he talked to graduates who complain that they’re bored. That’s definitely not the case here. There’s lots of variety, and it’s academically very challenging.” Associates say that “Doors are always open here. The partners are always available to help if you’ve got questions.”

Interestingly enough, it’s not the big, headline-making cases that associates consider the most fun, although they recognize that cases like that are the firm’s “bread and butter.” Instead, “The fun cases are the copyright and trademark cases.” One junior associate recalled working on a case for a statuary company—the kind of company that makes lawn dwarfs and that kind of thing—“where another statuary company had copied their animals.” The associate laughs that “We had all of these stone frogs, toads,

squirrels, rabbits sitting around the office. I'd be taking a deposition, with a gnome sitting there on the table, asking the witness for similarities between the gnome and a frog. It was great fun."

*"The senior partner has a playpen in his office!"*

MH&M is a "paradox" when it comes to family-friendliness. The lawyers all agree that the firm is very family-friendly, and every article that's appeared in local media backs that up. That would suggest that the lawyers put in light schedules, but that's not the case. Associates report that "It's a dichotomy. In terms of hours, it's a sweatshop. The culture is to work very long hours. But at the same time, they are interested in our families, and they really mean it."

The offices tend to fill up around 9 in the morning, with "a few people who come in at 8." Any weeknight "you might find yourself at the office until 10 p.m.," although "the evenings and weekends depend on cases—one or two practice teams at a time will have to work long hours." Associates say that "There might be 10 or 20 people in the office on the weekends," although "if you have nothing to do, you leave, no one cares, they're not watching over your shoulder." Despite the long hours, associates say that, "It's worth it to get the kind of responsibility I get in my cases. You don't mind prepping a motion if you draft it, too, and argue it in court, and I get to do that. I get to be on the front line, doing depositions, taking witnesses in front of a jury." That kind of responsibility "makes the work worthwhile," and it doesn't hurt that "We are very well paid. They are good about keeping us in line with the salaries at the big firms in town."

One of the ways the firm maintains a family-friendly atmosphere while expecting long hours is that "the firm bends over backwards to accommodate pregnant attorneys and attorneys with young children." One female attorney recalls telling George McAndrews that, "my difficult pregnancy would require ongoing testing that would reduce the amount of time I could be in the office. He told me to take whatever time I needed, that having a healthy baby was more important than anything else."

The firm recently instituted a policy that allows women attorneys with small children to work part-time. In fact, the firm is notoriously protective of the interests of its women attorneys. As one lawyer tells it, "Several years ago, an older client gave not-so-subtle hints that he would prefer not to have female associates assigned to his work. The firm responded by refunding all the fees he had paid, returning his files and suggesting that he would be happier being represented by some other firm." This attitude "has not been isolated. The firm is well-known for its understanding, support and equal treatment of female attorneys."

The firm's offices are incredibly kid-friendly, with a common observation that "it's not uncommon to see young children in the office." Lawyers report that "Half of the artwork in the firm are drawings made

by the children of attorneys and staff." One lawyer shares that "The senior partners not only say 'hi' to my children, they call my children into their offices and the kids get to choose a treat from their treat drawers." Lawyers also comment that "No one was surprised when a crib showed up in a senior partner's office and remained there, often with a baby of one of the associates having sitter problems."

The firm's interest in the welfare of children goes beyond the children of its employees. For the last four years, members of the firm have been involved in acting as "Secret Santas," answering letters to Santa written by underprivileged children in and around Chicago. "No letter that's received by the firm goes unanswered. If we get more letters than we have people from the firm who can participate in the program, the firm provides gifts to all remaining families."

*"The people here are great to be around,  
at the office and outside of work, as well."*

Associates say that "We socialize together a lot. We'll have poker games, things like that." They say that "Attorneys will routinely get together on weekends with families and kids, and the single ones will routinely go out together every couple of weeks."

The firm itself sponsors picnics, golf, basketball and football outings, and formal parties for the whole firm. In addition, the firm provides weekly breakfasts, as well as "spontaneous free lunches, as well as ice cream and cake parties to celebrate court victories, birthdays, and any other events that come up!" The firm also "encourages, if not sponsors, outings to sporting events, like Bulls, Cubs, or White Sox games, for all of the employees." Associates also like the firm's "annual Christmas party at Sears Tower," although they appreciate even more "the McAndrews philosophy of giving you money instead of perks."

All in all, associates feel that "Everything here is structured like a family, with George McAndrews as the patriarch. He gives us the philosophy of taking care of each other and the staff, and working hard. He talks about the 400 people who depend on our paychecks—all of our families. He cares about us, and he gets involved in the work we do. This is just a great place to work."