

A Lawyer Who Just Wants Some Fun

By TINA KELLEY

SO there's this tense moment, see, in the life of the lawyer defending Acme Sleigh in a product liability suit, brought by a Mr. Claus in an unidentified northern state.

*"I made a motion to bring the trial to a halt," the lawyer recalls,
"That one of Santa's helpers was instead at fault
"The judge rejected my argument as without sense,
" 'In this jurisdiction you can't plead elf defense.' "*

The real-life lawyer and songwriter closest to this case is Lawrence Savell, of Croton-on-Hudson, whose newly updated compact disc, "The Lawyer's Holiday Humor Album," features songs like "Let 'em Sue" and "Bill Those Hours," (to the tunes of "Let It Snow" and "Jingle Bells," respectively.) Another song, "All I Want for Christmas Is a Stomach Lining," features rhymes between Santa and Mylanta.

The judge in the above-captioned case, by the way, refused to throw out the case with a summary judgment, since it's winter. Ar ar ar.

Mr. Savell, 46, has a day job as a lawyer at the eminent Manhattan firm Chadbourne & Parke, but late at night, after he has tucked in his two sons, ages 2 and 3, he writes original songs and the occasional set of new lyrics to old standard tunes. He also wears a Winnie the Pooh and Piglet tie, perhaps part of his campaign to change the world's dismal view of lawyers and to show that a regular job need not stifle creativity.

"Lawyers have a very strange image, that they're stuck up and dull," he said. "Some of them are. I want to show that we don't take ourselves too seriously."

His day job provides him with endless inspiration for songs, as well as the wherewithal to afford the equipment he keeps in his recording studio and office at home.

"You don't have to go to a studio," he said. "You just need a relatively quiet computer, some software under \$100 and a half-way decent microphone." He plays guitar and keyboard, with a little help from the software called "Band-in-a-Box."

His law firm has encouraged his music-making, inviting him to play at office par-



Susan Stava for The New York Times

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ties, even paying for studio rehearsal time for him and the co-workers in his band. The band has had what Mr. Savell calls "multiple iterations," including a cross-section of Chadbourne staff members — lawyers, partners, associates, paralegals, word processing workers and support staff — and has had various names, including "The Breach (of Contract) Boys." "I don't think you could do what I do at other firms," he said. "The firm is supportive, to the point where they would ask me, 'Could you send a CD to the client?' It shows we have an outside life, and we're not stuck up."

EVEN though his avocation fills up valuable hours that most people would spend sleeping, it keeps him sane, he said.

"Letting yourself vent this way, you feel more that you've done what you want to do, that you haven't had to give it up," he said. "I think being able to enjoy or express ourselves or just blow off steam ends up making us happier, and thus better, at what we do that actually pays our bills."

Asked if he would ever consider quitting his day job for music, he barely pauses before saying yes.

"My ultimate goal is to achieve success with some of the over 100 serious songs I have written," he explained. "I have over the years submitted a few of these songs to the major labels, with no success."

But that hasn't kept him from trying a variety of ways to break in to the market. He said he has convinced the publicist for Mike Love, of the Beach Boys, to send to Mr. Love one of his CD's and a request for

Mr. Love to sing with him, as part of a charity project.

His other inspirations include Roy Orbison and Bruce Springsteen. (Mr. Savell did a parody album cover of the Boss's hit, "Born to Run," changing it to "Born to Pun.") His first paycheck from Chadbourne & Parke went to a Rickenbacker electric guitar, like the one John Lennon played.

Next, he may branch out to writing children's music, "given my built-in focus group," he said.

His CD's are made in Harlem by a company that charges less than \$1 each, including printing. His music is available at his site, Lawtunes.com, and also at Amazon.com and CDBaby.com.

There's a note in fine print on the back of the jewel case of "The Lawyer's Holiday Humor Album" that is worth reading:

"Let the record reflect that said album constitutes a non-denominational holiday celebration intended to evidence that lawyers can make and take a good-natured joke about themselves without resulting in protracted (albeit lucrative) litigation."

There's also a glossary, for those who aren't familiar with terms like "Skadden Arps," another major law firm; "cites," citations identifying court decisions and other legal materials; and "Does," meaning "multiple currently unidentified ('John Doe') parties to a lawsuit."

That's helpful for those who might not otherwise understand the case of Santa v. Acme Sleigh. The antlered co-plaintiffs are known as "Does One through Eight."