

John W. Frost, II

Commitments to family, community and the legal profession mark the new president of The Florida Bar

by Mary Smith Judd

Ashley Frost broke the code at an early age. When her kindergarten class was discussing their parents' professions, "I stood up and said, 'My dad argues and people pay him money,'" recalls the oldest daughter of John Wesley Frost, II.

Frost's younger daughter, Kerry, concurs, warning that the new Bar president "is never wrong, even when he's wrong."

"He'll argue with a wall," she says. "And he'll win."

Those who know Frost best agree he was born to take on a good dispute, but add to his list of qualities meticulousness, thoroughness, intensity, and passion. They describe him as a private, family-oriented detail man and highly skilled civil litigator.

But they also describe a doting father, with a compassionate heart and an unrivaled devotion to his community. He also has an artistic streak, they say.

What else can Florida's lawyers expect from their new Bar leader?

Raising the standards of lawyers as professionals tops his list of goals for the upcoming year, as well as blocking future attempts to switch control of the Bar's budget from the Supreme Court to the legislature.

Professionalism is not just a buzzword to Frost, said partner Neal O'Toole. "If everyone in the State of Florida treated clients the way John Frost does, people would think lawyers were the nicest people in the world. He represents people like he was representing his mother."

He is a strong proponent of the Professionalism Center that was proposed by the Bar's Committee on Lawyer Pro-

fessionalism and approved by the Board of Governors in May, underscoring an interest in raising professional standards that goes back almost 20 years, when he served on the special commission that revamped Florida's lawyer disciplinary system. He also has been active in the Inns of Court movement, served on the committee that established certification standards for civil trial lawyers, and was among the first class of trial lawyers to earn that credential.

"He expects a lot from everyone, but nothing more than he expects from himself," said Paula White, Frost's secretary for 17 years. White has worked with Frost for 22 years, starting out as secretary to a young associate at Holland & Knight, where Frost began practicing.

Frost was born August 23, 1942, in Jacksonville. He was named for his father, who left the family and moved out of state when Frost was five years old. His sisters, Barbara and Jacque, were nearly grown when their parents separated. His brother, Mark, was only a year old.

"Basically I was raised in a single-parent home," Frost said. "I credit my mom. I think she did a wonderful job in what was a difficult situation. She had raised two girls in a family situation. Now, here she was raising two guys on her own."

In the days following World War II, there were few single-parent families, Frost said. "None of my friends were in a situation like ours," he said. "We never owned an automobile. We never took a vacation."

Baseball and high school football dominated much of his free time. A knee injury prevented him from accepting an athletic scholarship and, later, from enlisting in the Marine Corps Reserves.

Instead, he attended the University of Florida, where he

"He utilizes his time and talents better than anyone I know. There's not a moment wasted in John's life."

Mary Smith Judd is assistant editor of *The Florida Bar News*

paid his way by waiting tables and managing the dining room of his Kappa Alpha fraternity.

In his junior year, Frost met his future wife, Terry, in an economics class. To this day, he is still baffled how Terry—who by her own admission struggled through the class—earned an “A” while he received a “C.”

After revealing this nagging, 33-year-old conundrum, Frost added, “She is one of the brightest people I’ve ever met.”

“What John won’t tell you is that he set the curve in our photography class,” said Terry. “That’s his artistic side. He’s very meticulous. I’m a global person. I’d be through with all my shots and he’d still be setting up his first one.”

As an undergraduate, she recalled, he was a good student, ambitious, but “a normal college guy who did normal college guy things.”

“He thought UF was the best,” Terry said. “To me, it was big, scary, and loud.”

When Frost graduated in 1964, he took with him not only an advertising degree, but the fiercest team loyalty those who know him best say they’ve ever witnessed.

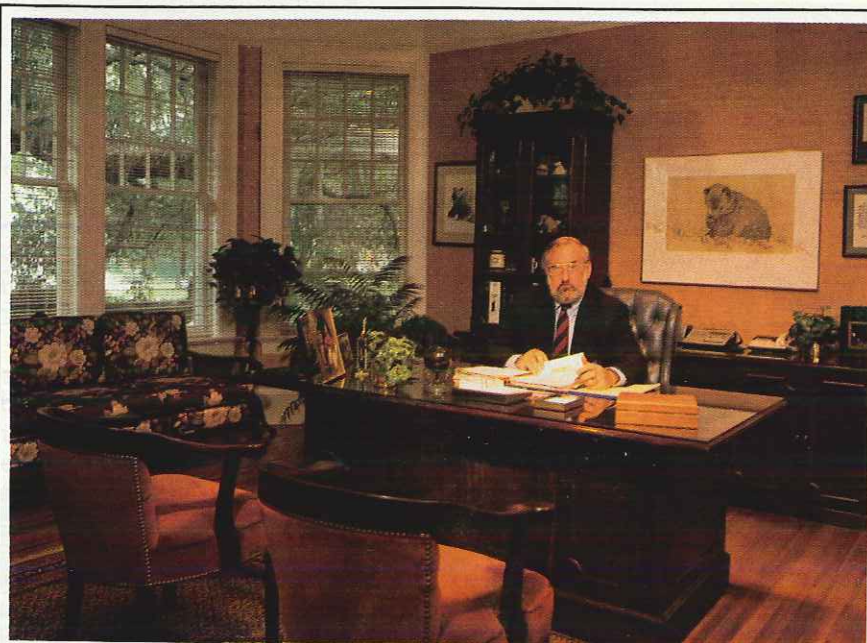
“He’s a Bull Gator. He’s the most Bull Gator I ever ran into,” said 10th Circuit Judge Susan Roberts, Frost’s classmate at Florida State University College of Law.

His walls bear diplomas from both schools, and his presidency marks the first ever by an FSU law alumni. “Talk about your divided loyalties,” Roberts said. “But he’s also very loyal to our law school.”

The loyalty she refers to includes large measures of both time and money. He has served as a director on the law school’s alumni association since 1976, was president from 1982 to 1983, a member of the board of visitors since 1994, and was a member of the panel that tapped now FSU President Sandy D’Alemberte as law dean in 1984.

In 1993, Frost donated the first \$100,000 endowment the school had ever received from an individual. The following year, to commemorate his daughter’s graduation from the law school, he asked that the name of the gift be changed to the John W. and Ashley E. Frost Endowed Professorship.

“The law school gave me the support and training to do something that I really enjoy,” Frost told *FSU Law*, the alumni magazine. “I have an obligation to the institution that gave me that



Memories from a Trial Practice

“Proces Arton: De,” an original Henri-Marie Toulouse-Lautrec lithograph, catches your eye when you enter John Frost’s office. Souvenirs of past cases also divert the visitor’s concentration.

There are the four toy cars and a truck left over from *Mealy v. The Department of Transportation*, a 1979 case in which a New Jersey couple was awarded \$850,000, the highest jury verdict returned in Polk County at that time for a personal injury case.

There is also the hard hat from representing the builder of the county courthouse. A scorched switch from a defective fryer, responsible for a restaurant’s burning, sits in a glass case.

Frost concedes that he is a detail person. “I probably too much tend to be a perfectionist,” he said. “That’s what happens,” he shrugs.

The case shouldn’t vary at all, he says. “It should be fact specific.”

In the “war room,” a storage room where Frost prepares for trials, newspaper clippings describe a 1979 victory in which Frost showed that Frostproof doctor Kenneth Dunham did not coerce his patient through hypnosis to leave him her estate.

There are also several boxes marked “Sofka,” records from a nine-year-old case still on appeal where model Donna Sofka was injured, and is now a quadriplegic. The jury awarded \$6.2 million, which is now the biggest verdict in Polk County. “The client became a really special person to my entire family,” Frost said. “From a legal standpoint, it is a significant case, but also being able to make her life a little better is important to me.”

Another case close to Frost’s heart was one against air traffic controllers after his best friend, John Daley, and another lawyer were killed in a plane crash. The verdict was \$1.8 million for Daley’s wife and three children.

Nicholodi v. Harley Davidson was significant legally, Frost said, because it established the crashworthiness test for motorcycles.

A case in which Frost convinced the court that a power company should not put a power line through a Boy Scout campground is considered one of the leading cases in eminent domain law.

“We take on cases with questionable liability if we believe in the cause,” Frost said. “I remember a medical malpractice case we tried twice. The first time it was a hung jury and the second time we lost, but I’m still convinced there was malpractice.”

'He has the ability to put himself in the jury's shoes'



A circa-1915 house is home to the eight-lawyer firm run by Frost and partners Neal O'Toole (left) and Tom Saunders.

It is a picture book sort of spring day and the president-elect of The Florida Bar walks decisively down cedar-lined Broadway Avenue, the dominant street in Bartow. In one massive hand he grasps a thick binder and an expandable file folder as easily as he might have carried a football 40 years earlier. In the other hand he carries a human skull.

It is 8 a.m. and traffic is about as dense as it gets in this county seat of just under 15,000 residents. John Frost has lived here for 27 years, and he knows many of those "Bartowans," nomenclature they have originated for themselves.

He doesn't smile, exactly, just sort of nods and lifts his hand, twisting the skull to greet those he recognizes in the oncoming cars.

Frost is on his way to

Judge Prince returns to his chambers to deliberate. While he's gone, Frost moves the skull to a shelf in the podium. When the judge returns, he rules in Frost's favor.

The jury is seated. "On October 30, 1993, Ella Keeble's life changed for the worse," Frost begins.

He tells the jurors she bit into a clam in her soup and broke a tooth on a piece of quartz, cutting her right cheek and traumatizing the temporal mandibular joint on the left side.

He pulls out the skull and shows them where the injury is. He describes the extent of her injury, the costs associated with it and the impact it has had on her life.

The first witness, a maxillofacial surgeon, sits down in the jury box, with the jurors seated around him in a half circle as he explains Keeble's magnetic resonance image films.

Chief among Frost's litigating strengths is his ability to size up his audience. "At jury trials, he has the ability to put himself in their shoes and present information so they can understand it," said 10th Circuit Judge Randolph Bentley. "He's a great communicator."

"He never permits himself to become rattled," said Judge Oliver Green. "He never permits himself to become discourteous. In all of that, he has a forcefulness that won't be ignored. He's one of those people who, if he wasn't anyone you knew about, and in a room full of people, you would notice him. He has a natural magnetism about him."

And he's tough. Partner Tom Saunders first knew Frost by opposing him in court for several years.

Saunders said he always viewed Frost as straightforward, ethical and fair, "but he's someone who you had to be careful with because he knew exactly what he was doing and certainly played all the statutes and rules to the advantage of his client."

After six days of testimony, the verdict is in. Mrs. Keeble is awarded \$113,000. "We're pleased," Frost says.

trial. It is opening day in *Keeble v. Campbell's Soup*.

He points to the old courthouse on his right. It is being renovated and will soon serve as a historical library and museum. He remarks that he misses the days when trials were held there, when lawyers and judges chatted in the hallways.

Across the street, the newer nine-story courthouse dwarfs its predecessor. It is impersonal, Frost says. Despite its infamy as a "sick building" in the late 1980s and early 1990s, forcing judges and lawyers to move out and try cases in 10 different locations around town, the courthouse is now sound.

Inside, the tan marble and austere fixtures speak of business. Frost greets the clerk in Judge Dick Prince's courtroom. "What? Are they bringing you out of retirement?" Frost teases Woodrow Wilson Howell, named for the man who was president the day he was born.

He discusses church activities with a court reporter. Two court reporters have been retained for this case because daily transcripts will be requested.

The defense team is composed of a lawyer representing Campbell's Soup and one from J.H. Miles Co., the supplier of the clams used in Campbell's clam chowder. On either side of the lawyers are a representative from Campbell's and Mr. Miles himself.

The plaintiff is Ella Keeble. She wears her long, white hair pulled back and uses a polished cane to help her stand when the judge enters. Mark Sessums from Frost's firm is co-counsel.

The jurors have arrived. The next hour is spent debating the admissibility of charts the defense would like to present during opening statements.

Frost argues they contain information not yet entered into evidence, and therefore cannot be used in opening.

opportunity.”

“That historic gift to the law school caused other individuals to follow suit,” FSU Law Dean Don Weidner noted. “John’s long been considered a friend of this law school and has been very supportive of the faculty, particularly those who are active in the profession.”

John and Terry Frost married in January of 1965 and moved to Ft. Lauderdale. The future president worked the next year and a half as a sales representative for Citgo, while Terry worked as a reporter for *The Miami Herald*.

“I wasn’t especially happy with the job, but it was a living,” Frost said. “When I graduated from UF, I had zero dollars.”

A Turning Point

Practicing law was not an immediate calling for Frost. “A lot of people say they knew since they were in the sixth grade they wanted to be lawyers. When I was in the sixth grade, I wanted to be a professional athlete,” he said.

While in training at Citgo, Frost was pumping gas for a customer one day and overheard a father scolding his son that if he were to drop out of college, he too might find himself pumping gas. That was Frost’s epiphany.

In the fall of 1966, he enrolled in the inaugural class at Florida State University’s College of Law. Terry accepted a job as the education reporter for the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

Frost also worked during law school, doing clerical work for the state Comptroller’s office and teaching a contracts class to paralegals.

Everything he studied convinced the future litigator that tax law should be his vocation. In fact, Frost’s senior paper was titled “Florida Homestead and the Marital Deduction.”

“Forget it. That was always a ridiculous idea,” said Judge Roberts. “I remember that he wanted to have an office practice, but he’s always been such an extrovert. I remember thinking, ‘What’s he doing, taking all those tax courses?’”

During his final year at FSU, Frost found his true niche, when he and other students, including Roberts, participated in Honor Court.

“John was the prosecutor, I was the defense attorney, and he beat my butt,” Judge Roberts recalled. “He was aggressive then when he was in trial, and he’s



A former reporter, Terry Frost now teaches school. Ashley (right) is assistant director of alumni affairs at the FSU College of Law, while Kerry is a teacher in Winter Park.

still aggressive. He was very well-prepared then, and he’s still very well-prepared.”

Roberts also remembers Frost, who graduated second in a class of 95, as being mature. “John did important stuff, like *study*, when some of us were playing bridge and dating.”

In Good Company

After law school, Frost accepted a job as Holland & Knight’s 26th lawyer and went to work in the firm’s Bartow office. Today the firm is the largest in Florida, with just more than 400 lawyers.

Frost was in good company. The firm’s senior partners in 1969 included Will-

iam O.E. Henry and Chesterfield Smith, who both went on to serve as president of the Bar.

“We feel like we inculcated in him a love of The Florida Bar—a feeling of its significance and importance to the profession—and his obligation to help it,” Smith said.

Frost’s supervisor for the first four years was Stephen Grimes. The future Supreme Court chief justice then headed the firm’s litigation department, a job that would become Frost’s when Grimes was appointed to serve on the Second District Court of Appeal.

“He was the finest young trial lawyer I had ever seen,” Justice Grimes said. “It was evident early on that he

would be a very successful trial lawyer. He's extremely energetic, has good values, and can get along with people. I'm confident he can put all that together and have a really successful year as president."

Frost recalls Grimes as always a gentleman. "I received great training in the practice of law," he said. "Going to work for him was the best move I ever made."

"From Steve I learned the importance of preparing," Frost said. "He did then, and still does, much of his own research. He was a great preparer."

Working under Grimes led Frost to counsel young lawyers looking at joining firms to ask who would train them. "Who's going to train you? That's the

most important consideration."

Those familiar with his practice say Frost has continued to polish the skills he learned early in his career at Holland & Knight.

"He's a superb lawyer, one of the best prepared lawyers I've ever seen," said 10th Circuit Judge Randolph Bentley. "He's also very intellectual and diverse."

"He communicates facts so that you can't misunderstand them," said 10th Circuit Judge Oliver Green. "The whole firm is a pleasure for me to deal with."

Frost became a partner in Holland & Knight after only five years. "There was never any question that he would be offered partner at the earliest time we considered it," Smith said. "He became a very quality litigator faster than most

people. I thought John knew how to handle legal issues and matters with both clients and courts much quicker than the average intelligent and high-quality person that we brought in as a beginner. He seemed to have a feel for it right from the start."

Henry likewise recalled Frost's litigating abilities as extraordinary. "I have always felt that a firm needed to have in its litigation group a 'hot dog'—the kind of aggressive lawyer who basically can't stand to lose, and will therefore put in the effort and almost always succeed," he said. "John was one of our best hot dogs."

Frost, O'Toole and Saunders

"The problem, from a firm standpoint,

'We need to stop talking and do something . . .'

"Lawyers need to stop talking about professionalism and start doing something about it," John Frost said. "If we can't get along, I don't know how we can expect the public to perceive of us as professionals."

In the time he has practiced, Frost said, he has seen the relationships between lawyers change drastically.

"I can remember when I never wrote a confirming letter on a telephone conversation," he said. "If someone would call and say, 'I need an extension of 10 days,' I'd say, 'Fine, you've got 10 days,' and that's where it would be. Now you've got to write confirming letters."

Frost said he is especially excited by The Florida Bar's Professionalism Center that will begin this year. The center was initiated by an ad hoc committee on professionalism chaired by Supreme Court Justice Harry Lee Anstead and was approved by the Board of Governors at its Key West meeting in May.

As a speaker at a recent seminar on professionalism and ethics, Frost said he was surprised by how many ways exist to look at a single dilemma. "And yet, you could always take the high road in all of those instances," he said.

Frost's definition of professionalism is to seek the next highest level in all aspects of being a lawyer.

For a man with a bachelor's degree in advertising, he has pretty strong words about the proliferation of lawyer advertising. "I think it's the worst thing that ever happened to our profession," he said. "I think it made us look like used car

salesmen." Below are the president's views on other issues critical to the Bar in the upcoming year:

• **UPL**—"I think we're on the right track," he said. "We need to protect the public from people who are practicing without

a license. I think [Bar staff] does a wonderful job, but it's time to make sure we're protecting the public from these people."

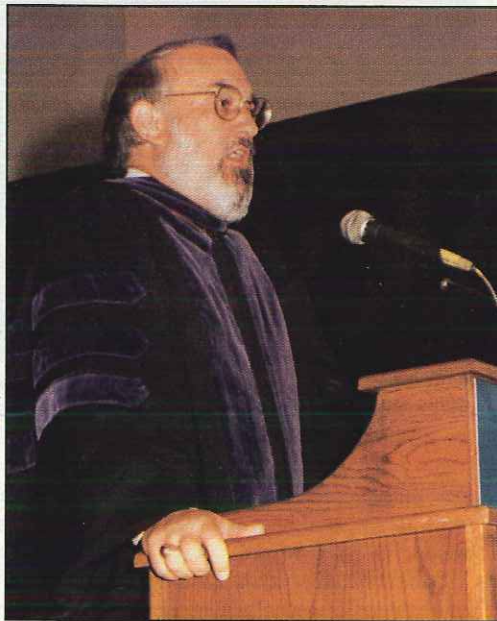
• **Mandatory reporting of pro bono**—"Tough subject," Frost said. "I believe we need some way to report what lawyers are doing in the pro bono area. I'm not convinced that mandatory reporting is the way to do it."

• **Term limits for board members**—"I think it's a great idea," Frost said. "The more people we can get to serve as leaders in the Bar, the more people will understand how important it is to take an active role. Being on the board has been one of the highlights of my legal career, and I think everyone should have an opportunity to do that."

• **CLE**—Frost said the Bar needs to continue to make CLE available and reasonably priced. Soon, he said, he would like to see many

CLE courses available through the Internet so lawyers won't have to travel to often expensive locations and can meet their requirements from their own offices.

• **Grievance and discipline**—"There is always room for improvement," he said, "but I think this is one area where we stand out in comparison to other bar associations. I think it needs to be made clear to the public that we're not self-regulating, but are regulated by the Supreme Court."



Frost's address to graduating University of Florida College of Law students encouraged them to always seek the high road.

with hot dogs, is that they're pretty independent," Henry continued. "Almost always, in due course, they will leave the large firm and open their own boutique firm."

And so he did.

In 1981 Frost left Holland & Knight with John Purcell and opened a full-service firm.

Purcell left in 1989 and the firm went to strictly civil litigation, said partner Neal O'Toole. In 1992, O'Toole's name was added to the letterhead, and two years later, the firm became Frost, O'Toole and Saunders with the addition of Tom Saunders.

The firm today employs eight lawyers in its offices in the restored and expanded Mary McLeod House, built in 1915. Frost bought the house from First Presbyterian Church, the Frosts' church for 27 years, where he has served several terms as an elder and she sings in the choir.

"I always heard John say he wanted to get out of the rat race of a large firm, get into small practice and sit out on the porch and rock and socialize," said longtime friend Gerald Tucker. "Once things in his own firm got rolling, that was kind of forgotten. There was this drive to make this thing successful. I've seen him apply the same competitiveness he takes with him into athletics in the courtroom and the practice of law."

Paula White agrees. The firm is very active in a number of civic and charitable projects, including major sponsorship of an annual "Making Strides Against Cancer" walk. "He manages to beat us all in the five-mile walk," she said. "He even walked backwards one year just to win a bet he had made with one of the firm's secretaries."

The office dynamic is very much like a family, with its own ground rules, said O'Toole.

First, Frost likes firm lawyers to live in the community—living in Bartow, where the average commute to work is under five minutes, makes working 12-hour days easier, he said.

Second, all lawyers are required to have at least one pro bono case open at all times. Most of the lawyers donate 40 to 50 hours per year.

Third, associates are trained in the tradition of the partners. "New lawyers become John's property for about a

year," O'Toole observed.

The county seat of "Imperial" Polk County, Bartow's population is just under 15,000 and has grown by little more than 3,000 people in the past two decades.

"It's a great place to raise a family," Frost said. Both his daughters have left Bartow, but return home often. Ashley, 27, is assistant director of alumni affairs at FSU's College of Law, while Kerry, 24, is a teacher in Winter Park.

Living in a small town agrees with Frost. Living in Bartow may mean traveling to Lakeland to see a movie. "But when we talk about going to Lakeland, that's 20 minutes. That's less time than it takes some people to drive across town in Tampa or Orlando."



A lifelong athlete, Frost got a hit off of Hall-of-Famer Don Drysdale at Dodgers' "fantasy camp" in 1982.

It is another hour to Tampa, where the Frosts hold season theater tickets at the Performing Arts Center, or to Orlando, where they cheer the Magic.

The Frosts are not more than 10 minutes from work, community events, or church, a proximity which suits his temperament. "I hate traffic and I hate to stand in lines," he said.

In contrast to the antique furnishings and artwork that adorn the 81-year-old office, the Frosts' home is extremely contemporary and was designed for low maintenance.

To understand the difference between Frost and his wife, one need only look at them. In contrast to Frost's large and

unflappable presence, Terry is petite and constantly in motion. He loves big city vacations; she loves hiking in New England. He argues cases for a living; she is an English teacher.

She describes her husband, whom she calls "Frosty," as a very gregarious person, while she craves quiet after a night of socializing.

The pair's opposing responses to crowds took both of them many years to understand, Terry said. "I couldn't understand why he was raring to go at midnight," she said. "Now that I do understand he is simply an extrovert, I just go home and go to bed."

Family life is important to both Frosts, and Terry said that is why she abandoned journalism for motherhood.

"I didn't want to do something where you have to be so tough," she explained. After the children were older, she began teaching. This year she will take a leave of absence to travel with her husband and work toward her master's degree at the University of South Florida.

Florida Bar Service

Following service on the Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors from 1971 to 1979—the last year as president—and helping with the Karl Commission's modernization of lawyers' disciplinary procedures for the Supreme Court, Frost said he temporarily retired as a "Bar groupie" in favor of family life.

After his daughters were grown, he looked around and saw a very changed profession. "In some ways, I didn't like what I saw," he said. So he ran for the Board of Governors in 1992, and two years later decided to seek the Bar's top office.

Others talked about running, he said, but he ended up without opposition after collecting 2,200 signatures—1,700 more than the number required to get on the ballot.

Splitting the state into zones, he enlisted the help of friends from his YLD days, as well as others from around the state to collect the signatures. "I wanted to get as much support as I could," he said. "If we were going to do it, I wanted to do it the right way."

Not having to campaign was a blessing, Frost said. "I think my partners were more pleased, because they knew how much time and money it would

take to run."

Another person pleased with Frost's uncontested election was John DeVault.

"There is no question. No one could have had a better president-elect during their term than I have," the immediate past president remarked. "I knew it before, but working with him this year has proven that he is going to be an extremely good Bar president. He has excellent judgment and tremendous depth of knowledge and understanding."

DeVault said Frost brings to the Bar "a calm sense of reason and judgment based on experience as a trial lawyer." He especially valued Frost's ability to reach out to segments of the Bar that have felt left out of decision-making and to draw them in.

"I've seen that with his approach to women lawyers, to the minority community, to small firms," DeVault said.

"You are getting a man who is a family man, a person who is extremely active in his community, who is active in his church, and has a very deep commitment to his profession," said former Bar President Ben Hill of Tampa.

In addition to his professional and civic obligations, Frost provides "color" comments on WBF Radio for the Bartow High School Yellow Jackets, "which gives you some insight into how a very successful lawyer has not forgotten his community and the youth in his community," Hill said.

Hill and Frost have been friends for more than 25 years, having met when they both served on the Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors. Their relationship was solidified by opposing each other for YLD president, Hill recalled. "It was an unusual way for a friendship to begin."

While Hill won that race, Frost ran successfully two years later.

"John is a team person and he loves to be the leader," Terry Frost said. "But the team benefits because he's very conscious of what the team needs."

He loves to have fun, Terry said. "But he generally takes himself and others very seriously. He is both generous and demanding."

He is well-known in Bartow for both sides of his personality. Gerald Tucker recalls that when his wife, a secretary for the Frost firm, lay ill and dying from cancer, Frost supported the family not only emotionally, but financially, keeping her on the payroll after she could

no longer work.

Tucker thanked Frost by letter two years ago, 11 years after his wife's death. "Your stature with The Florida Bar nor your physical size will ever exceed the size of your heart," Tucker wrote.

Thinking back, Frost said quietly, "Those things mean much more than big verdicts."

"One of his biggest assets is that he respects people with varying viewpoints," Terry said. "He doesn't fit the liberal mold or the conservative mold."

Longtime friend David Black said he cannot think of a single organization Frost has ever participated in where he wasn't a leader, or at least a major player. "If he's going to be involved in something, he gives all of himself," Black said. "He utilizes his time and talents probably better than anyone I know. There's not a moment wasted in John's life."

Black said what he is most impressed by is that Frost gives as freely of his time and talent as he does money. The time, Black said, is often the most valuable and hardest to give.

"There are people who belong to things and they just belong," said Judge Bentley. "He goes out and *does* things."

A quick glance at Frost's resume supports Judge Bentley's view. Frost has served as a master of the Willson American Inn of Court for the past six years and was its president this past year.

He is board certified, and served on the Civil Trial Law Certification Committee from its inception in 1982 to 1989, and was chair from 1987-88.

He is a 20-year board member of the Polk County Trial Lawyers Association, and served as the group's president from 1980-82.

Frost's activity in the Bar has been a constant, since his appointment to the Supreme Court's Karl Committee in 1977, formed to study lawyer regulation, to his present activity as a CLE lecturer. He also is past-chair of the special committee to study prepaid legal services (1977-78), a past member of the Trial Lawyers Section's executive council (1976-82), and past chair of the Board of Governors Investment Committee (1992-94) and Program Evaluation Committee (1994-95).

Judge Bentley also praised Frost for his ability to see the forest. "Not just in the law, but where the community is, where society is, the art, politics," he

said. "In many ways he is a renaissance man. There are many people who practice law and know nothing else."

Frost's diversity of interests includes his longstanding commitment to the Polk Museum of Art, where he served as president from 1993-1994. "He's not just on the board," Bentley said. "He knows what is being hung up and he has opinions about it."

What is Frost's management style? "It's 'this is how we're going to do it,'" Terry Frost said. "But he backs that up with his own effort."

"He can be very tenderhearted, but can be very self-absorbed when he's working toward a goal."

"It all starts with John," said O'Toole. "Ever since I joined the firm, he gets in at 7 a.m. and leaves at 9 p.m., works Saturdays and Sundays. He has a work ethic—and I don't mean just being at work—that I've never run across before."

The Bar is getting a person who will give everything he has, said O'Toole. "He's going to do a full and complete job."

O'Toole said he and Saunders often joke that since he became president-elect, they have witnessed a "kinder, gentler John."

"He's loosened up because of the Bar thing," O'Toole said. But Frost's reduced hours at the firm have not brought about what the staff expected—despite warnings that he would be out of the office on Bar business half of the time as president-elect and full-time as president, so far it has worked out to only a few days every other week, he said.

"John Frost is really committed to the practice of law. That's what he does Saturdays. That's what he does Sundays," O'Toole said. "He's done all the things you're supposed to do before you become Bar president. He's worked hard for 30 years. He's earned the right to do something different. I don't think he's going to miss a beat around here."

While Frost is out of town tending to Bar business, his staff scans in a day's mail and sends him messages over the Internet.

"I can work at night. I can do it anytime," Frost said.

It lengthens the day, "but when I go back to the office, the work isn't so backed up," he said. "And maybe [as Bar president] I can still practice a little law." □