

Rob Sholl

Of Counsel, Labor & Employment Department, Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C.
Member Since 1992 (Wauwatosa-Mayfair)
Rotary Club of Milwaukee Member Since 2002

Experiences we have as young adults often guide the entire trajectory of our lives. Just ask Rob Sholl.

The five summers he spent on the line at the General Motors Janesville Assembly Plant in the 1970s sparked an interest in labor law and set him on a path to become a labor/employment law attorney.

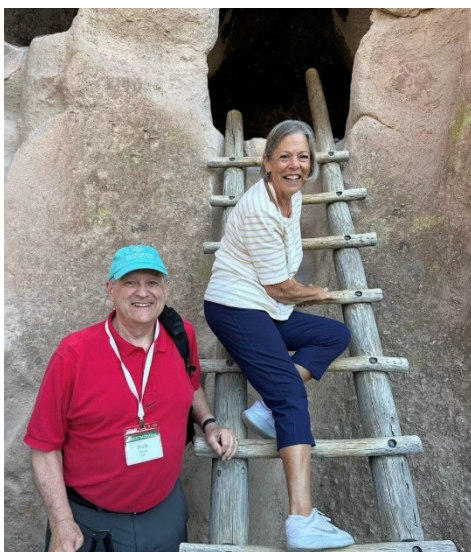
“I was a member of United Auto Workers Local 95 at the plant, which employed 7,100 employees during the last summer I worked there. Sadly, for Janesville’s economy, the plant closed in 2008,” said Rob, who grew up in Janesville. “But that’s where my interest in labor law began.”



After graduating from Dartmouth College, Rob was attending the University of Chicago Law School when he received a Rotary scholarship to earn his master’s degree in industrial relations at the University of Warwick Business School in England. There, his interest in labor law grew. He conducted his thesis research in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during “The Troubles.”

“I interviewed union officials, who were predominantly Catholic, and management officials, who were predominantly Protestant. It was a very tense time to be there,” said Rob, recalling buildings with chicken wire-covered windows to deflect Molotov cocktails.

Rob earned his Juris Doctor from Chicago and has been practicing labor and employment law for nearly 45 years, exclusively representing management. He served as chair of the State Bar of Wisconsin’s Labor & Employment Law Section, president of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Labor and Employment Relations Association, chair of Reinhart’s Labor & Employment Law Department, and was elected as a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Wisconsin Law Foundation.



What is it about labor and employment law that has kept him so engaged?

“While it focuses on workplace rights, duties and disputes, at its heart it deals with people: employers and workers. It’s the human element that makes this practice area so interesting. Every case is factually unique, as are the personalities involved.”

It’s also enabled him to cultivate meaningful professional connections.

“It’s been very rewarding to develop close working relationships with company officers and HR directors. I enjoy learning about their businesses, counseling them on how to prevent problems from arising in the first place, helping them through difficult situations and defending them in court.”

And the most challenging aspect of his work?

“Litigation. It’s both mentally and physically taxing. My clients, without exception, want their employees to succeed. Some put up with unbelievably poor performance before terminating a problem employee and only after coaching has proved unavailing. On the other hand, rare is the ex-employee who believes the company acted fairly in letting him go. These vastly differing perceptions lead to some challenging lawsuits.”

During his successful career, Rob also wrote noteworthy books.

“I’m proud to be one of the original co-authors of the three-volume treatise, ‘Wisconsin Employment Law,’ published by the state bar, now in its 9th edition.” He also co-authored “Hiring and Firing in Wisconsin,” which received the national Award of Professional Excellence from the Association of Continuing Legal Education.

Rob’s work ethic was instilled by his father, a doctor who worked his way up from humble beginnings.

“My father was my biggest influence growing up. He worked extremely hard, took on leadership roles in several professional organizations, generously volunteered his time—including founding the master gardener program at the Rotary Botanical Gardens in Janesville—and with my mother, raised five successful children.”

His mother, who attended Oberlin Conservatory of Music, was a piano accompanist for theater performances in Janesville. Rob regrets not sticking with his piano lessons but eventually ended up involved in music.

“One college memory I cherish was singing with the Dartmouth College Glee Club. I joined at a roommate’s urging, having never sung in a choir before and unable to read music.” Rob’s singing highlight occurred after graduation, when he joined the Glee Club in performing Brahms’ “A German Requiem” at Carnegie Hall.

Rob’s love of chorus continued in Milwaukee. He helped establish the Milwaukee Children’s Choir (MCC) as a stand-alone, nonprofit entity and served on its board for 10 years with one term as president. His daughters Emma and Anna sang with MCC for many years, progressing to the advanced choir that performed with Milwaukee’s major performing arts organizations.

“Memories of those concerts are priceless,” said Rob. He and Jill, a retired school librarian, also have a son, Ted, Anna’s twin.

Outside of work, Rob has several passions.

“Environmental issues are important to me, especially preservation of parks, forests, wilderness and natural areas. I’ve received outdoor ethics training from the Boy Scouts and am a certified ‘Leave No Trace’ Instructor.”

Not surprisingly, Rob’s favorite hobby is planting trees with groups in Wauwatosa, where he lives, at Boy Scout camps and with fellow Rotarians at the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum.

Involved with the Scouts for 28 years, he’s a recipient of its Silver Beaver Award, the highest honor a Scout Council may bestow on a volunteer. He’s also deeply committed to St. Matthew’s Ev. Church and the Wauwatosa Historical Society.

Joining Rotary was all about giving back and paying it forward.

“My principal reason was to connect with others interested in community service. Secondly, a Global Grant Scholarship from the Rotary Club of Chicago paid all expenses associated with my master’s degree in England and I wanted to support an organization that had done so much for me.”

Rob is a member of the Environment and Ecology Committee and recently re-joined the Tyrotarian Committee.

“We have a large club, and I’ve found that the best way to get to know other members is to be active on a committee.”

