

Attorney charges into legal arena

Glasser expresses no qualms about taking cases to trial

By CHRIS STIREWALT
DAILY MAIL STAFF

YOU could rightly say that Brian Glasser was born into the legal profession. He came into the world on his father's first day at West Virginia University law school 34 years ago.

"He missed the first day of classes, but I don't think his professors held it against him," Glasser said from his office in the old Scott Drug building overlooking Capitol Street. "There were kind of extenuating circumstances."

By all accounts, Glasser has already lived up to the auspicious timing of his birth.

The young lawyer and his partner, 47-year-old Ben Bailey, have carved out a niche for themselves by being unafraid to take cases to trial since they joined forces two years ago. When other firms might still be preaching settlement, the two Harvard-educated lawyers will step into the ring for their clients.

That bulldog reputation has made Bailey and Glasser one of the top choices in town for both plaintiffs and defendants who are past seeing much common ground with their opposition.

"If somebody wants to go to trial, it's not my job to sit here and try and talk them out of it," Glasser said. "We will try your case. We have no hesitation about going to court. That's what we do, and I think we do it well."

Bailey sums it up in another way. "I would rather (try cases) than eat," he said.

Bailey and Glasser's work defending the state Division of Environmental Protection in the famed mountaintop removal lawsuit has solidified the new firm's reputation. While they, and the rest of the state, wait out the appeal of U.S. District Judge Charles Haden's ruling, the firm has seen a spate of new business.

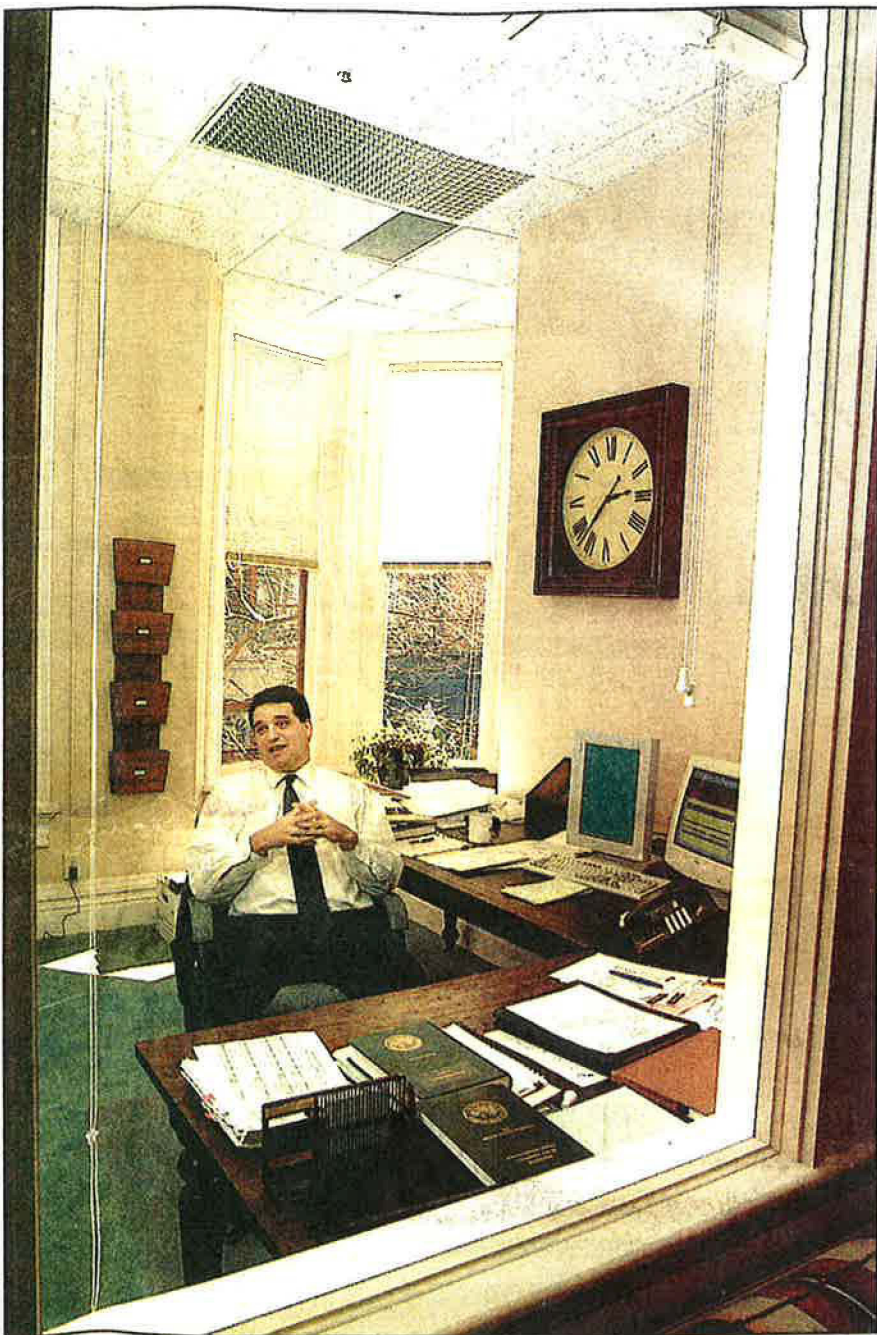
"Things have been good. I think people see us as being able to handle the big cases now," Glasser said. "When you handle a high-profile case like that, people will take notice."

The firm handles multimillion dollar suits for coal companies, represents plaintiffs in class-action cases and handles piles of criminal defense work. "The best part of what we do is probably in the variety of cases and clients we get to have," Glasser said.

What makes for the strength of the firm, both men agree, is the relationship Bailey and Glasser themselves share. While both may be capable lawyers in their own rights, they each say that the other has the skills and personality to round out the firm.

"Ben has the experience, wisdom and calmness that gets things resolved and shows jurors that we know what we're talking about," Glasser said. "I'm pretty pushy, loud and aggressive. I blow

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Above, by reinvesting the gains of recent cases in downtown office space and computer technology, Bailey and Glasser have been able to hold their own with firms 10 times their size. Left, partners Ben Bailey and Brian Glasser feed off each other's energy. "I can't tell you how great it is to come into work just plain excited," Glasser said.

Arena

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my stack and then he figures out how to really solve the problem.”

Glasser and Bailey began their friendship when both were working at the Charleston firm of Bowles, Rice, McDavid, Graff and Love. They started their own firm on March 1, 1999 after deciding that they were too constrained in terms of what cases they could take.

“There were too many conflicts with pre-existing clients in a firm that big. We just wanted to be able to take any case we wanted to,” Glasser said.

Glasser got his undergraduate degree from West Virginia University and went to Oxford University in England as a Rhodes Scholar before returning to the states to get his law degree at Harvard. He takes special pride in having played goalie on Oxford’s varsity soccer team.

He is married to his college girlfriend, Lena, a Swede who came to WVU on a tennis scholarship while Glasser was in school there.

The two married in England while Glasser was in school, and now have three children ranging in age from 8 months to 8 years.

He said he chose not to practice with his father, Martin, a partner in the business law firm of Lewis and Glasser, for one simple reason.

“We have a good relationship, and we thought we’d keep it that way,” Glasser said.

With three children, a burgeoning law firm and a new building, Glasser said his free time is rare and precious. He is an avid reader, but likes to spend as much time with his family as his demanding job will allow.

He hasn’t owned a television since 1984, and says the simple decision to cut the “big time waster” out of his life has been key in keeping his family life normal.

When asked to explain how he has managed to come so far in his field at such a young age, Glasser quoted the advice his

father gave him many years ago. “The harder you work, the luckier you get.”

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