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JARVIS E. JONES

MSBA President 2001-2002

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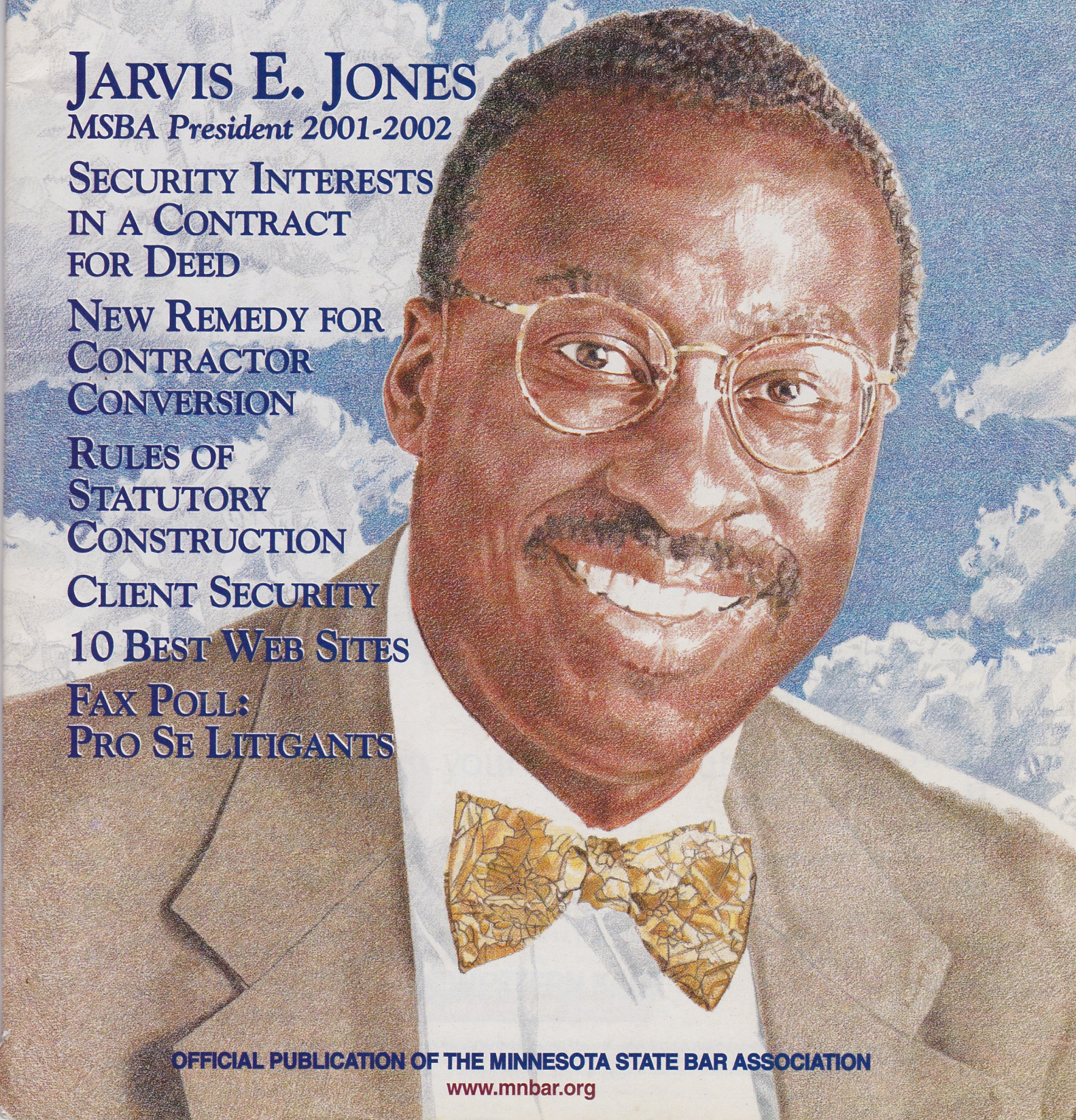
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MSBA President 2001-02

JARVIS C. JONES: CHANGE MASTER



PHOTOGRAPHS © STAN WALDHAUSER

MSBA's new president comes to the office with both a commitment to achieve important goals and a track record of overcoming challenges to do just that.

Growing up on the south side of Chicago, the third of five kids, Jarvis Jones always wanted to be a lawyer. He didn't know he would become president of the Minnesota State Bar Association or that he would be chosen by a Fortune 500 company (St. Paul Companies) to start a new business. He just knew he was determined to succeed.

"At a young age, I knew I was going to leave Chicago," Jones says now. "I had big plans and I didn't feel that many areas on the south side supported those plans or encouraged me to be my best."

BY
AMY LINDGREN

FAMILY MATTERS

And being less than his best just wasn't an option in the Jones family. Jarvis cherishes the stories of his father, Lawrence Jones, who began supporting himself at age eleven. After serving in the military, the senior Jones initially worked as a truck driver and then took a job with the post office as a mechanical helper. Although he took a substantial pay cut, Lawrence felt there was a better future for him on the operations side of the organization. His decision paid off. By the time Lawrence Jones retired, he was the superintendent of building equipment and maintenance, responsible for more than 1,300 employees who maintained the heating and

"the bar cannot be blind to the racial disparity that people of color experience in the justice system. ... There's work to be done before we can say 'justice is blind.'"

Jarvis Jones

plumbing of all 93 branches of the Chicago post office.

As his son relates now, Lawrence Jones' climb up the ladder was made more difficult because of discrimination he encountered during the 1950s and '60s. But the lesson the son took was not about racism, but about overcoming challenges of any nature.

"I can remember from knee high, my father telling my siblings and me about the challenges and hurdles he encountered at the post office because of the color of his skin," Jarvis Jones says. "But it was always with a smile and a twinkle in his eye and a story of how he outwitted the system. It was never, 'Life is tough.' *Never* have I heard him say, 'Life is tough.' It never brought him down. It made him dig deeper and it made him stronger. That, for me, was a huge inspiration. I'm not him, but his story defined me."

Jones feels he owes a lot to his mother, Lillian Jones, as well. "I get my will from my father, but I'm very clear that I get my spirit from my mother. She is the foundation for the family, and kept all of the children on the right path."

It was Lillian Jones who made sure the five kids attended church, who signed them up for activities such as Boy Scouts, and who pushed them to stay focused. As she says now, her advice to her middle child was always direct: "I always told him, 'Be your own person, regardless of what is going on.'"

Another strong influence on the young Jones was his pastor, Mike Steinke. Steinke, now a chaplain at Westville Correctional Facility in Indiana, served his first congregation at Zion Lutheran Church, where the Jones family worshipped, and where Jarvis' parents, Lillian and Lawrence, still attend services.

"When my pastor came into my life he was 25 and I was 15," Jones notes. "He helped me experience life in a spiritual way as a youth, and now he's become a close friend and a mentor. Now he's 52 and I'm 42 and the relationship has changed, but it's still based on a spiritual kinship."

One of the lessons Jones learned from his family and pastor was a strong sense of responsibility to others, which still drives him today. "Spirituality does shape my belief around contributions in life," he says. "I view myself as extremely blessed, therefore I have a huge responsibility to return what is given to me. Especially when it comes to making societal change, I really do believe that we can make systemic change happen. I'm sure that is rooted in my upbringing, particularly in the church and in my family."

EDUCATIONAL PURSUITS

In addition to helping Jones develop his spiritual foundation, Steinke also helped him take his first steps on the path to becoming an attorney. Jones

spent two years at Waldorf College in rural Iowa, where he gained a lifelong appreciation for good literature. He also learned more about the world, seeing it through the eyes of a farm community of 3,000. "I learned a lot about diversity at Waldorf," Jones notes. "I saw how people at Waldorf saw the world, how they spoke, how people from different backgrounds related — that's helped me tremendously."

He earned his associate's degree with a 3.8 GPA and then moved on to St. Olaf College where he finished his bachelor's studies. Anderson Small, who lived in the same dormitory at St. Olaf, still remembers his first impression of Jones: "One of the first things Jarvis said when I met him was 'I want to become an attorney. I want to run my own business.' And he accomplished those things."

Small and Jones, both political science majors, spent a lot of time together at St. Olaf. Their activities included pickup basketball games, monthly trips to hear Motown musicians at the local ballroom, and work together on a dance-a-thon to raise money for sickle cell anemia. But when summer came, Jones always headed out of town to work: Three years as a camp counselor at Lutherdale Bible Camp in Elkhorn, Wisconsin, and one summer as an intern at Pastor Steinke's mission in west Chicago. The contrast makes Steinke chuckle. "He was always willing to sign up for things like that," Steinke notes. "The Mission was real inner city, hard core, and the Bible camp was in the middle of Wisconsin. But Jarvis always related well. He could go up to anyone and make them feel comfortable."

Jones made good use of this ability when he entered William Mitchell College of Law, where he is remembered as a serious student with a deep commitment to social issues. For example, he served as the student liaison to the board of the now-defunct Minnesota Minority Lawyers Association (MMLA), a group he would later head. Jacqueline Regis, now senior corporate counsel for the St. Paul Companies and president of Minnesota Women Lawyers, has known Jones since their days together on the board of MMLA. "I remember thinking what a thoughtful, impressive, committed young man he was," Regis says. "I had no idea that he would become such a strong leader in the Bar, but I saw all the qualities in him. He was extremely focused, outspoken and principled. He was the student liaison, but he was actually one of the most active people on the board."

Law school wasn't all work for Jones, although he did work hard. John Holden, a sole practitioner in Edina and a close friend of Jones', has known him as a fellow student, close friend, and colleague. And, while he and Jones have often burned the midnight oil in discussions on religion, civil rights and law, one of Holden's strongest memories of his friend is rooted in the nearly legendary parties he threw at his rented brick house a few blocks from the college.

"It was a big, old, dark house," Holden recalls. "You'd go into that place and they'd have music going all the time. Jarvis loves music and he loves to dance. He loved to get people involved. The place would be packed — every single person from the law school would be there."

CAREER MOVES

Jones did well in law school and landed a position with United Health Care Corporation after graduation. From there he went to the Minneapolis firm of Fetterly & Gordon, for which he and another attorney led the damage litigation for a hotel arson case in Puerto Rico. Working on site in Puerto Rico for eight months, he and his colleagues deposed some 2,000 plaintiffs who had lost relatives in the fire. Jones' next move was into solo practice, where he concentrated his work on issues relating to insurance. Although he started his firm without a single client, he built a practice that included several major insurance companies. One of his clients, the St. Paul Companies, made him an offer he couldn't refuse, and Jones spent the next three years as a government affairs attorney on their payroll.

Jones' career took another turn in 1994 when the St. Paul Companies transferred him to the business side of the company, the Medical Services Division, as a business development officer. For the first time since law school, he wasn't working as an attorney. Glenn Oliver, now a cabinet member for the mayor of Detroit, was serving on a committee with Jones at the time. He says the transition from lawyer to corporate executive was probably one of the most diffi-

cult evolutions of Jones' career, although he didn't hear it from Jones directly. "He's such an upbeat type of guy, you don't ever really know when he's going through a difficult period," Oliver says. "It's not that he makes it look easy. It's just that he doesn't allow difficult situations to get the best of him."

Ironically, in the same month that he stopped working as an attorney, he assumed the presidency of the Hennepin County Bar Association, a position that would steep him in the issues of attorneys. A few weeks later, he married Laura Kaplan in a ceremony officiated by Pastor Steinke at Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church. Could life get any busier?

Well . . . yes. In fact, it just has. Now the father of a toddler (Taylor), Jones is poised to launch a national business for St. Paul Companies in July. On June 22, he accepted the presidential gavel for the MSBA, marking at least two firsts for the Association: Jones is the first lawyer of color to serve the MSBA as president, and he is also the first president to come from a corporate, nonlegal position.

Two weeks after his swearing in, Jones is expected to be in Atlanta to cut the ribbon on a new business unit for St. Paul Companies that will use telephone representatives to handle quotes, sales, and policy adjustments for commercial insurance clients. At the same time, his group is initiating a new Web site that will allow the first online self-service for commercial insurance purchases in the industry, while yet another group will focus attention on developing strategic alliances with nontraditional intermediaries such as banks and affinity groups. The last channel of the new division will be an initiative

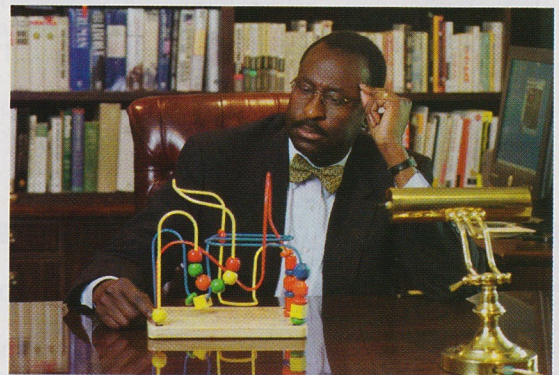
A Tour of the Office

At first glance, Jarvis Jones' office is a model of corporate propriety. At first glance, so is he. Stepping into the ninth-story office at St. Paul Companies, a visitor's initial impression is more of a non-impression. Credenza, desk, file cabinet, small meeting table . . . everything is where it should be. Just enough papers layer the top of the desk to be convincing, and a two-foot stack of business magazines anchors the ledge under the wall-length window. The same ledge sports a dozen or more books whose titles reveal some of the occupant's recent challenges: "Call Center Handbook," "Building Cyberstores," "The Distribution Channel Advantage," "The Virtual Corporation."

Everything about the office, the official box-within-the-big-box, tells you this is a place where serious work gets done. Until Jones playfully punches the red button on his Big Mouth Billy Bass and starts singing with the dancing fish, "... Don't wor-reee, beeee hap-py" Jones, swinging his head to the tune, finishes on time with the fish, vocalizing the humming part nicely. "That's a good song," he says, as if it had not been delivered by a plastic bass.

The fish on the wall, cleverly disguised as itself, draws the eye to other details in Jones' office. There's the shelf with African art pieces stationed high over the credenza, the photos of his family featuring darling shots of son Taylor and wife Laura, and the small, wire desk sculptures with these mottos: "Only those who see the invisible can do the impossible" and "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

But the piece that causes the eye to stop, and ponder, is the most familiar and arresting. On the wall opposite his desk, where he can see it when he's on the phone or greeting visitors, Jones has hung a giant blow-up of the famous news photo from 1989 of the lone man standing in front of the long line of Chinese tanks in Tienanmen Square. Jones says the image provides a constant reminder of the importance of standing up for what you believe in, as well as the triviality of most of the details we find vexing in our daily lives. It's an odd juxtaposition on the wall opposite the singing fish, but the contrast seems to increase the power of the image.



"He's such an upbeat type of guy, you don't ever really know when he's going through a difficult period, ... he doesn't allow difficult situations to get the best of him."

Glenn Oliver

to transfer agents' books of business to the call center for service after the initial sales are made.

This new business is a special point of pride for Jones. Not only has he been charged with planning, developing, and running it, he also led the group charged with creating the initial design and proposal. Now, less than six months since the proposal was accepted, he is hiring staff, working with vendors, and securing the physical space to make the plan a reality.

How will he manage this, and the Bar Association too? Actually, it's not as bad as it looks, according to Jones. "The implementation (of the business) isn't the hard part. The hard part was coming up with a viable and sound business model in today's competitive market. On the implementation side, it's more about time management and priority management, and I'm pretty good at those. I have to be. I'm a firm believer that anything that is important, you can do. You may not be able to do it all today, but you can do it tomorrow."

Wood Foster, former president of MSBA (1999-2000) and a shareholder at Siegel, Brill, Greupner, Duffy and Foster in Minneapolis, saw Jones juggle a similarly difficult schedule when he was president of the Hennepin County Bar Association — a memory which gives him enthusiasm for the coming year. "I thought he was just an outstanding president for the

Hennepin County Bar," Foster says. "I think he'll be terrific at the State Bar as well. For one thing, the Association has an excellent staff that will support Jarvis. When people know Jarvis, they want to work hard for him."

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Jones' platform for the presidency includes three initiatives: racial profiling, pro se litigation, and technology. Of the three, Jones recognizes that the first is the most complicated. "I honestly don't know how my agenda will take shape and form on racial profiling," Jones says. "But I do know that the bar cannot be blind to the racial disparity that people of color experience in the justice system. We have a responsibility as officers of the court to say, 'What is our role here?' And I think we do have a role. There's work to be done before we can say 'justice is blind'".

Some of Jones' passion on the topic of racial profiling comes from his natural compassion for others. "At the end of the day, what moves me is it [racial profiling] still has an unequal impact on certain groups of people," he says. But friends say Jones has also experienced the scrutiny of police officers who pull him over on the road. And Wood Foster recalls an MSBA seminar Jones taught in which he spoke of his father, a 70-year-old, retired, white-haired man, being stopped by police more than a

Biography of Jarvis Jones



Born: October 15, 1958, the third of five children, to Lillian and Lawrence Jones, in Chicago

Education: Bower High School, Chicago, 1978; Waldorf College, Forest City, Iowa, Associate of Arts with honors, 1979; St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, Bachelor of Arts with honors, 1981; William Mitchell College of Law, JD, 1985

Law Positions: Corporate attorney with United Health Care Corporation, 1985-87, Minneapolis; attorney with Fetterly & Gordon, Minneapolis, 1987-89; sole practitioner, Minneapolis, 1987-91; Senior Government Affairs Counsel, St. Paul Companies, St. Paul, 1991-94

Business Positions: Business Development Officer, Medical Services Division, St. Paul Companies, St. Paul, 1994-97; Vice President, Complementary Distribution, St. Paul Companies, St. Paul, 1997-present

MSBA Activities: President elect, 2000-01; cochair, Pro Se Implementation and Feasibility Committee, 1998-2001; chair, Pro Se Task Force, 2000-01; Executive Committee member, 1997-present.

Hennepin County Bar Association Activities: President, 1994-1995; cochair, Glass Ceiling Task Force, 1992-1993; Treasurer, 1991-192; cochair, Minnesota Minority Corporate Council, 1989-91;

Minnesota Minority Lawyers Association Activities: President, 1992-93 and 1993-94; student liaison to the Board, 1983-85

Major Accomplishment: As president of HCBA, joined with Glenn Oliver to successfully argue before the Minnesota Supreme Court that all attorneys licensed in Minnesota must take two CLE credits every three years on diversity and bias.

Interests: Classic and modern literature (favorite author: John Steinbeck), reggae, blues and folk music.

Family: Wife, Laura Kaplan; son, Taylor (2-1/2 years)

"He's a role model for anybody, that you can overcome a lot and achieve your goals."

John Holden

"he has always had this ability: Because he says something is going to happen, it does. He focuses on the end results and doesn't let himself become overrun by the obstacles."

Laura Kaplan

dozen times in two years, but never even given a moving violation ticket.

"It's just serendipitous that Jarvis is coming into the presidency when that topic is reaching the public's attention," Foster says. "There may be a perspective that the organized legal profession can bring to bear on the issue and if there is, Jarvis is the right guy to do it."

Pro se litigation may not be the hot media topic that racial profiling is, but it seems nearly as complex. After four years as chair and cochair of the Bar Association's pro se implementation committees, Jones has as firm a grasp on the issue as anyone can. He and his committee cochair, Edward Toussaint, chief judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, both speak of pro se as an issue of access, without impediments, to the legal system. The question of creating that access is trickier, and should provide a meaty subject for Jones in the next year.

Whatever challenges Jones faces, Judge Toussaint has advice for the man who has called him a mentor. "As I have talked to him about this year I have told him, if people in his house are not happy he's not going to be able to do anything else. It's personal first, then professional."

Judge Toussaint, who attended Jones' wedding, calls him a "very good husband and father." Holden agrees, noting that his relationship with Jones has changed from pickup basketball games and parties in law school to play dates with their toddlers now.

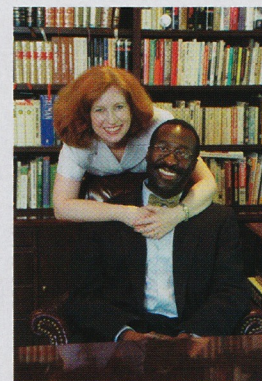
Laura Kaplan, Jones' wife of seven years, believes

he will have no trouble balancing family, business and Bar. "He really is an amazing father," Kaplan says. "Even when he's been especially busy at work, he's able to walk in the door and just be present for a two-year-old. Jarvis will get down on the floor and give him rides and really play with him in a fun, silly way."

One of Jones' favorite activities with Taylor is reading, and another is playing golf, which amuses Kaplan. "Taylor has a little plastic golf set and it's really fun to watch, because neither one of them really knows what they're doing. I'm the golfer in the family, but Jarvis is thinking of taking lessons now."

Kaplan has no doubt Jones will do well at the game, if he sets his mind to it. One of his gifts, she says, is to "create something out of nothing." As an example, she notes his lifelong desire to be an attorney. "He basically had no evidence that he could go to college, let alone be an attorney," she says. "But he has always had this ability: Because he says something is going to happen, it does. He focuses on the end results and doesn't let himself become overrun by obstacles."

John Holden believes Jones is driven to use that ability to have an impact on others, even while dealing with very difficult social issues and professional challenges. "For Jarvis, it's a very positive struggle," Holden says. "It's something he's very proud to be doing, to try to achieve better things and be a role model for other people. He's a role model for anybody, that you can overcome a lot and achieve your goals." □



A Word from the Classics ...

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about change, and the creation of new systems in business. While contemporary authors focus on such modern factors as technology and global competition, one needs to look to the Classics for the human view. That is exactly what Jarvis Jones did last year when asked to create a new business model for his employer, the St. Paul Companies. In his 400-page proposal, he included a passage from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, written in 1513.

Jones, a veteran of volunteer committees for several legal associations, could as easily have selected the piece to describe the painstaking nature of change on major social issues -- or even minor legal procedures. In any case, he describes himself as a true fan of literature, as likely to apply lessons from the Classics as from Drucker or Covey. The following paragraphs jumped out at him during some recreational reading a couple of years ago.

"It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more danger-

ous to manage than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones.

"And let it be noted that there is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful in its success, than to stand up as a leader in the introduction of change. For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new.

"This lukewarm temper arises partly from the fear of adversaries who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who will never admit the merit of anything new, until they have seen it proved by the event. The result, however, is that when the enemies of change make an attack, they do so with all the zeal of partisans, while the others defend themselves so feebly as to endanger both themselves and their cause."