

PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

Bouma rings in Snell & Wilmer's 75th year



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

Snell & Wilmer Chairman John Bouma talks about the firm's 75th anniversary and his tenure of more than 50 years with one of Phoenix's most powerful law firms.



WILMER FAMILY PHOTO COLLECTION

Frank Snell, left, and Mark Wilmer in 1963

Q&A

John Bouma has seen many changes in the legal landscape in Phoenix during his 50 years with Snell &

Wilmer. The firm is celebrating its 75th anniversary, and I talked with Bouma about his time with the firm and where it will be going in the future.

What brought you to Snell & Wilmer, and how would you describe your 50-plus years with the firm? My journey to Arizona was facilitated by a previous military commitment made at the University of Iowa. My wife, Bonnie, and I really liked the area, and I took all the necessary steps, including passing the bar exam, to practice in the state. During my

interview with the firm, Frank Snell emphasized that I should identify and pursue the "right opportunity."

What have been the most significant developments within the firm during its history and during your tenure as chairman?

Geographic expansion has played a key role in our firm's history. Interestingly enough, neither Frank Snell nor Mark Wilmer believed in large law firms. We have certainly grown in Phoenix since those days. Our eventual growth has been regional in scope, both strategic and opportunistic.

Who do you believe are some of the Arizonans most responsible for creating the state we live in today? Eugene C. Pulliam, the longtime owner and publisher of

The Arizona Republic and *Phoenix Gazette*, together with banker Walter Bimson and Frank Snell truly helped guide the economic and cultural growth of Phoenix. Others of note are Carl Hayden, Barry Goldwater and Mark Wilmer.

What do you see as the critical challenges facing Arizona during the next several decades and why?

As our natural resources diminish and our population continues to expand, availability of and access to water will continue to be a pressing issue. Attention will continue to be directed to immigration, with all of its legal, political and social complexities, on a state and national level. Finally, Arizona needs to identify meaningful initiatives and programs to broaden significantly its economic base beyond real estate.

How has Snell & Wilmer helped shape Arizona's economic and cultural landscape? I am proud that the firm has played, and continues to play, a meaningful role in the state's development. Frank Snell, as evidenced in his actions in the emerging legal and business communities during his earliest years in Phoenix, personified the ethos of public service and cultural and civic engagement that remains with the firm today. The growth and development of the past 50 years could not have occurred without the work of Mark Wilmer, whose approach to Colorado River legal and political issues on behalf of his client, the state of Arizona, transformed the political, environmental and economic landscape of the New West.

- Mike Sunnucks, Senior reporter