

David Gonzalez, at home in trial or on the trail  
*By Gail Jonas*

Several years ago, I handled a family law settlement conference with David Gonzalez representing one of the parties. I recall it was a difficult case but the parties, with the help of their attorneys, were able to reach a settlement. David was a formidable advocate for his client, and he paid attention to the detail.

We have become friends. At first, I found this rather amazing since I'm 30 years older than David and never really enjoyed litigating. However, I've discovered we have in common a love of nature and hiking. During a long hike this summer at Lake Sonoma, I also learned how important family is to David. He showed up with an off-road stroller and his two-year old daughter Bianca.

This fall, I arrived at David's home in Healdsburg for a Saturday morning interview with a bag of muffins and a book to share with Bianca. David had just returned from a run. His wife Vicky, Bianca, and dog, Otis, met me at the door.

It was wonderful to be welcomed by the whole family, but Vicky wisely shepherded Bianca and Otis upstairs so I could talk with David.

David described his growing up years in Cincinnati, Ohio, the last of six children born to parents who had worked hard to escape the poverty rampant during the Depression. David's father is a retired thoracic surgeon who started medical school at age 19, educated thanks to the G.I. Bill after joining the Marines at 17.

David described all five of his siblings, three brothers and two sisters, each outstanding and very different from each other. David gives his brothers credit for his love of music since they allowed him to go with them to college parties from age six on. Allowing their younger brother to tag along was a benefit to them, too; David described himself as having been used as a "girl magnet."

When David was in the fourth grade, he got a job as a golf caddy, saved his earnings all summer, and bought a turntable for \$116. David and I have both collected many, many vinyl records over the years and share a passion for rock and roll from the 60's and 70's. David has passed his vinyl records on and has a great sound system in his home. I still have most of my vinyls and occasionally play them.

How did David, a "Cincy boy," become so passionate about hiking and backpacking? Because Cincinnati is in the southwest corner of Ohio, close to the Appalachian range. A high school friend, an Eagle Scout, invited David to go caving with him in Kentucky. At college in Houston, his oldest brother, Luis, took David on fifty-plus mile backpacking trip into the Grand Canyon. At law school at the University of San Francisco, David went hiking in the Sierras by himself, was enchanted by Yosemite, and eventually attracted Luis to David's "back yard."

Now they take at least one major backpacking trip a year, most often choosing one of California's incredible national parks in the Sierras: Sequoia, Kings Canyon, or Yosemite. I could tell that David loves the Sierras. When I asked him if he had hiked the Lost Coast, he said he hadn't but it was on his list. But the Sierras remain highest on his list: "There's something about the Sierras, both east and west. I'm a mountain person and love the alpine lakes and high altitudes."

David backpacks because he loves the self-sufficiency "You're it; you're on your own." Every view is perfect, the daily "to do" list is left at home, and in contrast to other types of trips, there are no reservations, lines, and constantly reaching for your wallet.

Because David and his wife are expecting, she is not joining him on backpacking trips or arduous hikes at Lake Sonoma. By the time this article is published, their second child will have been born.\* David is looking forward to taking the whole family backpacking. While he has an infant, they will car camp. It's impossible to carry a backpack with everything you need *and a baby!*

I always ask the attorneys I interview if they like to read, and if so, what. David confesses that he doesn't have enough time to read for pleasure these days. His reading time is taken up with legal journals. He does keep at least two books, U.S. history and geology, at his bedside for insomnia. However, he was a literature major in college and his favorite fiction writers are Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Elizabeth Allende. I share with David an interest in these South American authors, having read several books by each of them.

The family came back downstairs, undoubtedly eager to eat lunch. I had spent over two hours talking with David and taking pages and pages of notes. My only regret is that so much of what I learned about David won't fit into the allotted word count for the attorney profile.

\*Alexander Gonzalez was born on November 17.

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