



Memory Book Update

David Thompson

Scarfone Hawkins has been a fixture in the Hamilton legal community in some form since 1973. For the most part, the Partners have been practicing in Hamilton for their entire careers and enjoy the challenge and vibrancy of the ever evolving city.

Don Hawkins attended Osgoode Hall as the last graduating class before it moved to York University, and articulated at historic Hamilton law firm, Evans Husband. Called to the bar in 1971, Hawkins stayed with Evans Husband to work as an associate for the next two years. He dabbled in a variety of different practice areas but ultimately settled, for the most part, on real estate and corporate matters.

In 1973, Don Hawkins, with fellow associate, Don Schroeder, left the firm and started up on their own. Their new venture proved quite successful with both of them earning more money in their first year on their own than they were previously earning as associates. They attracted clients through local contacts and were referred work from other lawyers. The new business structure and arrangement allowed both Dons a certain amount of freedom, including the ability to conduct business meetings over a few pints.

When Don Hawkins was at Evans Husband, he met Jim Brown and Wade Fernihough, both of whom were articling while Don was an associate.

At the time, Jim Scarfone was articling at another historic land mark Hamilton law firm, Agro Zaffiro.

Jim Scarfone and Wade Fernihough had become close friends while attending Windsor law school. The affinity of their Hamilton roots brought them together.

After articling, Wade Fernihough and Jim Brown decided to start their own practice and invited Jim Scarfone to join them as they wanted to add a litigator to the team.

The three friends had come to know each other quite well on the GO Train to and from the Bar Admissions course, quickly bonding over their mutual interest in classic cars.

Jim Scarfone was called to the Ontario Bar on March 20, 1975, one day ahead of Jim Brown and Wade Fernihough.

Brown Scarfone Fernihough opened its doors for business on April 1, 1975.

The three young lawyers were not very sure how to run a law practice or operate a business at first, however, with the help of Jim Scarfone's aunt who worked in real estate, and a friendly landlord, they secured both an office and a start-up line of credit.

The three worked hard, attracting some initial work through family, squash contacts, banking contacts, and other senior lawyers unloading "dog files" that they didn't want. The practice grew.

Jim Brown's brother, Bob, joined the firm in 1978.

The firm began to develop a reputation as a creative and progressive firm, investing in new equipment and technology.

The four partners stayed in their Main Street East office for ten years, before deciding that a downtown move would be the next big step in helping the firm grow. After moving downtown, the firm was able to attract bigger clients and better work from banks and mortgage companies.

Both start-up firms established themselves as fixtures in the Hamilton legal community. Both were active and visible working on diverse projects. Don Hawkins incorporated the Muhammad Ali Food Corporation and personality into the promotion of his practice,



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meeting “the Champ” in 1986. Don also worked on development projects in Ellicottville, New York and became the landlord for a funeral home.

Jim Brown, Jim Scarfone, Wade Fernihough and Bob Brown were convinced by a client to buy a firm boat that was used for fish and chips breaks on Friday afternoons in Lake Ontario. Jim Scarfone attended community golf tournaments and became involved in the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association as a founding member.

Brown Scarfone Fernihough Brown started its expansion program in 1988 and has continued it ever since. The firm grew with the acquisition of current partners, Jeff Teal and David Thompson.

In 1991, Don Schroeder decided to accept a job with Tim Hortons In-House, leaving Don Hawkins on his own and with a yearning to join like-minded colleagues in the practice of law.

The Schroder Hawkins and Brown Scarfone Fernihough Brown firms joined forces in 1991.

The firm grew again with the addition of Joe Speranzini and Mike Valente from other established firms in the early 1990s.

The firm suffered a set-back in 2000 with the departure of several partners. The six remaining partners (Scarfone, Hawkins, Speranzini, Valente, Teal and Thompson) of what became the newly constituted Scarfone Hawkins firm were then joined by Jim Mahler, Danielle Iampietro and Matt Moloci a few years later.

In 2016, the firm welcomed its three newest partners, Mike Stanton, Colleen Yamashita and Adam Savaglio.

From the humble beginnings of two separate start-up law firms run by fresh-faced, young lawyers, to one of the most respected firms in Hamilton and beyond, the lawyers at Scarfone Hawkins

exemplify what excellent-quality legal work and advice is all about.

The firm has incorporated a commitment to hiring and teaching students and young lawyers the firm culture and focus on both the character and problem-solving abilities so important in today’s legal world.

Today, the firm is a dynamic,

progressive organization of 26 lawyers and more than 65 law students, law clerks, legal assistants and support staff.

Scarfone Hawkins continues to value the opportunity to serve the Hamilton community and beyond, presently, and into the future. ■

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