

# ERIC QUANDT | Taking Complex Litigation from A to Z

by Dan Rafter

Eric F. Quandt boasted some interesting roommates while taking his undergraduate classes at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Three of them became doctors and one was Tom Wopat, the actor who gained fame in 1979 for playing Luke Duke on the popular TV show *The Dukes of Hazzard*.

But it was Quandt's fifth roommate who made the biggest impact. This roommate's father was an attorney in Madison. From meeting this attorney, Quandt, who had no background in law prior to this meeting and no family members in the legal field, was intrigued.

The pull grew even stronger as graduation day neared. Quandt had been studying mathematics. But like many graduates, he wondered what he would do with his degree once he left the university. What kind of job would he find, what kind of career would he create with a math major?

Inspired partly by his roommate's father, Quandt eventually decided to attend law school, which he did at the University of Wisconsin. He earned his law degree in 1976 and focuses on complex litigation with in Chicago.

Quandt remains forever grateful for that undergraduate introduction into law. He's even found that it reminds him at times of his undergraduate major.

"Law is a very logical progression of thinking," Quandt says. "It's all about how you get from 'A' to 'Z.' That's how math is, too. You have a logical progression of thoughts. You go from where you are now to where you think you want to end up."

Quandt has used this logical thinking to become one of the top trial lawyers in the country. He has successfully tried a wide range of cases, tackling everything from pharmaceuticals and medical-device trials to cases involving asbestos, products liability, and personal injury litigation.

He has a passion for sports law, too. He has represented team physicians, athletic directors, and trainers in cases involving intercollegiate sports. As co-founder of the Institute for Sports Medicine and Sports Law, he has helped organize three well-attended national conferences focusing on medical and legal issues in sports; the conferences have a website at [www.ismsl.org](http://www.ismsl.org).

It's been a successful career, especially for one that Quandt never planned to have.

"I'm certainly happy with the way things have worked out," Quandt says. "I feel like I have found my niche. I never really thought about getting into criminal law. I know some people truly enjoy that field. I didn't have that interest, though. I like civil law and I like litigation. I like people and courtrooms. It all turned out well."

## A True Strategist

Quandt's colleagues aren't surprised at how successful the attorney has been. He has, they say, one of the sharpest legal minds in the complex litigation arena.

Just ask Andrea Kott, partner with the Chicago law firm of Lewis & Gellen LLP.

"Eric simply does a tremendous job of working his cases," Kott says. "He always puts his clients in the best possible position before a trial."

Quandt is a true strategist, Kott says, leaving nothing to chance before hitting the courtroom.

"His strategy is always well thought out," Kott says. "And he always retains the best experts in the field to help coordinate his different defenses. Then there's the fact that he is passionate about the work that he does and deeply committed to his clients. He always gives his clients the best possible representation."



A quick look at Quandt's successful cases proves this. Quandt once represented a foreign automobile manufacturer in a bus turnover case in London that had resulted in multiple deaths.

Quandt's client had sold a bus through a subsidiary to a travel company in London. The bus turned over during a sight-seeing tour in the London area and rolled down a hill, killing many of the 40 passengers and injuring several others.

Quandt and the legal team mounted a jurisdictional defense in what had become a complex multi-district litigation in the United States. The move worked, and the case was dismissed.

"That was a major gamble for the company," Quandt says. "We took the risk and it turned out well."

Quandt also represented a major chemical manufacturer that had been sued following a gas pipe explosion that killed people in Waterloo, a community in Iowa.

In this case, a bar in Waterloo exploded, killing five people. Quandt's clients manufactured a resin that was used in making the plastic for the gas pipe. The claim against this company alleged that this product was defective, causing the explosion.

Quandt and the legal team argued that the real problem was that the public utility installed the pipe improperly at certain points and that this caused the deadly explosion.

"This was a very technical case," Quandt says. "I took the deposition of the chief metallurgist at the National Transportation Safety Board. That board had conducted a very thorough investigation of the explosion. That deposition supported our defense."

The case eventually settled with a favorable outcome for Quandt's client. But the case was not yet over.

The utility eventually sued in federal court because it had to replace its gas pipes in two Western states. The utility wanted Quandt's client to pay for this. This time, Quandt achieved a dismissal under the economic-loss doctrine. His client did not have to pay anything for the pipe replacements.

"That was a good result," Quandt says. "It was an interesting case. We had to work with some very top technical experts. It really was a satisfying result for us."

Cases like these are part of what make the field of law so fascinating to Quandt, even more than 35 years after he earned his law degree.

"The technical aspects of cases really do interest me," he says. "Given my math background, I enjoy reviewing and reading technical articles to help me digest where I think I should go with a case and how we ought to get there. Part of the fun is working with top experts on various issues. You meet experts

who have dedicated their lives to certain matters. You are there with them under the microscope in a very narrow area. It's very interesting to meet these people and to see how they work."

### **Pioneer in Sports Law**

Quandt traces his interest in sports law to the time he spent counseling physicians at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University and to the work he's done with many team physicians for the Chicago Bears and Chicago Cubs.

Inspired by this work, Quandt, along with other professionals in law and medicine, founded the Institute for Sports Medicine and Sports Law. The major national conferences he's helped organize address a variety of medical and legal controversies at the collegiate, high school, professional, and Olympic level.

In May 2011, Quandt delivered a keynote address—focusing on how team physicians, athletic directors, and trainers at colleges can minimize the professional liabilities—at the Big East Sports Medicine Society's fifth annual symposium. And he presented a course on the same topic to team physicians at the national combines of the National Football League.

"There are so many interesting cases today involving athletics," Quandt says. "It's long been something that interests me. And I felt that we needed to take a closer look at the growing area of sports law."

Quandt expects to continue devoting at least part of his time to pursuing this interest.

"The sports medicine programs are pro bono programs. It takes a tremendous amount of time to organize these conferences. But I do it because I like to do it," Quandt says. "I'd like to see these continue. I want to see this effort grow."

Count Stephen Wood, a partner at Chicago's Kelley Drye, as another fan of Quandt's legal skills.

Wood has known Quandt for more than two decades and has tried cases with him, watching Quandt build his career and his base of loyal clients.

"Eric is the consummate trial lawyer," Wood says. "He knows his way around the courtroom. And he is fearless when representing his clients."

Attorneys who think they can intimidate Quandt are always in for a shock, Wood says.

"I've seen Eric in situations where he is confronted with aggressive tactics by opponents trying to get him in a corner," Wood says. "But Eric knows how to fight his way out of corners. He'll confront issues head-on. It doesn't matter who he is up against or how complex a case is. He will not be intimidated."

Quandt doesn't consider providing top

service, all the time, to his clients to be anything unusual. It's the only way for successful attorneys to enjoy long, thriving careers, he says.

"You give it your best effort, all the time," Quandt says. "That is it, simply put. You are a professional. The expectations should be the same as when I go to a doctor. I always expect my doctor to give me the best effort. Why should it be any different with any professional? That is part of what makes up ethical behavior. You might not always get the best result. That's something that can't be helped in a profession like this. But you can continually give it your best effort. That's to be expected. I wake up every day and say I want to give it my best shot."

It seems Quandt roomed with the right person at college.

And even though his fourth decade of practicing law lies not too far ahead, Quandt is just as passionate about the field as he was when he graduated law school in 1976.

"I am still interested in the competitive nature of litigation," Quandt says. "It keeps you on your toes. I've had the benefit of working on matters that I have enjoyed. I've been able to work with in-house people who are interested in what they do. I've worked with experts who are fascinated by what they do. This all keeps things flowing in a positive and interesting fashion." ■