

## LAWYER LIFESTYLES

# The 'Morg-nificent Seven' Ride Again

*City Lawyer Masters Cowboy Skills Out West*

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*Special to the Legal*

This town ain't big enough for one partner, who, after squaring off against six-shooters in the courtroom, is now staring them down in the wild, wild West.

One or two weeks a year, Morgan Lewis & Bockius partner Jay H. Calvert Jr. makes a journey out West where he transforms from a successful Philadelphia trial attorney into a traditional cowboy. Through the landscapes of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Arizona, he has learned every skill a cowboy needs to master: relatively mundane camping, strenuous roping and wrangling, and rounding up cattle.

Calvert became interested in the trips through his already ample experience riding horses. He rounded up six other Morgan Lewis attorneys from different offices, and together this Magnificent Seven took their first ride in 1991.

There is perhaps no better definition for the term "city slicker" than seven big city lawyers heading out West. And indeed the movie with the same title came out just a week before the Magnificent Seven rode together for the first time.

Calvert said they all went to see the movie in their respective locations, and could only imagine what was in store for the upcoming week. And that first week did hold many city slicker experiences for the group, but in the 11 years since then, not only have Calvert's skills improved, but he has lost the urban stigma.

"You're judged entirely by what you can do," he said. "They don't care where you're from. If you can ride a horse, if you can

work all day in the hot sun, if you can rope a cow, then you're helpful to them and you can come right along.... If you're a complainer, they'll treat you like someone who's a complainer."

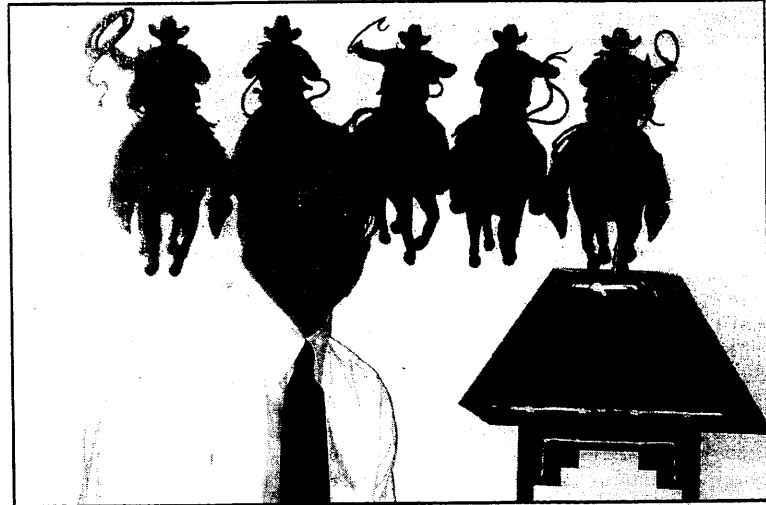
The trips have emphasized to Calvert the differences that exist between people in the West and those back East, differences in everything from their everyday lifestyle to their political views and how they view the land. But Calvert knew when he had arrived as a cowboy when he was in a store buying beer.

Shortly after the beginning of the group's first trip, they went into a store to buy a six-pack of Heineken, shelling out \$25 for the few beers. Some rough days later, when the group came in looking haggard and unshaven, however, the beer was only \$6 — the cowboy price as opposed to the tourist price.

Since that first trip, the Magnificent Seven haven't always gone as a complete group, and firm outsiders have joined as well, but generally they would go about every two years. Calvert, however, started going once or twice a year, and the Magnificent Seven recently had their 10th anniversary ride.

Calvert and cohorts have traveled with a combination of programs, outfitters, teachers and ranch owners, and have even stayed in a ranch house that once sheltered the likes of Teddy Roosevelt and Zane Grey. "We pay for this," he said, "because it's their food, it's their equipment, it's their horses.... but they love us there because we help them."

A lot of what the trips are about, according to Calvert, is becoming a good western rider, and about watching cows, particularly driving them through the land to different grazing areas. Cattle drives don't always hold the



**JAY H. CALVERT JR., MORGAN LEWIS & BOCKIUS PARTNER AND PART-TIME COWBOY, DECORATES HIS CENTER CITY OFFICE IN A WESTERN MOTIF.**

most excitement for Calvert — "Moving cattle is like watching paint dry," he said — but the drives are by no means easy.

Peeking out over Calvert's crisp white dress shirt and blue tie — an ensemble that makes him look like anything but a cowboy — is a faint scar earned during a drive through a dense forest. His horse was riding at a furious pace through a thick cluster of pine trees, and, with Calvert's attention elsewhere at the time, a pine needle pierced him through the neck. Blood spilled in streams over his neck, and initially he thought he had been stabbed by a larger branch.

The wrangler riding with him gave attentive medical advice: tie a bandana around the wound and keep riding.

Calvert is lucky, though, that this is the worst injury he has sustained. Amongst stories of dislocated fingers and riders being thrown from their horses only to land near

jagged rocks, there are also the perils of wrangling cattle, something at which Calvert himself is quite adept.

With his roping skills, Calvert tried his hand at wrangling some calves when it came time to brand them. But unless one uses the proper technique to wrap the rope around the saddle horn, the wrangler's thumbs can get caught under the rope with the 800-pound calf pulling on it, leaving a wrangler without a thumb. Calvert fortunately, and as a testament to his skill, still has both digits intact.

The value of a vacation is not usually measured in the risk to body parts, but Calvert maintains that there is no better way for him to get away from the stresses he encounters as a lawyer.

He won't ever spend more than a week out West because of the intensity. "It is so intense that the minute you lose concentra-

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## Cowboy

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tion you can get hurt," he said. "You're concentrating so much that there really isn't any time to worry about work. And on those kinds of vacations, the intensity is such that when you come back, you're totally refreshed because you've blocked out all work while you're doing this."

Plus, he noted, it's pretty hard to get cell phone reception out there, and isolation is part of the relaxation as well.

"It really does give you a total break from your work, and law is such an intense profession that having to do something that allows you to be totally concentrated on something else is a real refresher, and to have it so different and have it so physical versus so mental also helps. Just the rejuvenation aspect of it is important," he said.

Calvert also sees benefits for his practice and for his relationships with clients.

"Being with folks with such different backgrounds and such different viewpoints from what you traditionally see in the East really helps you understand people and their motivations," and that can help a trial lawyer professionally, he said.

"It gives clients and friends who are clients an opportunity to see another side to you, and also to have something interesting and casual to talk about," Calvert said. "So for the most part clients love it, and generally think that I'm crazy, and for the most part would not want to do it." But some clients have in fact

made the journey out West with him.

Calvert's office interweaves the two sides of his life together — the corner office offers a panoramic view of Center City, while the walls are covered in western art and photographs from his many adventures. He cannot be quite as liberal with his gear at home, however, where his equipment — several sets of spurs, hats, chaps, chinks (short chaps), Wrangler jeans, shirts, vests, dusters, boots, ropes, and saddles — stays in a trunk under strict orders from his wife.

Despite the rules, his family is supportive. "They all thought it was kind of cute that dad was doing something like this, and they were personally very happy to let me go and have an adventure for a week on my own," Calvert said. But "they had absolutely no interest in going."

Roping is the one western activity he can indulge in at home. Calvert's wife has allowed several roping dummies to reside in the garage, where Calvert can practice.

When he finishes practicing law, Calvert hopes there is still room for him out West, although he's not sure his wife would be so supportive, although there are plans to get a horse when he cuts back his time practicing.

And he hopes to keep going out and becoming a cowboy for as long as he can. His inspiration may come from the landscape or the culture of the West, but it is probably the older cowboys, the 80-year-old men, weakened by a hard life, who can still saddle up their horses, and by absorbing the strength of the beasts below them, ride like any young cowboy. •