

WATCHMAN

Jeffrey Nusinov used to fix what you used to wind on your wrist

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by [Amy Kates](#)

In a previous life, Jeffrey Nusinov, managing partner of Fisher & Winner, was quite possibly the youngest master watchmaker in Baltimore.

“My great-grandfather, who came over from Russia in the early 1900s, opened our first jewelry store in downtown Baltimore at East Baltimore Street,” says Nusinov, who worked in the biz from 1989 to 1997. The store, Charles Nusinov & Sons, allowed Nusinov an interesting alternative to what most of his schoolmates did after the final bell rang. “I would work after school learning the family trade,” he says. “It takes a steady hand and a great deal of patience.”

His tutorial continued throughout his undergrad years. In fact, he took night classes so he could continue to work with his grandfather and uncle to fine-tune his skills as a watchmaker. “Those were the years that I really learned what an old-fashioned work ethic was all about,” he says.

So what exactly is a master watchmaker? “That’s a great question,” Nusinov says with a laugh. “I don’t have a particular certificate or anything; it was all family training. I specialized in mechanical watches, like the old wind-up mechanical watches, pocket watches and wristwatches, as opposed to the battery-operated watches you see nowadays.”

Nusinov didn’t create watches from scratch; he handcrafted integral parts for timepieces, including antique ones. If a precious family heirloom like a 100-year-old pocket watch stopped ticking, Nusinov created the parts to save it.

But the watchmaker is not a watch wearer. “While in the business, I would wear a different watch every day, only to test what I was working on,” Nusinov says. “But I’m not a jewelry person—no



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**Jeffrey E.
Nusinov**

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he wanted a greater challenge. He even looked into courses in Switzerland, “the heart of the watchmaking world,” that focused on quality and precision. That wasn’t feasible, so he took the LSAT on a whim.

“My undergraduate work was in sociology so I thought law or social work would be a good thing,” he says. “I figured I could help people.” His assumption paid dividends—he got into law school at the University of Maryland, and upon graduation, scored a Baltimore City Circuit Court clerkship. In 2001, he met Norman Smith, his partner today. “On one of our first meetings, we somehow ended up getting into our pasts,” Nusinov remembers. “My prior life as a watchmaker helped me get hired because Norman was a professional musician, a trumpet player, who on a whim switched to the practice of law.”

One of Nusinov’s most impressive successes came in 2006. His client, Juan Pizzorno, created a high-speed mailer, “the fastest in the world,” when he was a student; he then joined forces with the company L-Soft and the technology worked in conjunction with LISTSERV. However, Pizzorno claimed L-Soft failed to pay him royalties as they sold his software. “He didn’t have the resources to compete against a large company, and other lawyers rejected his case,” Nusinov says. After a three-week trial in federal court, in which Fisher & Winner went up against one of the largest firms in the world, Hogan & Hartson, Nusinov won a \$5.1 million verdict for his client.

Nusinov was also part of the defense team in the high-profile trial of Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon.

Nusinov may be out of the repair game but his family is still going strong at Charles Nusinov & Sons—although his grandfather, Nathan Eleck Nusinov, recently passed away at the age of 89. “It was a special moment when I went to my grandfather to tell him I was going to law school,” Nusinov says. “He said, ‘That’s what a family business is for—to provide opportunity for the next generation.’”

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