

Club Profile

by Mary S. Gilbert

Seeing Starz—

A Profile of Hagen Starz



Hagen Starz speaks with an almost evangelistic zeal about his admiration and affection for the PAA. Having joined the club in 2001 during his second year at the University of Pittsburgh Law School, he has since recruited many of his friends to join him in what he calls “a very inclusive place with a strong sense of community that is difficult to find at other workout facilities.”

“It’s tough to put your finger on, but when you walk in you feel good about the place and yourself,” he elaborated. “It’s so much more than a gym, a restaurant or a hotel. I live in North Oakland, and it doesn’t make sense not to belong here. I’ve gotten lots of my friends to join. I just invite them and the club sells itself. I like my friends to see what I’ve been excited about for almost two years. The members are quality people, but not hoity-toity. I absolutely like the networking opportunities. I’ve met so many great people here that I wouldn’t know otherwise. I’m an attorney at Burns, White & Hickton, and I’m the only one in my firm who’s a member, but I’m working on that, too.”

Starz takes full advantage of his membership. He lifts weights, plays squash, hits golf balls, bowls on the intermediate league, swims, takes part in an occasional pick up basketball game and enjoys the dining. He has competed twice in the Pittsburgh Marathon and considers the steam room a nice post-run reward. Fight Night and the PAA Olympics are his favorite events. A friendly warning: as a team captain he already is preparing his fellow teammates with full intention of bringing home the gold. Starz even used the PAA as a source of refuge and relaxation earlier this year while studying for the bar exam.

Starz brings the same infectious enthusiasm and passion to his work with the law, a profession that he chose as a teenager living in Meadville.

“I’ve known since I was 15 that I wanted to be a lawyer,” he recalled, “and I just kept building on it, doing mock trials in high school and college and clerking during the summers. I put all of my eggs in one basket, but my personality and strengths are suited to law. I have an ability to identify with all types of people, communicate effectively, read different situations, think on my feet and tell stories in ways that people want to hear them.

“I want to be a litigator. My firm does railroad and transportation litigation, and it’s a great chance to cut my teeth on a high volume practice. You never stop learning. I look forward to that, learning from each case and mentor. There’s a saying that people practice law because they never get good at it,” he laughed.

“The law is like having a union card in that you can do lots within and outside the law. Legal training provides you with the ability to go into business or politics. There’s lots of jumping off points with a law degree. That’s attractive to me because it gives me a good solid base, but if I want to do something else 25 years from now, I won’t have to start from scratch.”

Long term, Starz plans to remain in Pittsburgh.

“I think that Pittsburgh is big enough so that there’s always something to do and small enough that people know your name. Pittsburgh isn’t Boston, or New York or Washington, D.C., and it doesn’t try to be. There’s something beautifully simplistic about that. Local politics are exciting, and Pittsburgh is a place where you can make an impact on your community and the region.”