



THINK FORWARD

Intellectual Property Litigator Gary Ropski Reaches 40-Year Milestone at Brinks Gilson & Lione—and Counting

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CHICAGO—Gary Ropski remembers being sent a letter in 1975 by the hiring partner at the patent law firm then known as Hume, Clement, Brinks, Willian, Olds & Cook, Ltd. stating he did not have the required technical background to be considered as an associate.

“My B.S. in physics from Carnegie Mellon University seemed like enough to me,” recalls Ropski, “so I tried to speak with the attorney to find out what I was lacking. Eventually the new hiring partner, Dick Lione, called me back and said I was qualified to apply after all, and I was hired after interviewing with most of the lawyers in the firm.”

Ropski says that early lesson in persistence has served him well in a remarkable 40-year career that still continues at leading intellectual property law firm Brinks Gilson & Lione. Along the way, Ropski has excelled in a range of different roles, from intellectual property attorney to award-winning litigator and then election by his peers to two successive terms as Brinks’ president, from 2006 through 2011.

“When I joined the firm now known as Brinks Gilson & Lione, there really was no such thing as an intellectual property law firm,” Ropski notes. “There were so-called patent firms, and they worked on referral from general practice firms when clients of those firms needed an attorney with expertise in patent, trademark, or copyright law.”

“In fact, when Brinks moved to the NBC Tower in 1989, some reporters who wrote about it saw the phrase *intellectual property* in our press release and thought we were dealing with real estate,” adds Ropski. “We contacted one reporter after his story ran, and he told us ‘Well, I knew you were in real estate because of your property specialty but I wasn’t about to say you were the smartest attorneys in town.’ How times have changed.”

Now, Ropski says, intellectual property is one of the most sought-after careers in law. Correspondingly, Brinks Gilson & Lione has grown over the years, and today ranks as one of the nation’s largest IP boutiques.

Colleagues describe Ropski as relentlessly upbeat, energetic, and adventurous. Known for his strategic thinking and skill in evaluating the quality of claims, he has a reputation for meticulous preparation in everything—from cases and client relations to his competitive sailboat racing.

“Gary has been a role model here at Brinks for decades,” said firm president James R. Sobieraj. “Rather than resting on his laurels after his two terms as president, he returned to working as an active first-chair litigator and developing new business. And I deeply appreciate the support he’s given me as his successor.”

Adds Sobieraj, “Outside Brinks, Gary is known as a preminent litigator who is always cool and calm under pressure. He is a gifted communicator able to inform, educate and charm juries with his cogent

explanations of complex inventions and unfamiliar principles of patent law. His achievements and leadership skills are unparalleled, and he was instrumental in developing and sustaining Brinks Gilson & Lione as a leader in the practice of intellectual property law. I'm delighted to congratulate Gary on his 40th anniversary at the firm."

Ropski also has taught patent and copyright law for 17 years at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, served as a mediator, and even skippered sailboats for ten years in the international Patent Cup Regatta, winning first place twice.

Of the many accolades Brinks Gilson & Lione has received, Ropski most values the award Brinks won while he was president: the Thomas L. Sager Award, given annually by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association to law firms that have demonstrated sustained commitment to the hiring, retention, and promotion of diverse attorneys. Brinks became the first intellectual property law firm in the Midwest and only the second in the country to receive the award.

Ropski has extensive experience in complex litigation, having been first- or second-chair in more than 125 patent, trademark, trade dress, trade secret and copyright cases. Ropski has handled high-stakes cases before key district courts for patent litigation and precedent-setting appeals before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. He is admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of Illinois, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, as well as numerous federal courts.

Ropski's clients, peers, and colleagues have recognized his prowess as a trial and appellate lawyer with dozens of awards and honors. Leading Lawyers, which identifies top attorneys through annual peer surveys, named him the [#1 Leading Intellectual Property Lawyer in Illinois](#) in 2014 and one of the Top Ten Business Litigators in Illinois in 2009. In 2014, Ropski was selected as a [fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America](#), a highly selective honorary society that accords membership to less than one-half of one percent of American lawyers, based on their excellence and accomplishments in trial and appellate litigation, and their reputation for superior ethics. *Best Lawyers in America* named him [Chicago Lawyer of the Year for patent litigation](#) in 2013.

Ropski joined Brinks shortly after graduating *cum laude* from the Northwestern University School of Law. Before that, he was a trainee in a manufacturing management program at General Electric—where he gained the insights into what patent attorneys did that sparked his interest in a legal career.

"I know my sustained career path will not be typical for young lawyers entering the profession today," noted Ropski. "But I've found the more time you spend at a firm, the more you can be involved in contributing to its successes and shaping its future. I consider myself fortunate to have had that opportunity at Brinks."

Brinks Gilson & Lione

The attorneys, scientific advisors and patent agents at Brinks Gilson & Lione focus their practice in the field of intellectual property. Brinks is one of the largest intellectual property law firms in the U.S. Clients around the world use Brinks to help them protect and enforce their intellectual property rights. Brinks lawyers provide counseling in all aspects of patent, trademark, unfair competition, trade secret and copyright law. More information is at www.brinksgilson.com.