



# Ron Pope '84

## Alumni

Ron Pope graduated from high school seriously contemplating

studying Theology at Ottawa University in Kansas. "Because I wanted to play football and their team was 'horrible', I decided to go to Emporia State University instead," Pope said. Pope played football and graduated with a bachelor's degree from Emporia in 1980. After graduation, he considered medical school but thought the program was too long and difficult. He decided instead, to become an attorney and applied only to Washburn Law.

Pope attended law school with his then wife, Judy. "I worked to make us money, and Judy is the one who got both of us, especially me, through law school." Pope was a commercial pilot and flew an air ambulance and still flies today. He has taught more than 1,000 students to fly.

Through law school, Pope wasn't sure what area he wanted to practice or the direction his career would take. Pope said he fell into trial work in medical malpractice and personal injury. As he quoted Harry Potter, "The wizard does not choose the wand, the wand chooses the wizard." I was fortunate and had some early success. The area of law chose me." Pope practices in the area of medical malpractice, personal injury product liability. He handles some general practice work "if friends or family need assistance, or if someone needs legal representation and can't afford help elsewhere. Then I do general practice work." Pope is quick to point out the interesting coincidence that he once considered med school, but ended up practicing law in an area that focuses on medial issues.

Pope wholeheartedly believes that practicing law is "the most fun thing you can do." He loves to go to work every day and finds each day challenging and rewarding. Pope believes he has been "blessed" with finding a career that he loves and enjoys and one where he has been fortunate enough to be successful. He describes a day of practice as "organized anarchy - it is organized chaos." Pope believes his success comes not from always being able to out-think opposing counsel, but definitely being able to out-work them; words he fondly remembers hearing from Judge Terry Bullock during law school.

Pope is quick to point out that he doesn't like to talk about his verdicts. "I have had some million dollar verdicts and some zero dollar verdicts. It's not about what you won or received in the past. Maybe another attorney would have received more, maybe someone else would

have gotten less. What matters is what you are doing today, right now, for your client. Your past verdicts have nothing to do with your client's current case. Therefore talking about big cases does not serve a useful purpose," said Pope.

Working with people and helping them with real problems is what Pope finds rewarding. "These are real people with real problems. Their lives have been turned upside down, and for some it is the decision to buy prescriptions or food, or the decision to provide one child with an operation or let the family eat. I have the opportunity to help these people during their darkest moments and it feels wonderful."

Pope is an adjunct professor at Washburn Law who has taught Pre-Trial Procedure, Trial Advocacy, Litigation Strategies and has lectured on nearly every subject in the clinic. Pope engages his students in class. If they won't come to him, he goes to them. "In class everyone sits at the back. I like to walk around, but since the classrooms are set up so I can't walk around among the students and interact with them, I walk on top of the desks." Pope loves teaching and the interaction with law students. "Washburn Law has a great quality of students who are thirsty for knowledge; that makes it fun to teach," he said.

Pope believes Washburn Law turns out the best trial lawyers. "I have tried cases in over 13 states with some of the best attorneys, in some of the biggest and so-called most prestigious firms, in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Some of the most competent and most respectful attorneys come from the Midwest. We are lucky to have that reputation here," said Pope. He is also quick to point out that not only does the law school have a great full-time faculty, but they have adjunct professors who are certainly in the top five percent of trial lawyers, not only in the region, but nationally. "You have people like Tom Wright '64, Mike Francis '75, Curt Waugh '87 and Wayne Stratton '58, just to name a few, teaching law students. It is no wonder Washburn Law turns out so many successful trial lawyers."

Pope, by all definition has a passion for what he does and for the people he serves. He is a strong advocate for Washburn Law and the advocacy programs it provides its students. He is a successful trial lawyer and appreciates every day that he works at what he loves. Pope is also committed to and proud of his family, wife Shawna, and children RJ, 17, Harley, 4, and Jett, 1.