

BY MARITZA COSANO
PHOTOS: ADDIEL PERERA

BILL BONE, *The Community Advocate*

A community advocate is a person who is a resident living or working in the neighborhood and is concerned about the health, growth, and welfare of his community. For the Town of Palm Beach and the City of West Palm Beach, no other name can define this title better than Personal Injury Attorney, Bill Bone.

Everybody calls him Bill Bone. Not Bill. Not Mr. Bone. Bill-bone, like two syllables, is easy to pronounce. He's straightforward, passionate, and enthusiastic about everything he loves or what he enjoys in life, like cycling and helping support his two beloved cities: The town of Palm Beach, where he lives, and the City of West Palm Beach, where he works.

A history buff, he doesn't mince words about American industrialist Henry Flagler's role in the Palm Beaches. How he made a significant contribution to Florida's economy by creating America's first resort destination [Palm Beach] and by building the center of the Palm Beaches [City of West Palm Beach]. For Bill Bone, the tale of the two cities gets him excited. "I really, really, love my town, my city, my community," he says, and this infatuation began as a child in his hometown of

Delray Beach, where he grew up. That passion is the strategic approach that has also influenced outcomes and change on behalf of his community.

There is no denying that the founding partner at Larmoyeux & Bone Law Firm is a force of nature. A man who is a product of a tight-knit Italian family, a nucleus that provided emotional and economic support, and made him the strong individual he became. His father came to this country in 1940 and worked as an auto mechanic, just like his grandfather. But it was during his high school years when he joined Atlantic High School's Speech and Debate Club, the Drama Club, and the Student Government Club, that Bill Bone began to learn how to be an outspoken, active citizen, a self-advocate in regards to decisions affecting his life, and that of others.

Since then, Bill Bone has not held back his ideas, desires, and plans for his family and his community, which also include his four kids and his dog Budha. Paraphrasing British statesmen, soldier, and writer, Winston Churchill, he says, "Never, never, never give in, except for conviction and honor," a motto that defines him as a leader.

That philosophy in life is the reason why he's also called a "super lawyer," although he prefers to talk about his community rather than his career as a personal injury trial attorney. He has earned a reputation as a tough negotiator and one of Florida's most experienced trial lawyers in the courtroom.

Every year, Bill Bone travels to New York City to see every single Broadway show in the Tony Awards lineup. Locally, he supports the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts and Palm Beach Dramaworks. He says he never misses a show.

Bone also loves cycling and he created the Bill Bone Racing Team, one of the longest and largest racing series in Florida. He believes in the protection the police and fire departments provide our cities. Therefore, he helped create a foundation for both the Town of Palm Beach Police Foundation and The Fund for the West Palm Beach Police Department.

Recently, Bill Bone spoke to me exclusively about his love, affection, and support for the community.





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Your resume is impressive. What drives your passions and your love for helping others?

I really, really love this community. When I left for Gainesville, it was the first time I had ever been that far north. However, when I came back home, I just threw myself into this community. I had a very happy childhood here. It’s my way of giving back.

How long have you lived in Palm Beach?

I’ve lived here for 35 years. When I graduated from college, I bought an apartment facing the ocean in Palm Beach.

You love history and West Palm Beach has lots of it. Do you find yourself sharing it?

Oh, yes, a lot of people know about Henry Flagler and his association with Palm Beach. However, few know about his intentions for both Palm Beach and West Palm Beach. He developed Palm Beach but he invented the City of West Palm Beach in 1895, which is older than the Town of Palm Beach. Flagler didn’t want Palm Beach to be a city, he wanted it to be a resort of sorts. He always intended West Palm Beach to be the support of the town and all of the neighboring communities.

You and local historian Rick Rose share similar interests in the community. What excites you?

Rick and I are very good friends. I simply want to see the city grow and prosper, and be upbeat. Rick’s passion is tourism and travel, whereas my interest lies in government, governing, and the community’s safety, water quality, parks, roads, infrastructure, and of course, the court system. Those are the things that excite me.

In the past few years, I’ve seen the City of West Palm Beach truly explode. Particularly after the building of the Bristol on Flagler Drive. The Bristol, of course, looks a lot like many fancy condominiums on Brickell Avenue in Miami or in places like Central Park West in New York. People who used to live in Palm Beach fell in love with the Bristol after they saw it. Who wouldn’t want to live in a luxurious, large, modern building facing the intercoastal? When they came to West Palm Beach, they suddenly realized that West Palm

Beach was beautiful, big, and bold—not just a place to drive through to get to the airport.

Tell me how you have, for the past 15 years, been involved with the Town of Palm Beach Police Department, and recently, with the West Palm Beach Police Department.

Every year, we have a party at Mar-a-Lago, and I serve as the Master of Ceremonies and Auctioneer for the Palm Beach Police & Fire Foundation. One day, the Chief of Police for the City of West Palm Beach was playing golf with the Chief of Police in Palm Beach. He wanted to know how they could get a foundation like the one on the island.

Bob Garvey and I became the curators for this newly created foundation, called The Fund for West Palm Beach Police Department [WPBF]. Essentially, we are a group of residents from different neighborhoods. We call ourselves the fund for the police. We want to support them by recognizing and celebrating those citizens and officers for their heroic acts. We have the medal of honor and the Police Duty Excellence Award, which celebrates what they accomplished by going above and beyond the call of duty.

The Fund for the West Palm Beach Police Department started six months ago, and so far, we have raised over one million dollars. We had our first event in April at the Kravis Center. This was an awards ceremony where we recognized 40 police officers for their excellence and heroism and gave them cash rewards.

Since then, we’ve had two other events: a BBQ on the steps of the West Palm Beach Police Station, and in early May, we held a basketball game between the WPB police and firemen. Though the firemen started strong, the police officers won by one point.

This is so timely, as the nation honored the anniversary of George Floyd’s killing not too long ago.

Every policeman I know is horrified by that. That’s why I support the police. I want the police to be the best trained, the most attentive, and the best paid in the county. I want them to recruit the most qualified people for the job.



Bill Bone on his bike that he usually rides to work. He is a highly respected cycling advocate. Since 2004, the Bill Bone Pro-Am race series—a series that got its name from its founder Bill Bone—has become the premier bike race series in Florida, held throughout over 20 locations.

What do you like to do for fun and entertainment?

Right after my divorce from my first wife, I decided I wanted to get myself out of the rut of working all the time. I was very active in the law but remembered how much fun I had in high school and college doing all kinds of things like speech debate and drama. Though I was never an athletic type of guy, I liked the sport of cycling. I started riding my bike with a group of people in town, who were part of the Motorola Team in the 90s.

Do you mean the national team that competed in the Tour de France?

No, that one really had nothing to do with the local team. I thought it was cool to join the Motorola Team in Boynton Beach. But, suddenly, Motorola decided to end the local team. The other members of the group looked up to me to find a solution. The team flattered me by calling the group the Bill Bone Racing Team. My ego said, “Sure!” I knew I would never compete as a serious cyclist. In fact, I want to be quoted: “I am a much better lawyer than I am a cyclist.”

So, you’re not trying to be a super cyclist?

Nope. Just a recreational cyclist. From there, the group created the Bill Bone Grand Prix, and we raced around Downtown West Palm Beach. The Bill Bone Racing Team also sponsored many other cycling events, including races and championships, becoming one of the largest and longest cycling racing series in Florida. Starting out as a supporter and advocate for the state, I became so enthusiastic about the sport after seeing men, women, and children take part in the races. From 12-year-olds to men and women in their 70s.

What led you to advocate the sport from a legal perspective?

I went to Tallahassee to make sure the laws are better for cyclists. There’s a lot of prejudice against cyclists, you know.

It is our arrogance as motorists to think that just because we are behind the wheel that we are priority number one on the road. I have a Porsche. I admit I like fast cars. You feel powerful behind the wheel. There’s an engine under you and when you push a button or press a pedal



Left to right, Bill Bone, City of West Palm Beach Mayor Keith James, and hotelier, philanthropist Bill Meyer during a recent event with The Fund for West Palm Beach Police to support the Police Department.

you can take off. It is our culture that goes back 70 years when the oil industry lobbied Congress to build new roads. Our entire infrastructure in America was built for cars. As a result, when people get into their cars, they feel like they are numero uno. They think they have the right of way, and that is wrong!

Other cultures don't think that way. Look at Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa.... People are number one there. Pedestrians are the most vulnerable. So, you start with the hierarchy of vulnerability—pedestrians. If you're in a car, if you see a cyclist, you should give them preference on the road. If you are on a bike, you look out for pedestrians. If you are in a car, you have to look out for bikes. If you are in a truck, you have to look out for cars.

Let's get back to what we were discussing about our community and how

we support our police. Is there such a difference between our county versus others that don't feel the same way?

I think we're about to see a change in that. It all stems back to two years ago when George Floyd was killed. Only in smaller and elite towns like the Town of Palm Beach and others throughout America, there was a sense that we needed to support the police. That was very rare because police departments remain small. But, across America, police departments got very big and often disconnected from their community. Thus, people considered cops to be the enemy or the "bad guys." Many of us realized two years ago, when this incident happened, that although there are officers who abuse their position, the vast majority are ordinary people.

So, for the same reason that we created

a foundation in Palm Beach and West Palm Beach to support our police officers, we just tapped a nerve in our community, and suddenly, not only wealthy people but also regular folks wanted to show that we care about the police. And, we are the majority. This sentiment is sweeping across the country right now. Perhaps five years from now we will see that similar police foundations like the ones we created for Palm Beach and West Palm Beach are created. It's happening now in other cities.

The time is right, says Bill Bone. His commitment comes from within, and it is contagious.

"It's all about the community," he concludes. And who's willing to argue that?