

Good Morning!

KAMLOOPS



THIS WEEK

DECEMBER 28, 2007

FRIDAY EDITION

VOL. 21 NO. 150



**After a
13-month
stint in
professional
purgatory,
BILL SUNDHU
is now
embracing
his passion
— and he
couldn't be
happier**

PAGE A3

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

AN UPDATE ON THE PEOPLE AND EVENTS
THAT FILLED THE PAGES OF KTW

KAMLOOPS **THIS WEEK**

Dec 28 2007

Where Are They Now? An Update on The People and Events That Filled The Pages of KTW The fall and rise of William Sundhu

By Dale Bass

For a man who faced the disgrace of spending a night in the drunk tank, being removed from his job as a judge while he waited 13 months for his punishment — and then resigning from a position most lawyers aspire to, Bill **Sundhu** is one happy man.

Why wouldn't he be?

He's one of two dozen lawyers worldwide accepted into a prestigious human-rights law program at Oxford University.

He's back on the other side of the judge's chair, resuming his career as a trial lawyer. He's involved in his community in a way he never felt he could be while wearing the judicial robes.

And he's pursuing his passion, the reason he entered law in the first place — advocating for people who might otherwise have no one in their corner.

But first, **Sundhu** said, he had to endure his own personal black pit when he was arrested for causing a disturbance in a Vancouver bar in February 2006.

The subsequent 13 months the judiciary spent reviewing his case before the charges were stayed and a diversion arrangement imposed was, in his opinion, wrong.

"The process became the punishment," **Sundhu** said.

But it also helped crystallize his belief that he had to make a change in his life and pursue his original dream of involving himself in the human-rights movement.

"When I think about what I went through — and I'm a lawyer, a judge. I know the system and I still was left in limbo — when I think about it, I think about what it does to the ordinary person, the person who has no one and doesn't know how the system works."

And, being still young — **Sundhu** is now just 49 — with 11 years on the provincial court as a judge, he said it was time to take stock, reflect and make changes.

Sundhu started his studies at Oxford in November and should complete the



program in about two years. It will give him a master of arts in human-rights law — but, more importantly, it is giving him a chance to debate with other lawyers about issues of substance.

Sundhu is looking forward to making new friends through the program, which is largely done online, with residency requirements in the summers.

He sees it as inspirational and motivating, qualities he learned as a child from his parents, who came to Canada in 1950 as poor, uneducated immigrants. It was a time when newcomers to Canada faced many inequities and discrimination.

Sundhu devoted himself to his education, embraced his law studies, became an accomplished trial lawyer and ascended to the bench when he was just 37.

It all came undone at that Vancouver bar, where police said he was drunk, belligerent, aggressive — all facts **Sundhu** acknowledges as true.

But that's in the past.

The man who once passed judgment on others found himself on the receiving end — and was overwhelmed by how he was embraced by his community.

“People supported me. I messed up. I didn't hide that fact. When people asked me, ‘Judge, what happened?’ I told them I messed up.

“But I found solace in how well I was treated and my family was treated. People would come up and say that they understood. They'd been there, too.”

Sundhu knows bad things happen to good people.

He's seen them in his courtroom. He's heard their pain, listened to their promises to make amends.

Finding himself in the same position forced him to make some hard choices — but they're decisions he's glad he could make.

“It can be lonely being a judge. For many nights, I struggled with these decisions,”

Sundhu said.

“But there comes a time when you have to move forward.

“Now, I'm just a regular citizen. I have a set of skills I can give back to society as a lawyer, as a citizen and as an activist.

“Life is good.”