



En route to the law, Carson spent a lot of time as Cinderella en route to the ball.



Amber M. Carson
Gray Reed
Bankruptcy: Business
Dallas

Making Magic

While brightening the lives of sick kids, Amber Carson was undergoing health crises of her own

BY LYNNE MARGOLIS

Before she became a bankruptcy lawyer, Amber Carson spent summers and holidays playing princesses and woodland creatures to the delight of thousands of children at Disney World. The best part of being Cinderella or Snow White, she says, was interacting with Make-A-Wish kids.

"They talk about the magic of Disney. People think of that as the fairy godmother who makes magic," Carson says. "But the magic is the looks on the kids' faces. For those five minutes they're with that character, they aren't a sick child. They just get to be happy."

She started attending the Disney College Program the summer after her sophomore year at the University of Massachusetts, working as a character attendant, which involved shepherding costumed performers to appearances and keeping meet-and-greet lines moving.

"Now, whenever I see a line anywhere, I can estimate how quickly it's going to go," says the Texas native with a laugh. When she eventually achieved character status,

she says, the impact she had on children was worth every second spent wearing layers of clothes and heavy makeup in the Florida heat.

"Whenever you gave those little kids hugs, you just wanted to hug them forever and not let them go," she says of the children with life-threatening illnesses.

Those interactions took on even more meaning when she found herself fighting leukemia, the disease that claimed the life of 7-year-old Christopher James Greicius, who inspired the creation of Make-A-Wish.

Carson was 26 years old when a routine blood test indicated her platelet count, which should have ranged from 150,000 to 400,000, was over 1 million. Her diagnosis of chronic myelogenous leukemia (also called myeloid leukemia) came the year after she graduated from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law and became director of legal education for Barbri Inc., a bar exam prep-course provider.

Had Carson become ill 12 years earlier,

her oncologist told her, this disease would have been a death sentence. But in 2001, the Food and Drug Administration approved an oral form of targeted therapy for CML. She took a second-generation version that sent her platelet level plummeting so fast, her doctor characterized it as "dropping off a cliff."

"Within 10 months, there was no sign of cancer in my blood," Carson reports.

Her main side effect was fatigue, which eventually subsided. She did not experience hair loss or other typical side effects of traditional chemotherapy.

"Hardly anybody knew that I was even sick," says Carson, who was already telecommuting and told almost no one at work about her diagnosis. Her doctor originally said she would need the medication for the rest of her life, but a couple of years later, she joined a monitored discontinuation trial and has not taken a dose in three years.

Studies show the five-year survival rate for CML can now exceed 90%. Carson

credits the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society with funding much of the research that led to targeted therapy.

The whole time, Carson continued working at Disney World whenever possible. It had taken more than two years to become a character, and she wasn't about to give that up. "I found out that I was going to be a character while I was sitting in real property my One L year," she recalls.

In fact, Carson weathered an earlier health crisis before entering the Disney program.

As a college freshman in 2005, Carson developed Crohn's disease, and doctors removed 1 foot of her intestine. After being treated for the disease for years, Carson's symptoms disappeared.

Carson finally hung up her Cinderella slippers after becoming an associate at Dallas firm McCathern in 2015. The next year, she served a clerkship with Harlin D. Hale, chief U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge for the Northern District of Texas. And in 2017, she moved on to Gray Reed.

"I do think that working at Disney helped with my speaking and presentation ability in court, and in CLE programs," she says.



Carson spread a little enchantment in her role as Snow White.

"As a character, I spoke with thousands of people from around the world on a daily basis and I had to think on my feet, and that helped me to become a better oral advocate for my clients."

She now spends her days offering

a healing of sorts to clients who find themselves in difficult financial straits.

"Bankruptcy is kind of like a hospital where no one really wants to be," she says. "But hopefully, you leave the process in a much healthier position." ^{SL}

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Both Sharda and Mala were selected to the Top 40 under 40 by The National Trial Lawyers in 2017-2018. Bash received the Avvo Clients Choice Award in 2018. Anjali was selected to Immigration Law 10 Best Attorneys by the American Institute of Legal Counsel Immigration Division in 2018. Also, Mala was appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott to serve on the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

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