

"I really respected and idolized my father," Johnson said. "His service in the Army inspired me to go to West Point, even at a time when we were involved in the Vietnam War. It was while I was at West Point that my interest in the law was piqued. I took a couple of law classes that really sparked my interest."

Johnson also drew inspiration from his mother, Gladys, who for years volunteered at Army hospitals before becoming a teacher and guidance counselor in New York City schools.

"Both of my parents really instilled in me the value of community service, the importance of giving back," Johnson said. "It is something that has stayed with me my entire life."

An "Army Brat" who grew up from age 10 in New York, Johnson has a history of community involvement, serving on the board of the American Cancer Society and as co-chairman of the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Foundation. His volunteer work with the American Cancer Society was born from the loss of his first wife, Sheryl, who died of breast cancer in 2000 after the couple had been married for 25 years. It was a tragic loss he suffered with their two children, Erin and Chip. Johnson has since remarried and his wife, Rhonda, serves as a senior vice president for Comerica Bank. Daughter

Roy Campanella, who enjoyed a stellar 11-year career with the Most Valuable Player award three times. His playing days came to a premature end in 1958 when he was paralyzed in a car accident on Long Island, confining him to a wheelchair for the balance of his life. He died in 1993 at age 71, nearly a quarter of a century after he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

"He lived with us for several years while I was growing up and he took me to see a number of Major League games," Johnson said of Campanella. "He was a role model for a lot of young men, inside and outside baseball."

Many legal admirers now view Johnson in a similar light. He is quick to deflect any personal praise, preferring instead to focus on the importance of helping UDM take its mobile mission to the national stage. To date, the RV has made the rounds in Texas and Florida, stopping to help veterans in cities such as San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Pensacola, and Orlando. In March, visits to Tampa, Jacksonville, and the Miami area are planned in the Sunshine State, while a Georgia stop is planned in Atlanta. Johnson also has agreed to enlist the support of GM's outside counsel in these and other cities as the RV travels around the country.

"You can't help but be moved when you hear some of the hardships they have encountered in their lives. My heart is full, especially knowing that we are offering a service that is producing tangible results and is making a difference in the lives of some of these veterans."

In Texas alone, the UDM program offered assistance to nearly 400 veterans with federal claims. Gordon was particularly heartened by the response in Houston where members of the Volunteer Lawyers Program turned out in force to aid with the effort, receiving training that will enable the attorneys to continue the pro bono work in the months ahead.

"The tremendous work and dedication the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program displayed was indicative of the great response we have received from the legal community to our efforts," Gordon said. "I really believe that this is program is going to take off on a national level based on what we have seen so far. Of course, the success of the program in Michigan is what spurred us on to take this nationally. We have received a \$200,000 grant from the state to help expand our work in Michigan and our original van continues to travel to cities around the state. We're delighted that we are now able to offer this assistance on two fronts."