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Michael D. Myers
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Peter Richardson
Author of *A Bomb in Every Issue:
How the Short, Unruly Life of
Ramparts Magazine Changed America*

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Michael D. Myers has a national law practice involving class actions and commercial litigation at both the trial and appellate levels. In this exciting interview, he discusses “dead peasant” insurance, which is sometimes used as a shorthand reference for life insurance policies that insure a company’s rank-and-file employees and name the company as the beneficiary. Mike has also been counsel in cases involving eighteen approved class action settlements, including the Wal-Mart and Fina Oil “dead peasant” insurance cases. He has argued before the United States Courts of Appeals for the Tenth and Fifth Circuits in landmark cases involving life insurance and personal privacy rights. A substantial part of his practice concerns corporate-owned life insurance and his cases have been reported in THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, and internationally in LEMONDE’S March 18, 2003 article Les Mortelles Combines Des Patrons Américains. Mike is frequently used as a media resource on the topics of insurance and annuities. He has appeared in the NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL and on CNN’s Prime News with Erica Hill to discuss life insurance issues and consulted on the documentary film SiCKO.

Before forming McClanahan Myers Espey, Mike was a partner with the Houston, Texas litigation boutique McClanahan & Clearman, L.L.P. where he practiced for thirteen years. He is a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and Texas A&M University and a former member of a United States Army explosive ordnance detachment. Mike was named a "rising star" lawyer by Texas Lawyer magazine in 2006 and one of Houston's top attorneys by H-Texas magazine in 2008 and 2009.

Peter Richardson is the author of American Prophet: The Life and Work of Carey McWilliams. He is the editorial director at PoliPoint Press and the interim chair of the California Studies Association, and teaches courses on California culture at San Francisco State University. His latest book, A Bomb in Every Issue, tells the largely untold story of the wild ride of this hugely influential magazine that achieved countless firsts: it published the first conspiracy theory about JFK’s assassination, it was the first to reveal that the CIA had backed the National Student Association during the Cold War, and its article about the use of napalm on Vietnamese children (another first) caused Martin Luther King Jr. to speak out against the war for the first time.

Launched in 1962 as an intellectual Catholic quarterly, within five years Ramparts had become a secular magazine and won a George Polk Award for “its explosive revival of the great muckraking tradition.” Deeply committed to the civil rights and antiwar movements, its contributors included Noam Chomsky, Cesar Chavez, Seymour Hersh, Angela Davis, and Susan Sontag. It was in its pages that Che Guevera’s diaries and the prison diaries of Eldridge Cleaver (which became Soul on Ice) first appeared. But by 1975, out of money and time, it had folded for good. Ramparts was “the journalistic equivalent of a rock band,” Peter argues and, despite its early demise, it left an important journalistic legacy, influencing a generation of reporters and editors, that is still apparent today.

Hosted by Steve Murphy.



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Contact:

Michael D. Myers 713-223-2005

McClanahan Myers Espey LLP

<http://www.mmellp.com/michael.php>

Peter Richardson

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