

## Zwanikken and Snow open law office

By Wim Hart

# The excitement of seeing justice triumph

St. Maarten's youngest law office, Zwanikken & Snow, officially opened its doors on Friday with the cutting of a ribbon followed by a well-attended reception. Although Roeland Zwanikken started the office on October 1, 2002, and Jelmer Snow joined him on February 1, 2003, they already had the intention for a long time to one day operate together. The official opening was set for February this year, after Snow joined. Whereas their law firm is brand new, Zwanikken and Snow themselves have a lot of experience as attorneys-at-law working on St. Maarten, as well as on other islands in the Netherlands Antilles.

"BESIDES being all-round law specialists, we each have our individual fields which complement each other in an excellent manner. We are operating as a team," Zwanikken and Snow told The Daily Herald just before the official opening of their office, which is located on Bush Road #22.

Zwanikken said that after having worked for various offices in St. Maarten and the Netherlands for a number of years, he wanted to set up his own law firm. "On August 15, 2002, I knew I would leave the office I was then working for and I decided to set up my own firm. One day later, I discussed my plans with Jelmer Snow, with whom I had worked before in another law office in St. Maarten and he immediately wanted to jump aboard."

Snow said, he had been planning to have his own lawyer's office years ago and had waited for a partner he could rely on. "I know I can rely on Roeland," he said with confidence.

AFTER THEY HAD taken the first step on the joint road to start a law office in August

last year, everything went incredibly fast. Zwanikken said, "We set out from scratch and in six weeks time we managed to arrange the financial matters, the rent of an office, the purchase of office furniture, books, everything."

The two partners explained that their present office on Bush Road is in a perfect location. It's easy to reach for their clients, they have the availability of sufficient parking space and it's a stone throw away from Philipsburg, where most of the businesses and the courthouse are located.

WITH THE thousand-and-one things involved in starting of a new office, the furnishing of the office and what not, together with the daily work that comes with a well-filled order portfolio from many clients, Zwanikken and Snow look back at some hectic weeks, they said.

However, they have always looked forward as well and are already thinking of expanding their office by attracting a lawyer-intern. "Eventually, it is our intention to work with a bigger team to tend to our clients even better than we do al-



Curtis Zwanikken (11) and Nathan Snow (2) cutting the ribbon with Diego Zwanikken (4 months) looking on in the arms of his mother Debbie. Standing behind them are from left Roeland Zwanikken, Roger Snow, his son Jelmer Snow and Jelmer's spouse Anju.

ready," they stated.

THE MANY challenges that come with offering support to people and businesses for their legal problems using your own skill and knowledge are the most interesting parts of their profession of attorney-at-law, the two lawyers said. Snow added, "The most exciting part of my work is entering the court room to plea for a client and then see justice triumph."

Zwanikken noted that their individual interests and skills are in particular complementary in the sense that he himself is fond of handling the long drawn out and compli-

cated affairs, which he has to study in depth.

At the moment he is very much occupied with lawsuits in the area of telecommunication, where, he says, much has not been properly and legally arranged, such as in, for instance, Europe and the US. "This neglect has caused many problems and huge interests," he said.

Zwanikken is also dealing with bankruptcies, such as Food Center, where he is the trustee, and supplies legal advice to corporate clients.

SNOW SAID, while he likes to handle all different types of legal cases, he is in particular interested in the relatively short and fast ones, such as summary proceedings. "I also handle divorce cases and legal aid cases that are paid for by government, in particular labour disputes."

One of their main philosophies is to closely cooperate with their clients as a team, rather than operating from an old-fashioned point of view where a lawyer is the know-it-all-person.

Said Zwanikken, "In this way we are able to establish a good relationship with our clients. We endeavour to work as a team with them. We strive for interaction with our clients. Individuals and companies come to you with their problems and make use of your skills and knowledge and to-

gether we try to solve the problems. It's like a game of chess in which you have to make the right move to get a strategically advantageous position."

BORN IN HOLLAND, Jelmer Snow moved to Curaçao with his parents at the age of 10. He received his education in Curaçao before leaving for Holland to study Dutch law at the University of Leiden. After completing his law studies in 1989, he immediately came to St. Maarten, where he worked as a lawyer at the office of C.A. Richardson & Associates for two years.

He did general practice as a lawyer and dealt with both criminal and civil cases.

In 1993, he went to Curaçao for one year to work at Winkel, Soliana & Grul Law Office before returning to St. Maarten to again work at C.A. Richardson & Associates.

He spent his longest career as a lawyer at Law office Gibson, Koeijers, Hoeksma & Snow, where he worked for eight years, six of which as a senior associate. During this period, Snow was Dean of the St. Maarten Bar Association and legally represented the Governments of Saba and Statia, as well as other clients on those two islands.

Before teaming up with Zwanikken in his own law office, Snow spent about one

year at the Halley, Verzijl, Blaauw & Navarro Law Office.

ZWANIKKEN arrived in St. Maarten in 1994, immediately after he concluded his law study at the University of Amsterdam and an additional year at the Metropolitan University of Manchester, United Kingdom. "I have always wanted to work abroad. As a lawyer specialized in Dutch law, your choices are then in essence limited to the Netherlands Antilles or maybe Suriname, where Dutch law is also applied.

Prior to his arrival on the island, he had applied for a position with a number of law firms and eventually joined Gibson and associates, where in the beginning he was involved in a variety of law work, including criminal and civil cases.

Gradually his main interest focused on bankruptcy law and civil law, and advising commercial firms and labour law.

In 1999, he returned to Holland for two years to work as a lawyer for an office in Amsterdam (Van Diepen Van der Kroef) for two years. He then returned to St. Maarten to join Lexwell Attorneys-at-Law for one year.

*A dream finally came true, when Zwanikken started his own office together with Snow.*



Attorneys-at-law Jelmer Snow (left) and Roeland Zwanikken seen with secretary Amelia Pantophlet.