



NAWL NEWS

National Association of Women Lawyers®
The Voice of Women in the Law™

November-December, 2007

Welcome to NAWL News! This is a free newsletter, and we encourage you to pass it on to others who would be interested. To unsubscribe, please hit “reply” and put “unsubscribe” in the subject box.

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The NAWL Summit – November 5, 2007

Rickie, there was nothing on the website about this - can you write something up? Or just delete if there's nothing yet.

National Survey Findings Released

On November 15, 2007 the National Association of Women Lawyers released the findings from the NAWL 2007 National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms. To view a copy of the survey results, click [HERE](#).

FOCUS ON: Boies, Schiller & Flexner

Boies Schiller is a young, aggressive firm, and it doesn't have a women's initiative because they don't feel they need one. The culture there is what many law firms may become in the future. While referred to as “a firm of casual brilliance” and “a litigation powerhouse” by the *National Law Journal*, lawyers dress casually. Many have flexible hours so they can balance their family life with work. The whole emphasis is on quality of work, and getting it done in a way that works for both the firm *and* the attorney.

Tanya Chutkan, a partner in the Washington, DC office with two small children, says that Boies Schiller is very much oriented towards producing excellent work in a timely matter for their clients. From the top down, this is managed by allowing the attorneys to work in the best way for *them* and their clients. There is no dress code per se, although they do dress up for court and meetings where the client would be more comfortable with formal business attire, but otherwise, blue jeans and khakis are often the norm. “And face time isn't important – you don't need to be seen here at 11 at night or on weekends. We're always available to our clients; we work while commuting, while taking our kids to soccer,” she comments. “Our clients are very focused on the work we're doing, and our casual dress is not a problem.” The quality of life for employees is critically important to the firm, and window dressing does not play a part.

When you join Boies Schiller, there is a clear expectation that you will work very hard. Attorneys travel a lot and work in other offices, so there is a significant amount of interaction with all attorneys and all offices in the firm, which creates a truly collegial atmosphere. The firm is laid back, but with the brilliant edge that comes from people that are firing on all cylinders and are working in a culture that brings out their very best.

Office locations are part of the flexibility of the firm. They chose to locate their Washington, DC office in Friendship Heights, not in the downtown area. It's easier to get to and reduces the commute time for all. Their

New Hampshire office was opened in response to the relocation of a talented and valued attorney who had moved there, but who wanted to continue with the firm. Opening a New Hampshire office worked for both.

Technology, too, has helped in this regard. The firm feels that the practice of law has changed for the better and become more flexible, because now an attorney can work almost anywhere. Many things that used to require a meeting can now be done on a conference call. Technology does intrude on weekend time, but this has become the norm in most firms today. Attorneys never go through a weekend without checking email, but this allows them to hit the ground running on Monday morning without having to wade through the “Monday morning morass”. The firm views an electronic practice as good for everyone, and it certainly increases the flexibility so necessary today.

In the never ending search for balance – Boies Schiller a pretty good job. “If you need to leave to see your child in a school play or you’re coaching a sport, you do it. The expectation is that you will get your work done on time, and done well. Other than that, we don’t micromanage where or how you get it done,” Chutkan comments. “We have one partner who has coached basketball one afternoon a week for years. Family life is not viewed as an impediment to work.”

This balanced, collegial atmosphere clearly has an impact on retention. Generally, attorneys at Boies, Schiller don’t leave to go to other firms. They will accept clerkships, or move to another geographic location for one reason or another, but most of the time they don’t move to other firms. Why? The quality of work [here] is very similar to that in a big firm, but the atmosphere is “much more sane”. Sometimes good associates are still entranced with the 100 year old law firm, but Boies Schiller feels their opportunities are really significant. Associates are trained, supervised, and get much more hands-on work at an earlier stage because of the size and culture of the firm.

When asked about a specific women’s initiative, the firm stated that it doesn’t have one, because the size and culture of the firm is such that they don’t need it, although the firm does take diversity seriously. While they recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining women, the issues that might require a women’s initiative are always being addressed. “We try to make sure our lawyers have balance in our lives. We’re small, we’re 10 years old, and we want to hire bright and diverse people.” Tanya Chutkan – who is African American -- finishes. “We don’t confine ourselves to one type of lawyer.”

NAWL Members in the News:

Please send us your stars so that we can share and celebrate their achievements.

Fenwick and West LLP is pleased to announce that Charlene M. Morrow has been appointed as Chair of the firm’s Patent Litigation Group, which currently has over 38 members. Charlene has been in practice in the Silicon Valley since 1989, where she represents a variety of software and semiconductor clients. She has an active trial practice, including recent victories in patent trials in California and Delaware.

In My Opinion:

In this column, we solicit opinions on issues pertinent to women from our readers. In this issue, we spoke with **Susan Esserman of Steptoe & Johnson**, and NAWL President **Holly English of Post, Polak, Goodsell, MacNeill & Strauchler**. If you have a question on which you’d like to see opinions, please contact louiserothery@comcast.net.

NNews: What do you see as the most exciting thing in the future for women in the law?

H.English: With organizations such as NAWL, with more and more pressure from general counsel about diversity, with strong surveys such as the NAWL survey measuring change, and other indicators of change, the most exciting thing in the future will be greater equality and opportunity. We have the tools to bring about change and now it’s a matter of sticking to our guns.

S. Esserman: What is exciting is the increasing role of women as general counsel, and in the position to hire. Women are now at the top of their field in positions of leadership and management, and as rainmakers. While there are still improvements to be made, there have been some very positive developments. A college of recently went to a meeting of general counsel, and they were all women. This is a great and interesting change, and creates more potential for women.

NNews: What is the biggest challenge facing women in the law?

H. English: I feel that it is staying positive and upbeat, despite the fact that the media is always reporting reasons why we should be discouraged. There are many law firm where it is hard to succeed if you're a women, but there are many, many others that are good places to work, with strong and supportive people. If you're not in your optimal situation you owe it to yourself to improve it. A bad situation is not necessarily representative of women working in the law.

NNews: Do you think things will change for men? How?

S. Esserman: For men and women there are always changes, and we have to adapt – marketing, technology, etc. But I do think that there is a much more diverse client base now, whether you're in a law firm or working as general counsel or in a law firm. You have customers and clients that are very diverse. I think men will have to work on fielding a more diverse team to approach these clients.

NNews: Has there been anything in your career that has surprised you?

S. Esserman: My field of expertise – international trade – is a surprise to me. It is the furthest from what I would have thought about in law school (I wanted civil liberties). It's one of those things where I tried the field and, loved it because it's a blend of law, politics, policy, economics. When young lawyers or people who are contemplating law school ask about focusing on a narrow area, I always tell them to keep an open mind. You never know where you'll end up.

H. English: As a young lawyer, I assumed there would be no sexism. I thought that if you worked hard, you would get what you want. But clearly there were and are males who are not comfortable with women or have an issue with helping women to advance. That was a surprise. Also, I don't think anyone can truly be prepared for the challenges of family and work. If you have small kids or caregiver responsibilities, it's especially difficult.

NNews: What is your most memorable or significant accomplishment as a lawyer?

S. Esserman: Well, there have been two things. One of is being a department head and working with my incredibly talented team, building the practice. I've gotten enormous satisfaction out of working with my group. The other was when a senior associate I was to win a trade case for Harley Davidson that really did save the company from extinction. I now represent the company, and it's so successful - it was wonderful helping them get there.

H. English: Certainly becoming president of NAWL; it's an exciting and wonderful opportunity. There have also been several cases that I have worked on that resulted in extraordinary satisfaction. One was an impossible challenge, and a colleague and I brought it to a successful conclusion, which was really fabulous. Bringing about a resounding success, instead of settling based on a series of compromises (which is a lot more common!), is very satisfying.

NNews: What has been your most challenging issue to date, and how did you handle the situation?

S. Esserman: The most challenging issue is day to day managing work and family, ensuring that I am available to my three sons, husband and enjoying my family - yet at the same time staying on top of my practice and the firm responsibilities.

NNews: What is your definition of a good day?

S. Esserman: Solving a complicated policy and handling a political problem that really translates into results for the client – that’s a fun day.

H.English: A day when I have a wide variety of things to do, and I spend a lot of my time counseling people on employment issues or working on NAWL affairs. I like days to be busy, varied, and have a high human interaction component, not spend endless time staring into a computer.

NNews: If you weren’t going to be a lawyer, what would you be?

S. Esserman: There are many things I could or should have been – a symphony conductor, a city planner, a landscape architect, a historian – so many things!

H.English: I’ve been many other things. I have been a consultant to corporations on values/ethics issues, and I’ve written a book on gender issues for lawyers. Now, if I were not going to be a lawyer, I’d be a journalist writing feature stories about a wide variety of topics. Trouble is, I like to have a reasonably decent income! So that option isn’t quite as viable as I’d like.

NNews: Tell me something about yourself that may surprise other people.

S. Esserman: My inner strength comes a great deal from my two sisters, both of whom are doctors and who inspire and motivate me, give me counsel. Also, I still maintain my Wellesley network and feel that women’s networks are very important to me.

H.English: I used to play the harp when I was a teenager. It was fun for a while, and I had a beautiful harp, but it’s not something I had the time or frankly the inclination to keep up.

NNews: What book have you read most recently that you would recommend to others?

S. Esserman: One book that I loved was Alexander Hamilton by Franz Chernow. It is so beautifully written about a man who had such extraordinary talent and played so many roles in the history of our country.

NNews: What person in history – ancient or recent - would you be most interested in having dinner with?

H. English: I think Queen Elizabeth I. She was incredibly powerful, she did things absolutely her way when it was very difficult for women to do much at all, she was smart and shrewd, she sent troops into battle – she things that most women today don’t get an opportunity to do. Just an amazing person.

S. Esserman: Leonard Bernstein. I’m a LB groupie even more than 20 years after his death, he just inspires me with his joie de vivre.

Fewer Women are Seeking Law Degrees - From The National Law Journal

Since 2002, the percentage of women in law schools has declined each year, according to the America Bar Association. Cathy Fleming, a partner at Nixon Peabody and past president of the National Association for Women Lawyers, says a perception among young women that they have a wider array of career opportunities is one reason, but a change in work ethic is also at play. And law firms, with their reputation for punishing work hours, may have a tougher sell to college graduates.

NAWL Historical Factoid

Donna Halper, who is writing a book on the history of NAWL, will be contributing interesting historical tidbits to the NAWL News from now on – always interesting!

In August of 1928, Lillian D. Rock, the Vice President of the National Association of Women Lawyers, predicted that there would be a woman president within her lifetime. In fact, she told the press in an interview, she would be both surprised and disappointed if there weren't a woman vice president. She said she was encouraged that there were more women judges now, but believed even more were needed. "The woman judge," she said, "is the true symbol of the emancipated woman," explaining that because women could now interpret the law, this had improved their status. She said that there should be one woman judge for every male judge, and if this happened, society would be a far better place. Lillian Rock not only gave interviews on the subject of the need for women political leaders. In 1935, she founded an organization called the League for a Woman President and Vice President. It soon had 3000 members, but never was able to advance its central goal. One wonders how Rock would feel about the fact that in 2007 we still have never had a woman president nor vice president.

Donations for this project are greatly appreciated, and can be sent to Rickie Jacobs at the NAWL offices in Chicago.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Second Tuesday of the Month

Read, Learn & Connect Series

**Facilitated by Karen Kahn Wilson, EdD PCC, executive coach who has worked with hundreds of attorneys
2:00 p.m. EST**

Read, Learn & Connect is a dynamic teleconference, book discussion group for NAWL Members and guests. Since this program began in October, 2005 members have found the gathering to be a great way to read of some of the newest books to come onto the market; a time to discuss important, professional ideas with colleagues; and an chance to connect and learn from top-notch thinkers. We offer this program in collaboration with Karen Kahn Wilson, leadership and business development coach and principal of KM Advisors. Each month Karen introduces us to a book that she believes will spark our interest, curiosity, and light our fires to grow in new directions. She facilitates a dynamic teleconference where she interviews the author of the assigned book for a short time and then opens the lines for members to engage in a thorough Q&A session with the author. All selected books are "must reads" for professional women who are serious about advancing their careers. Join us for a great conversation with your colleagues and an opportunity to get constructive advice on important career issues with Karen and leading authors.

December 12: *Tripping The Prom Queen: The Truth About Women and Rivalry* with Susan Shapiro Barash □ As more women join law firms we need to think about ways to maximize the ways we work together. This book explores the world of women to women competition and how we often undermine each others efforts. In a warm and engaging style Barash discusses the "underworld" of female relationships and ends with outlining ways that we can turn this competition into strength.

To register and receive call-in information email NAWL with your complete contact information.

Note: Sponsorship opportunities are available at all events. For more information, contact knitter@nawl.org

Quote of the month:

“Funny business, a woman’s career: the things you drop on the way up the ladder so you can move faster. You forget you’ll need them again when you get back to being a woman. It’s one career all females have in common, whether we like it or not: being a woman. Sooner or later, we’ve got to work at it, no matter how many other careers we’ve had or wanted.”

Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1909 - 1993), *in All About Eve*

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