

PUBLICATION

A Conversation with Baker Donelson Women

Fall 2010

Founded in 2004, the Baker Donelson Women's Initiative was formed to address the growing national concern regarding retention and advancement of women in law firms. The Women's Initiative has made a commitment to expand diversity and celebrate the success of our professionals, and it seeks to improve recruitment, retention and representation of women in leadership while improving career development.

To that end, we want to share with you the background and observations of three of our women lawyers with the longest tenure at the Firm. This issue features shareholder Jill Steinberg; future issues will focus on other women shareholders and the challenges and opportunities they have faced in their careers.

Jill Steinberg, a 1985 graduate of the University of Tennessee law school, practices out of the Memphis office, and was the first Chair of the Baker Donelson Women's Initiative. She is a member of the Health Care Litigation group and concentrates her practice in medical malpractice, product liability and personal injury defense.

What was the motivation behind the founding of the Baker Donelson Women's Initiative?

It was originally contemplated to focus on marketing and networking for women attorneys, but it evolved to include the other aspects of our mission statement.

"Baker Donelson formed its Women's Initiative Committee to:

- *substantially improve the recruitment and retention of women attorneys;*
- *increase the representation of women in leadership positions at the Firm and the communities we serve;*
- *heed the call of our clients to provide a more diversified attorney team; and*
- *improve career development for its women attorneys, thereby enhancing the economic viability of the Firm."*

What has been the biggest challenge of your career?

There are not enough hours in the day to do everything I want to do!

How has your experience differed from what you expected when you started out?

I had no idea what law practice would be like and how my career would evolve. When I began with the Firm, we had 45 lawyers in two offices (Memphis and a very small Knoxville office). I certainly did not expect to be practicing in a large regional firm with more than 550 lawyers, but it has been something that I have loved.

What has been the most surprising thing about your career?

I have been most surprised at how I have been able to be a rainmaker and manage large amounts of litigation.

What was the most rewarding client interaction?

When I was six months pregnant with my second son, I tried back-to-back jury trials for two physician clients just before Thanksgiving. Both were defense verdicts and both were very grateful and gracious. My family was having a reunion with about 80 family members descending on Memphis for Thanksgiving. I was hosting dinner at my house on Friday night for my family, just two days after the second jury came back. One client sent me a huge basket and the other sent an incredible arrangement of flowers to my house on Friday with a wonderful thank-you note. I felt so proud! Here I was about to have a baby, really soaring in my career and surrounded by lots of family who were excited for me on all fronts as well.

Has the landscape changed for women since you started out?

When I first started practicing, there were no women litigators in the Firm and no one to mentor me. Women lawyers, particularly litigators, are a huge segment of the Firm now and they have each other to lean on and to learn from. I am very jealous of the camaraderie and wish that I had had the opportunity to work with women litigators in my early career.

Why did you choose a law career?

I wanted a profession where I could have challenges every day, make a good living (I had previously considered being a high school teacher or principal), and could have flexibility with career paths.

Did you clerk at Baker Donelson?

Yes, during the summer of 1984 after my second year of law school.

Have you ever practiced anywhere else?

No.

How many children do you have and how old are they?

Two boys – Corey, age 20 and Eli, age 16.

What are your three best rainmaking tips?

1. Develop your internal marketing relationships. Your colleagues in the various offices have many choices with respect to sending out work. There are great internal opportunities for the development of business. Get to know people throughout the various offices and practice groups, particularly people who have a lot of business. Landing even one referral from a colleague can lead to more opportunities and increase your business as well.
2. Have a great resume online. Many clients shop for attorneys on the internet. Additionally, Baker Donelson is a well known and respected firm and corporate counsel and new clients often go to our website to look for the attorney whose experience fits the client's needs. Having a resume that sets forth your experience in a professional and comprehensive manner is a great magnet for business.
3. Develop an expertise and become well known among clients and other attorneys as someone who is a go-to person in that area of the law. Love what you do and it will show!

You can reach Jill Steinberg in our Memphis office at 901.577.2234 or jsteinberg@bakerdonelson.com.

