

## DEANE BROWN

### Lawyers and Litigation Clients Benefit from Her Perfectionism

by John Flynn Rooney

Deane B. Brown juggles her practice focusing on commercial litigation, employment law and attorney disciplinary matters with her work with organizations such as the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, which she is set to lead in two years.

That is in addition to being a wife, mother, and mentor to younger female attorneys at **Beermann Swerdlove LLP** in Chicago.

Brown "is one of the most organized people I know," says Chicago lawyer Karen McNulty Enright, who got to know Brown through their involvement in the WBAI. "She's very prepared."

Enright adds, "She has achieved a balance that so many people are looking in terms of her professional and personal life."

Brown, 44, was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey but raised in Highland Park. She still lives there, as do her parents, Linn and Bob Brown.

"My parents were very supportive of me," Brown says. "Certainly, they encouraged me to be whatever I wanted to be."

After graduating from Highland Park High School, Brown matriculated to The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, receiving her undergraduate degree in international relations in three years.

While attending Johns Hopkins, Brown worked at the Baltimore public defender's office in the Death Penalty Defense Unit. That experience whet her appetite for pursuing a law degree.

But Brown then went across the ocean to study at The University of Cambridge in England and, in 1987, earned a master's of philosophy degree in criminology there.

"I learned for the sake of learning," Brown says of her time in England. "It was a nice break."

Brown returned stateside to attend Boston University School of Law. She received her juris doctor from there in 1990 and passed the Illinois bar the same year.

In her first job out of law school, Brown worked as a law clerk in the Massachusetts trial court.

In 1991, Brown returned to Chicago and began a three-year stint as a staff attorney with the Federal Defender Program in Chicago. After representing criminal defendants, she became an associate in the commercial litigation

department of a Chicago firm now known as Katten, Muchin & Rosenman LLP.

Brown made the switch to civil law in part because she "found the rigidity of the federal sentencing guidelines difficult to explain" to clients.

#### 'A Perfectionist in Everything'

While at Katten, Muchin in 1996, Brown's daughter was born. Brown later decided to leave

While at Katz, Randall, Brown joined fellow partner Warren Lupel in representing attorneys with disciplinary cases before the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

"She learned a great deal on her own and by experience about representation of lawyers in disciplinary proceedings and issues surrounding professional responsibility," says Lupel, now a principal of Lupel, Weininger LLP in Chicago.



Katten, Muchin for a mid-size Chicago law firm.

In 1998, Brown took a job with Katz, Randall & Weinberg LLP, now defunct.

Howard C. Emmerman hired Brown at Katz, Randall and is a fellow partner at Beermann Swerdlove, which she joined in 2002. Here, she enjoys the firm's "family-like atmosphere."

Brown "could combine a forceful personality with a great deal of diplomacy and charm," Emmerman recalls. "Her intellect is evident from the first minute you talk to her. That's what caused me to offer her a job."

Emmerman adds, "She does not brook fools easily. She has always dedicated herself to her work ethic, which is enormous, but in addition, she has always found time to advance the profession by taking leadership roles in bar association committees."

Brown "has extraordinary talent as a writer and is a very sharp thinker," Lupel says.

Emmerman praises Brown's attention to detail and her writing skills.

"I used to think of myself as a good writer," Emmerman says. "Deane would look at my writing and make me feel small. She is a perfectionist in everything she does."

"Her legal writing ability is just vastly superior to everybody" else's, says Miles N. Beermann, a Beermann Swerdlove principal.

Brown's current practice focuses on representing businesses and individuals in commercial litigation disputes, along with employment issues, such as non-compete enforcement, severance negotiations, and trade secret matters. She also continues to represent lawyers before the ARDC.

"It's sort of a niche practice," she says.

Brown is in court two to three times a week. Her clients include entrepreneurs, small and mid-size businesses, along with lawyers.

"Over the years, she has developed into a rainmaker as well as a thoroughly capable lawyer," Emmerman says.

Brown typically handles one or two trials annually. In December 2008, she successfully tried a case involving a dispute between a law firm and lawyer who had left the firm.

Most of the cases Brown handles are in the Cook County Circuit Court's Chancery Division.

Julia M. Nowicki, a former Cook County Circuit Court judge who presided over cases in which Brown represented parties, says Brown "is the kind of lawyer a judge likes to have in the court. You trust that what she is telling you is truthful."

Nowicki, who retired from the bench in 2006, adds that Brown is "one of those lawyers that is prepared (and) feels very intensely about the position that she's arguing in front of the court in a particular case.

"She also has a sense of humor, I think, which allows her to take reasonable positions on her case while being persuasive at the same time," Nowicki says.

Brown makes herself available to assist younger lawyers in the firm, including editing their legal briefs and encouraging them to generate business.

The firm gives a percentage of attorney fees to an associate who brings in a case, Brown says.

"To do that, [the newer associates] need to get out there and network." Brown says.

Brown has worked hard at developing professional relationships and networking. She is a past president of the Professional Women's Club of Chicago and will serve as the WBAI's president in 2011. Brown previously chaired the Illinois State Bar Association's Standing Committee on Professional Conduct and serves on the Kohl Children's Museum's Board of Governors.

Brown is "very detail-oriented, smart and hard-working," says Enright, a principal of Winters, Enright, Salzetta & O'Brien LLC and a past president of WBAI.

"When I was the president, she was always someone I could call on," Enright adds. "I knew she would always get the job done."

Brown "is very outgoing (and) confident. She puts others in the room at ease," Enright says, adding that Brown is very "direct... There is no beating around the bush."

Brown also displays a big heart, according

to Enright. For example, Enright sometimes refers clients to Brown for advice.

"She speaks with them that day and often doesn't seek any fee for the discussions she has," Enright says. "She goes above and beyond to help people."

Brown and her husband, Steve Eisenstein, an actuary with Ernst & Young, have one daughter.

Brown enjoys spending time with her family and playing golf with her husband or other women.

"She is an avid golfer," Enright says. "That is one of her passions." ■