

Q&A > department

Julianne M. Hartzell

Age: 35.

Education: She earned her undergraduate degree from Duke University in 1998 and her law degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 2001.

Profession: A partner at Marshall, Gerstein & Borun, she works with inventors and corporations in the fields of consumer products, medical devices, pharmaceuticals and Internet technology. She handles all forms of intellectual property litigation, including patent, trademark, copyright and trade secret litigation. She also has experience enforcing covenants not-to-compete and confidentiality agreements.

1. Why did you become a lawyer?

I was originally motivated by a desire to see justice done and I still see that in some of my cases. But at the time that I was first deciding that I wanted to go to law school, it was more about criminal law and in my naive viewpoint, putting the bad guys away.

2. What do you like the most and the least about being a lawyer?

My favorite part is building up that combination of evidence and the law to prove why my client is right; putting all the puzzle pieces together to build the case. My least favorite is the discovery disputes. While some of them are strategic and important, the vast majority seem to be a waste of everybody's time.

3. What's the last big case or matter that you handled?

There was a case where we were representing a company that was sued on an alarm system patent. And, there were three defendants working together to challenge the patent. I represented one of the defendants throughout but in order to present a unified defense to the court all three chose me to argue on their behalf. We were successful at the district court level in getting the case dismissed for lack of standing.

The part that was interesting about it was that it was about who owned the patent but everybody was dead. Both inventors were dead. They had some records but not all the records. Trying to prove what did or did not happen was difficult. And, the decision in the district court was appealed to the federal circuit and the three defendants chose me to



Photo by David Durochik.

argue on their behalf. We successfully had the judgment affirmed.

4. What's the strangest thing that's happened to you as a lawyer?

The strangest was a case when I was still at a general practice firm that was a directors-and-officers case. The directors and officers just abandoned the company. On behalf of the shareholders, we were bringing a lawsuit and we had everything. We had all of their computers, all their e-mails, because they walked out the door. My job was to read the e-mails and it was occasionally juicy. ...

5. If you could have lunch with anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?

Sandra Day O'Connor.

I would love to talk to her about what it was like when she first came out of law school. It is just so amazing that she came out of school and faced so many obstacles trying to get a job, trying to get more responsibility and to have achieved what she has is absolutely amazing.

6. What's your favorite book, movie, TV show or play about lawyers and why?

The lawyerly answer is "To Kill a Mockingbird;" I've always loved the book more than the movie. But the one I watch most often is "Legally Blonde." It's just an entertaining one. I like that it shows, that as a law student, you try to integrate the law into your everyday life.

7. What's your favorite childhood vacation?

I grew up in Ohio and we would go camping a lot and one of the places we went was Cedar Point Amusement Park that has lots and lots of great roller coasters.

8. What advice do you have for new lawyers?

The most important thing, and I'm not really sure why this wasn't apparent to me when I started out, was that my job is to make both the partner I'm working for and my client's life easier. I need to go beyond what was asked of me and figure out what they need to know and figure out how to present it to them in a way that's useful to them. ...

9. Who is your role model?

In terms of people that I know well and that I've seen work, there are a couple partners here at the firm that I really admire their style. Both Tom Ross and Tom Duston here at the firm have taught me a ton about litigation and strategy and putting together my case. They do it in very different ways but I found it very beneficial to draw from the things I've learned from both of them.

10. What's your favorite Chicago restaurant?

I was just at Twist in Wrigleyville, which is a terrific tapas place. They do some variations on the standard tapas, which is why they call it Twist. ■

By Olivia Clarke