

Notable Career Enters New Phase

Grace Moran Returns to Nuts-and-Bolts Lawyering

BY LEIGH JONES

Call it Grace Moran: Phase III. After raising seven children — yes, seven — followed by a 22-year stint representing the Tenth Judicial District Grievance Committee, Ms. Moran is entering a new stage of her career that she says will return her to the nuts-and-bolts lawyering she craves.

Now serving as of counsel with Moran & d'Arcambal in Rockville Centre, Ms. Moran plans to defend the types of actions that she prosecuted for much of her career with the Grievance Committee.

"When I was on the other side of a matter, I was always saying that I wouldn't handle it like that," she said in a recent interview. "Suddenly, I'm confronted with putting my own theories to the test."

The moniker of the firm she has joined is no coincidence. Her daughter, Siobhan Moran, is a name partner, along with Michelle d'Arcambal. With a second office in Manhattan, the eight-attorney firm focuses on commercial law and insurance defense.

Grace Moran will help establish the firm's professional discipline services, and perhaps no one is better suited on Long Island to represent attorneys in

trouble with the Code of Professional Conduct than she. After graduating from St. John's University School of Law in 1979 at the age of 40, Ms. Moran worked briefly for a city firm before taking a job as assistant counsel on the Tenth District staff.

In December 1998, Ms. Moran replaced Chief Counsel Frank Finnerty, a man whom she describes as a mentor. She worked as acting chief counsel and took the top spot a month later to become the first female chief counsel for a grievance committee in the state. In 1994, she became the first woman to serve as the president of the Nassau County Bar Association.

But running the staff of attorneys, which swelled from four to 12 during her tenure, increasingly steered Ms. Moran away from lawyering and toward administration, a transition that she ultimately outgrew.

"You reach a point where you get into a groove," she said. "I had reached that point. I wanted to get back to the actual practice of law."

It was not until Ms. Moran, 64, officially retired, however, that the mother and daughter seriously considered joining forces.

"We really hadn't discussed it," Siobhan Moran said. "We were all sitting back waiting to see if she was seri-

ous, then she really pulled the trigger."

When asked what working with Mom is like, Siobhan Moran gave a good-natured groan. "Mostly, it's pretty good," she said, adding with a laugh. "It's a lot easier having her in the law office than growing up with her."

She continued, "She has a vast amount of experience to draw on. She definitely brings a different perspective."

Despite more than two decades working as the opponent of lawyers in trouble, Grace Moran remains surprisingly sympathetic and unjaded about those in ethical hot water.

"What people don't realize is that you don't have to be a bad lawyer or a bad person to get in trouble with the Grievance Committee," she said. Describing the Rules of Professional Conduct as "broad and extensive," she added, "You can step over the line almost without realizing it. It makes me somewhat paranoid now."

Harvey Besunder, an attorney who served on the Grievance Committee from 1988 to 1996, said Ms. Moran's "tremendous insight into people" puts her in good stead not only to work the other side of grievance matters now but also to return to hands-on practice.

"I don't see it as an easy task for anyone, but she'll handle it nicely," Mr. Besunder observed. His Islandia