

firm, Pruzansky & Besunder, has represented attorneys charged with ethical violations.

"Whether they were the complainant or the attorney, they walked away thinking they got a fair shake," he said.

Ms. Moran's departure from the Tenth District's offices in Syosset was made with little ado, a conscious decision on Ms. Moran's part, but a strategy that left many wondering where one of the best known attorneys on Long Island had gone.

"It's just my personal style," said Ms. Moran, who had grown adept at avoiding the spotlight in her former job which sometimes involved well known attorneys in trouble. "I just wanted to slip out the back door."

The new chief counsel for the Grievance Committee, Robert P. Guido, who worked with Ms. Moran for about 20 years, said that it was her choice to commemorate her departure with a luncheon and not much else.

"We keep a pretty low profile here," Mr. Guido said, adding that since becoming chief counsel, he has done "very little lawyering," mostly tending to administrative tasks instead.

Now that she has left the Tenth District and entered private practice, Ms. Moran, who declined an interview with the *Law Journal* for a profile piece two years ago, is ready to talk about the perspective that her former position afforded.

Foremost, she said that attorney accountability has dramatically increased over the last 20 years.

"When I started, few people knew what a Grievance Committee was," she said. "I have watched the court become stricter, and I've seen an increase in

surveillance," which she described as a "good thing."

Ms. Moran said that in the 1970s when she attended St. John's law school, she took a professional responsibility course as a "break" from tougher courses. Not the case now, she said. The "pendulum" regarding attorney oversight has swung so far that the profession feels "overwhelmed" by its responsibilities, she added.

"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," said Ms. Moran, describing the Rules of Professional Conduct as "broad and extensive."

"But it levels the playing field for attorneys and clients," she remarked.

Client Communication

The Grievance Committee for the Tenth Judicial District generally works as a clearinghouse in Nassau and Suffolk counties for complaints regarding attorneys' alleged ethical violations. Allegations that do not rise to the level of serious misconduct typically result in the committee issuing a letter of admonition or, in more grave situations, a letter of caution. The committee also dismisses complaints.

For matters that demonstrate serious breaches of the code, the Grievance Committee prosecutes those actions before the Appellate Division.

In 2000, the year for which the latest information is available, the Second Department received 59 cases, as opposed to 91 in 1999. In 1998, some 86

cases went to the Second Department, compared with 56 in 1997 and 62 in 1996.

When Ms. Moran started, the most common problem involved attorneys stealing from clients, she said, specifically from escrow accounts, personal injury settlements and estates they handled. Over the years, however, conflict of interest issues arose more often, to the point now where an "infinite variety" of opportunities for attorneys to breach the rules exists.

But what has remained a consistent mistake among attorneys in trouble with the Grievance Committee is a failure to communicate with clients, Ms. Moran observed.

"It's difficult because some clients can call four and five times per day," she said.

The type of clients Ms. Moran will encounter remains to be seen. But what is certain about her new of counsel post is that she now can slow down a bit.

She had a taste of it during the weeks that she took off after her retirement from the Tenth District. Like many professionals who decelerate from a full-throttle job, however, she discovered some surprises.

"We all have these ideas that if we just had the time, we'd do these wonderful things," she said. "I've come to the conclusion I'll never do them."

Even so, Ms. Moran said she plans to find a balance between work and leisure, and spend more time with her husband of 42 years, Eugene Moran and their many grandchildren.

But will she miss the Tenth District? "Someone told me I would miss the deference," she said. "I honestly don't think I'll miss that, but I will miss the people."