

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

## Law firm keeps it all in the family as three members share the load

BY SHAUN ZINCK  
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SPRINGFIELD — Gena Gruss Romagnoli never planned on working for her father, but when the opportunity came up she said it felt right.

"I don't even think he finished asking me if I wanted to work for him before I said yes," she said.

Romagnoli, an associate at Henry Phillip Gruss Ltd., started working for her father in 2007. This January the firm added Kristin M. Gruss, Romagnoli's sister-in-law.

Together the trio of attorneys make up the Chicago-based law firm, which focuses on personal injury and medical malpractice cases.

All three drive to work together every day as well, Henry Phillip Gruss said.

"I've always wanted to work with my family," Gruss said. "We all live in Park Ridge and my daughter and son live right next to each other. It just seemed like a natural progression."

The medical aspect of the cases the firm takes on also connects to



Henry Phillip Gruss sits with his daughter-in-law Kristin M. Gruss (at left) and daughter Gena Gruss Romagnoli (at right). The three lawyers make up the Henry Phillip Gruss Ltd. law firm.

nurse and his son, Kristin's husband, practices medicine as a doctor. The firm recently reached a \$6 million settlement on one of its first cases that all three worked on, Gruss said.

Gruss said working with relatives of cases so each one of them

"You always trust your partners," he said, "but there's more confidence that I will have my daughters' back and they will have my back."

The law firm takes on a lighter load of cases so each one of them

## Gruss

gets involved with every case, Gruss said. The lighter load allows for them to get to know their clients intimately, often inviting them into his home.

"Dealing with wrongful death and medical malpractice you always end up dealing with the whole family, not just one person," Henry Gruss said. "So it ends up with our family helping out another family. We like that a lot."

Romagnoli said her father has a laid back personality and has allowed her to take on more responsibility, including trying a case by herself.

Romagnoli said she wanted a change of scenery after working for three years as a defense attorney and associate for then Bollinger, Ruberry & Garvey.

John M. Stalmack, a partner at Ruberry, Stalmack & Garvey LLC, worked closely with Romagnoli during her time there and said he wasn't surprised when she left.

"She was on the fast track," he said. "She just didn't do things that I ordered to do, she would come up with ideas."

He said practicing against her will be difficult.

"I'm gonna be faced with a real

class adversary," he said, "and I trained her to beat me."

Romagnoli said she enjoys working more as a plaintiff attorney than defense attorney.

"When I was a defense attorney, I felt like I was reporting to clients on what I was doing, or going to be doing next," she said. "Here instead of reporting or billing, I get to spend that time working on the file. It's time better spent, in my opinion, with less time on administrative work."

All three formally worked as defense attorneys before gradually moving to plaintiff work. Gruss worked as a corporation counsel for

the city for three years before opening his sole practice about 20 years ago.

Kristin Gruss worked as a defense attorney for Donohue, Brown, Mathewson and Smyth LLC for at least 10 years before joining her father-in-law in January.

Romagnoli said the personal and professional aspects of working with her father don't really collide.

"I haven't really had any conflicts between us in the last five years," she said. "This is what we do. This is our life and it's kind of personal. Our work is personal."

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