

From the World of Disney to the Home of Elvis, Grossman Puts Entertainment Savvy to Work

LESLEY J. GUDEHUS | *The Daily News*

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Attorney Audrey Grossman takes a balanced approach to life and work.

She recently joined the law firm of Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC as an associate, and concentrates her practice on estate planning, elder law and entertainment law. She previously practiced with The Grossman Law Firm, an estate-planning firm she founded in Memphis in 2004. Before moving from Los Angeles in 2003, Grossman worked as a film production attorney for Walt Disney Pictures and as an associate at the Greenberg Glusker law firm in L.A.

She earned her bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, in 1990 and her law degree from Harvard Law School in 1995. She is a member of Temple Israel and the Professional Advisory Group of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis. She served on the board of Playhouse on the Square from 2003 to 2005. Grossman's husband, Craig, is executive director of the FedEx Institute of Technology, and they have two daughters, Eliana, 2, and Sara, 6 months.

Q: Why did you decide on a career in law?

A: I majored [as an undergraduate] in Chinese and Asian Studies, and fresh out of college, I was looking for work and found a job with an immigration law firm that needed someone to translate for Asian clients. I was being paid as an assistant to do a lawyer's work, and I thought I might as well become a lawyer and be paid as one, and that's how it happened. My father is a retired physics professor. He graduated from Harvard [but he wasn't that happy about my becoming a lawyer], so when I decided to go to Harvard Law School, my dad sent me an article about how Harvard Law School graduates go on to other careers.

Q: After working for other companies in California, why did you start your own firm in Memphis?

A: When I moved here in 2003, I was four months pregnant. After our first daughter was born and before we had our second daughter, I started my own estate planning practice. That worked out for a while, but I like working with other people and having the resources of the firm, and I enjoy it here.

Q: How did you come to combine estate planning and entertainment law?

A: I have an unusual practice here. I do estate planning and elder law, as well as entertainment law. In L.A., I was a film studio lawyer at Disney. When I moved here, I decided I needed to do something else. My father-in-law has an estate planning practice in L.A., and he was able to give me advice.

Elder law is a mixing pot of a lot of [services for] elderly clients. In many cases, people haven't planned for their old age. They think if they don't plan for it, it won't happen. Mostly, I help them understand long-term care and Medicare and Medicaid issues. There are a lot of rules specific to people who end up in nursing homes. Nursing homes can be outrageously expensive. Often people make too much [money] to qualify for federal benefits, so we legally restructure their assets and income to help them to qualify and not completely impoverish their families. That goes hand-in-hand with estate planning.

Regarding entertainment law, both the music and film businesses are picking up in Memphis. There is a need for lawyers to handle that. Many film and music people have been using lawyers in Nashville. I hope I can fill that gap.

Q: How do you balance family and career?

A: I've been here [at the law firm] only three and a half weeks, so it's an ongoing process, and I'm working part-time. I have always used visualization, so at the end of the workday, I take all my problems and put them in a box and then put them away. They will be there tomorrow. For me, the most important thing is my kids. When I am with my girls, I am with my girls, and that helps me do both my work and my parenting better. Of course, we have no family here - no grandmother down the street - so it helps that we are able to afford a nanny!



Memphis Law Talk



Name: Audrey Grossman

Position: Associate

Company: Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC

Basics: Grossman, who used to work as a film studio attorney for Walt Disney Pictures in Los Angeles, recently joined Harris Shelton. She handles estate planning, elder law and entertainment law.

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- Audrey Grossman