

# Julie I. Fershtman, Chair of the State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly

By Robert S. Bick

I was in high school when I first met Julie. At that time I didn't know very much about her except that she sat next to me in 9th grade world history class and I thought she was cute. As I got to know her, I found her to be idealistic, caring, dedicated, and hard working. She was certain, even back then, that she wanted to enter the legal profession and get involved in organizations that would help her become an integral part of improving not only the profession but also the world in which she lived and would one day work.

That was 25 years ago. Julie has now been my wife for 11 years. She has come a long way toward achieving her goals and becoming the professional she always wanted to be. I believe that a true professional inspires others, strives for excellence in everything he or she does, and makes his or her mark on the profession and the public in a positive way. Julie is all of these things.

These are times when young lawyers gain inspiration from watching less-than-ideal role models achieve great success. Julie inspires lawyers by showing that success comes when we follow our dreams, keep a strong dedication to public service, and when we never forget why we entered the practice of law.

Julie has practiced law for 15 years. She is primarily a litigator. Out of law school she began working for large law firms in the Detroit area. When she formed her own firm in 1993, she wanted to serve a clientele of major insurance companies as well as small businesses. With a life-long passion for horses, she even wanted part of her practice to serve people and businesses involved in horse-related activities.



Julie I. Fershtman

Many lawyers told Julie that her law practice goals were unattainable. I was with Julie at the ABA convention in 1993 when she asked Jay Foonberg (an icon in law practice development and marketing) if her plans had merit. He candidly told her "no." He explained to her that insurance companies, the clients she was most interested in serving, usually hired only large law firm practitioners, not solos. He warned her that she would "starve." Julie didn't listen. Instead, she forged ahead in pursuit of her dreams and goals. And she didn't starve, either. Mr. Foonberg now cites Julie in his speeches and writings as an example of marketing success.

Through public service, Julie has brought the law to people in a positive way and helped educate them about legal issues and how to avoid legal disputes. Since 1993, for exam-

ple, she has written a monthly column for as many as 80 magazines and websites across the country. (Just type in her name on an Internet search engine, such as [www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com) or [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) and see what happens.) She has accepted speaking engagements on legal topics at conventions in 22 states. In addition, she wrote two books dealing with legal issues that pertain to horses, *Equine Law & Horse Sense* and *MORE Equine Law & Horse Sense*.

Today, Julie has become well known to and respected by the very clients she wanted to serve when she set out to establish her own law practice. By consistently demonstrating the highest standards of integrity, fairness, and excellence in the practice of law, Julie has made herself virtually a household name in the industries she serves. She has built a busy and rewarding law practice.

Julie conducts herself personally and professionally in conformity with the highest standards of ethics and respect for our profession. When planning seminars on law practice development and career satisfaction, the State Bar of Michigan, Oakland County Bar, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, Federal Bar Association, and ICLE have lined up Julie as a panelist. She does not merely discuss how lawyers can develop a practice to follow their dreams—her message is that hard work, consistently demonstrating civility towards opposing counsel, and an unfaltering dedication to ethical and high quality service are key elements of a fun and prosperous law practice.

Bar Association activities have been a vitally important part of Julie's career. She is the past chair of the State Bar of Michigan

Young Lawyers Section and the Oakland County Bar Association Professionalism Committee. She has served for a number of years on the State Bar's Board of Commissioners and is currently a member of its Executive Committee. In addition, she has recently been appointed to serve as a member of the board of directors of the Oakland County Bar Association.

A strong believer in mentoring programs that join young lawyers with more experienced lawyers, Julie developed a program that brings experienced lawyers into law schools to conduct videotaped mock job interviews, with a critique of the interview. In 1996 the ABA/Young Lawyers Division selected this program for its highest award in the nation for the most outstanding project in the country serving the bar. When the Oakland County Bar Association initiated the Inns of Court program in Oakland County to promote civility, professionalism, and mentoring

among practitioners, Julie was invited to serve on its Executive Committee and to be a participant in the program.

Since she started her own firm, Julie has been profiled in the *Detroit Free Press*, *Crain's Detroit Business*, *the Legal News*, WJBK TV-2 News (Detroit), *ABA Journal*, *Lawyers Weekly USA*, *Texas Bar Journal*, and an ABA/Law Practice Management Section book called "Marketing Success Stories." The ABA book credits Julie, in part, for advancing courtesy to opposing counsel as an integral part of every lawyers' practice and as a way to make a practice grow.

For the many efforts she has undertaken, Julie has received recognition. In 1995, the American Bar Association *Barrister Magazine* named her one of "21 Young Lawyers Leading Us into the 21st Century." In 1996, *Crain's Detroit Business* selected her as one of "40 Best and Brightest Business Leaders Under 40" in Metropolitan Detroit. In 2000,

she received the "Professionalism Award" from the Oakland County Bar Association.

As you can see, Julie continues to be the idealistic, caring, dedicated, and hard working individual I met some 25 years ago. Now that she has been sworn in as the 2001-2002 chair of the State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly, I can't help but think that she has come a long way towards achieving the goals she set way back in high school of becoming integrally involved in organizations that will improve the legal profession and the world in which she lives and works. I am certain that Julie will provide excellent service to Michigan lawyers as the chair of the Representative Assembly. ◆

*Robert S. Bick, Julie's husband, is a partner at Williams, Williams, Ruby & Plunkett in Birmingham, with a practice emphasizing corporate law and mergers and acquisitions. He and Julie live in Franklin, along with their five-year-old daughter, Katie.*