

Father-daughter legal team follow similar paths



FAMILY FIRM Attorney David E. Hoy of Elmhurst and his daughter Attorney Colleen L. Sahlas of North Riverside work together out of their Hoy & Sahlas, Ltd. law office in Oak Brook. Hoy started the firm in 1985 and Sahlas joined her dad in 2000. | RYAN PAGELOW-SUN-TIMES MEDIA

BY STEVE SCHERING

Contributor

While working in human resources nearly 30 years ago, David E. Hoy was having lunch with the vice-president of his company when a simple question caused him to re-think his career and his life.

The boss asked him which law school he attended and Hoy's response came as a surprise to the man.

"I said, 'I'm not a lawyer,'" Hoy said. "He said, 'But everything you do is the work of a lawyer.'"

That's when Hoy made the decision he believed best for his family. He applied to law schools and decided to continue working full-time, while taking law classes at Northern Illinois University at night.

"I definitely wanted a higher degree and was going to apply for my MBA and continue to advance in the corporate world," Hoy said. "The thought of, 'doing the work of a lawyer,' had been planted. I enjoyed the work I was doing and I was good at it."

His wife Lynette and daughter Colleen, then only 7 years old, were supportive. Hoy would

play racquet ball at 6 a.m. two days a week, be at his job by 8 a.m., study during his lunch and dinner breaks, attend his law school classes for two to three hours Monday through Friday nights and be home in time to read his daughter a story and enjoy a light supper with Lynette before doing it all over again the next day.

Hoy finished up his law school at Chicago-Kent College of Law. A recession caused his corporate position to be eliminated, but by then, he was able to open his own practice in 1985 in Oak Park.



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Attorney David E. Hoy of Elmhurst started his firm in 1985 and his daughter Attorney Colleen L. Sahlas of North Riverside joined her dad in 2000.

Later, his daughter earned her bachelor's degree in social work and served as an intern in the Cook County States Attorney's Office. She, like her father, believed a career change was in order.

"The only part of that job I enjoyed was going to court to testify in my cases," she said.

She eventually enrolled in the John Marshall Law School, taking night classes.

"As graduation was looming, I had gotten engaged and was planning my wedding while studying for the bar exam," she said. "I was going to interview at the states attorney's

office and my fiance Nicko said, 'Why are you going to work for them? Have you ever thought about working for your dad?'"

She had worked as a legal secretary for her father when she was 19, but never envisioned practicing law with her father.

"I said, 'Are you sure you want to do this?'" David Hoy said after receiving his daughter's phone call. "She told me her rationale and the life of a states attorney was not something she wanted anymore. I was blown away. What a compliment to have your daughter come work for you."

Colleen Sahlas joined her father in January 2000 and by 2006 had become a partner in the newly renamed Law Offices of Hoy & Sahlas, Ltd. In 2009, the father-daughter legal team moved into the Oak Brook East Building at Oakbrook Center.

"We haven't killed each other yet," Hoy joked. "We really complement one another's areas of law and skills."

With Father's Day approaching, and having walked in her father's footsteps, Sahlas understands the sacrifices made by her dad many years ago and enjoys coming to work everyday with him.

"Even though he went to law school at night, he always made time for me," Sahlas said. "I don't know how he was at three different places at once, but he was. I have a real appreciation for how he bettered our family life."



Attorney David E. Hoy of Elmhurst and his daughter Attorney Colleen L. Sahlas of North Riverside focus on estate planning, probate, real estate and business law.