

A regularly occurring column written by different paralegals from varying backgrounds to share their experiences.

It Took a Herd of Elephants . . .

by Deanie Kramer

I simply wanted to do something more meaningful with my life, but it took a herd of elephants on the Serengeti plains to push me out of a Beverly Hills law office and into a career "that made a difference."

While I was on photo safari in Africa, watching a herd of elephants crossing the plains on their search for water, I realized that those magnificent animals were doing what they were supposed to be doing. They were free. I was not! I realized that I felt like a caged animal in the zoo.

I returned from the trip and left my job as a legal administrator for a prestigious law firm in Beverly Hills. My legal career had been so varied. As a former teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District for 17 years, I put my training and experience to work when I graduated from UWLA in 1984 as a litigation paralegal. I rose quickly in the ranks to Paralegal Administrator. A course taught by the Association of Legal Administrators gave me the additional skills to become a Legal Administrator, managing firms in Beverly Hills, Century City and Santa Monica.

It was when I left the traditional law firm setting that I founded Divorce Resource Inc., a full service family law assistance center. There were similar services available in the community for those with very limited incomes, and plenty of attorneys to be hired with the requisite huge retainer, but there were too many people that fell between the cracks of those two groups. I decided to fill that gap and assist people, at an affordable rate, who needed help with divorce, separation, paternity, custody, visitation and other family issues. I soon discovered that there was a huge community that needed the kind of affordable assistance I could provide. I also provided referrals to attorneys that are resolution

oriented, financial consultants, therapists and a variety of other professionals.

I had assisted thousands of couples successfully through the process and most of them had never seen the inside of a courtroom. I was also assisting the people to resolve their issues without becoming adversarial. My goal was to help people resolve their issues so that they could move on with their lives, with their heads held high, and be able to enter the next phase of their lives clear and sane, retaining as many of their assets as possible, and causing minimum stress to the children involved. I then decided to continue my education and training and become a Certified Mediator.

My training through the Los Angeles County Bar Association and Dispute Resolution Services gave me the additional training and credentials necessary to become a Certified Mediator. As of this year, I have successfully assisted over 12,000 couples through the system.

One of my prior clients was a television producer with Fox Television who called me to gain insight into the family law and mediation process. Fox was considering bringing back Divorce Court TV, only using real people. Thus began yet another dimension of my career. I helped create the pilot for Divorce Court TV, and now I have completed over 700 mediations as the official mediator for the show.

I never could have imagined the career I now enjoy. I have been fortunate to be able to offer sanity at an insane time in people's lives and assist in healing society, one family at a time.

It's been a fascinating trip! We never know exactly what is in store for the future unless we leave doors open for unexpected opportunities! ☺

FROM THE EDITOR - *continued from page 3*

All of us have dreams . . . what are yours?

LAPA has more than 1,000 members. I've heard from so few of you. What would you like to share?

Email me at editor@lapa.org. ☺