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You were on the bench for 25 years before you joined JAMS. What skills did you learn there that helped prepare you for a career in alternative dispute resolution?

As a judge, I honed my listening skills: hearing inflection and emotion in voices, observing facial expressions and body language, yet always noting content and context. Those skills, coupled with the respect for the attorney-client relationship, are fundamental to mediation and arbitration, as well as to the trial court.

Tell us more about your experience in public service.

When I graduated from Duke University School of Law, my former dean recruited me to be an honors trial attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice, and I found public service to be a perfect fit. Other than a brief time in private practice, I spent my career in federal, state and local governments, followed by 24 years as a trial judge in state courts. During that time, I tried civil matters involving employment, civil rights, construction, business and charitable organizations, and family issues, as well as the full range of criminal matters.

Who most influenced your decision to pursue a career in law?

When I was seven years old, my mother started going to law school at night, with my father’s full support. One day I found my mother’s torts casebook and started reading, and we discussed what I found so fascinating. My mother showed me every day that a woman could enjoy a full life, professionally and personally. I read Clarence Darrow, F. Lee Bailey, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and more, but their collective influence paled in comparison to that of my own mother. She championed equal rights and always reached out to welcome young lawyers, especially minorities. As a state district court judge, she fought for domestic violence laws and other reforms. And when she took senior status, I was appointed to fill her seat. To this day, we are the only mother and daughter in U.S. history to serve on the same bench. Although we enjoyed that special time, she was immensely proud when I was appointed to the next level of the judiciary, the general jurisdiction trial court.

What do you think sets JAMS apart from its competitors?

JAMS, through its administrators, neutrals and associates, adheres to the very highest standards of professional excellence. In response to the pandemic, JAMS not only created a highly secure and professional method for continuing operations, but it also pooled resources to provide continuing education and training for associates and neutrals. That forward-thinking, creative dedication to staff and community is just one example of why JAMS is the best in our field.

What practice area do you enjoy most?

I have a special affinity for disputes involving personal interactions in the workplace. I find great satisfaction in resolving the emotional and intellectual challenges presented in disputes alleging harassment, discrimination or misdealing between supervisors and employees, between partners, or between more and less powerful persons.

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What are your most successful traits as a mediator/arbitrator?

As a mediator, I'm able to help the parties in a given case recognize both sides of their dispute and enable them to gain the perspective necessary to reach an amicable resolution. As an arbitrator, I try to keep the process moving efficiently, without veering too close to a trial, while respecting the attorney-client relationship. My ultimate goal is that the parties and attorneys, whether in mediation or arbitration, believe that the process worked as it should.

What was the toughest dispute that you mediated/litigated?

I found my toughest cases were not the most challenging intellectually, but rather the most demanding emotionally. As a trial lawyer, I defended emergency medical workers who were unable to prevent the death of a young adult from a severe asthma attack. His parents, unaware that he had stopped taking his essential medications, blamed the EMTs, who were also understandably distraught that their efforts were fruitless. As a trial judge, I struggled to maintain a calm and objective demeanor in trials involving the physical and/or sexual abuse of children by their parents. That breach of basic parental obligation, often compounded by the other parent's fear of testifying against the abuser, made each trial day a new ordeal—with seemingly everyone depending on my composure.

Fun Facts

What is your fondest memory from law school?

Studying on a spring day in the gorgeous Duke gardens with friends!

What is your favorite family tradition?

Passover Seder—no question! Nothing says “family” more than bringing everyone together, recognizing each participant's perspective on our shared history and enjoying a special and wonderful meal.

What advice would you give to young women interested in entering the field of law?

Be honest with yourself about what you want in life and in your career, and then do your best to learn from every opportunity and obstacle along the way.

If you could time travel, where would you go?

Perhaps 50 years into the future—to see how my grandchildren and great-grandchildren are doing!

You have been an adjunct law professor. What was your favorite class to teach?

I truly enjoyed training trial lawyers, but teaching advanced legal writing was even more rewarding. Helping law students, law clerks and young lawyers to break bad habits and write more clearly was extremely gratifying.

What have you learned from the pandemic?

I became far more aware of how much we all need personal contact. Not being able to see family and friends in person has been very difficult, and I wonder how much our youngest generation is missing, as they've become so dependent on interacting through electronic devices. The cost to our emotional welfare is great, especially when there are reports of health care workers having to care for patients essentially anonymously behind PPE.

To set a case with Judge Krauser, visit jamsadr.com/krauser or call 202-942.9180.