

ILENE GOLDSTEIN

Providing Perspective to Divorce Clients

by Erin Calandriello

BANNOCKBURN—Nine months pregnant on August 2, 1995, Ilene Beth Goldstein was involved in a complicated financial trial. Within 24 hours of delivering her closing argument on a case that was won, Goldstein gave birth to her son, Matthew.

But Goldstein's work ethic began blossoming long before that trial.

Throughout high school and college, Goldstein worked at her dad's business on the North Shore. She wasn't interested in carrying on the family business, and that didn't bother her father.

"I always wanted to be a lawyer," says Goldstein, 48. "When I was a child my dad would say, 'If you made a convincing and sound argument, you would get your way.' He loved a good argument. He always wanted to be a lawyer, so he made me the lawyer he wanted to be."

By making her that lawyer, he "taught me hard work pays off, and you don't sleep until the job is finished."

Nearly 14 years after that trial, Goldstein has established herself as one of the top five percent of matrimonial lawyers in Illinois due to her "high energy," one colleague says.

A partner at **Katz, Goldstein & Warren**, Goldstein has worked as a family lawyer since 1987. She has been an active trial attorney involved in preparing and litigating divorce cases involving complex financial matters as well as custody issues. Her caseload depends on the complexity of the cases, most of which stem from the North Shore. Goldstein, who runs her practice from a corner office in Bannockburn, says that her "perseverance" is at the crux of her success.

"When consulting with her partners on a case, they would joke, 'You've already chewed all the meat off the bone, move on,'" Goldstein says.

Judge Intern to Litigator

Goldstein's law practice encompasses a wide range of cases. She has handled cases involving tracing assets over long periods of time, business valuation, real estate valuation, pension and other defined benefit plan valuation, investments, securities and stock options, tax ramifications, and other financial interests.

During her 22 years practicing domestic relations, Goldstein has tried and settled numerous custody cases involving visitation



and psychological issues on behalf of mothers and fathers.

The court has appointed her to represent children's interests. She has pursued and defended claims of maintenance, child support, college expenses and the other related issues. Goldstein has negotiated prenuptial agreements and has litigated and settled issues involving the validity of prenuptial and postnuptial agreements. She's also a certified arbitrator for the 19th Judicial Circuit in Lake County.

Goldstein was born and raised in Glenview. After graduating from New Trier West High School, Goldstein attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She graduated from University of Illinois in 1982 with a degree in economics.

As a student at Chicago-Kent College of Law, she took an internship under Cook County Associate Judge Susan Snow.

Working under Snow, who was a seasoned divorce judge, Goldstein learned "that you need to think about what problems are solved and what problems come from your actions as an attorney."

At the beginning of a case, Goldstein says she delved into "problems like establishing parent scheduling, paying of bills, and figuring out how debt would be paid off."

"There was never a dull moment," she says.

Goldstein left the clerkship and graduated in 1985. She worked at general practice firms, where she handled personal injury cases, which included a few jury trials.

But, "I didn't like the pace (of personal injury)," she says. "I liked solving problems immediately."

So she left the firm and, in 1987, went to Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck, where she limited her practice to divorce.

In 1998, Goldstein started her own family law firm, Katz, Goldstein & Warren, with partners Stephen H. Katz and Todd R. Warren.

By having her own firm, "I can control my pace," Goldstein says. "I can meet clients, do my work, go to my son's baseball game, and then work all night if I have to."

Because the cases her firm receives are "complex," Goldstein says that her job is to "bring order to chaos by delving into the details."

This is what she does best, she says: "Mastering the details."

She calls herself "detail-oriented" and spends significant time with her clients, who have high expectations. "They require a lot of attention and we're good at that."

"I analyze financial statements, the value of real estate, pension plans, stock options, and business valuations," Goldstein says. "At the

same time, I have to understand emotions and put them in perspective. If the man cheated on her, and he wants out, there's a lot of hand holding because she never thought she'd have to take care of herself."

When they first started their firm in 1998, Goldstein worked in the office while "managing her young kids and still getting all of the cases done," Katz recalls. (*Continued on Page 148*)

And that hasn't stopped.

Katz says he sees "e-mails from her at 3 or 4 in the morning. She has a high level of energy; she can be juggling several different cases and keep all the balls in the air and manage them, plus manage her whole life," including her two boys and husband.

"She has a huge memory. She not only knows what her client's assets and income are, she knows the other side's assets and income," Katz says. "She's always prepared and she can forcefully advocate for clients because of it."

One of her former clients, who ended her marriage of 30 years in 2007, agrees. The client, who asked not to be named, adds that Goldstein "always was thinking five steps ahead, and, at points, she really took the other attorney by surprise. She had anticipated things so far and well in advanced that they hadn't caught up."

Goldstein not only knew the intricacies of her case, the former client says, but she never backed down and never crossed the line when dealing with opposing attorneys.

Most importantly, Goldstein was "very personable and fun to work with in a very difficult situation," her former client says.

"She's very energetic, stamina-wise and intellectually. It's her energy that keeps the momentum moving and makes you turn over your trust to her completely. I had faith in her to represent my interests 100 percent on a personal journey that's in no way cookie cutter."

"In today's society, people want things faster and faster," Goldstein says. "They want immediate gratification, and it costs them substantially because they don't gather their thoughts or prioritize their issues, and they send e-mails through their phones and want an immediate response every time something pops into their head, and it costs them every time."

They're often not cost-conscious because "emotions run high" in divorce cases, Goldstein says.

"Good lawyers will tell their clients to condense and prioritize their needs. They should get a therapist who's more qualified to be addressing their emotional problems so it doesn't cost them as much," Goldstein says, describing what she advocates.

Beyond the emotional component, today's divorces are also affected by the economy, Goldstein says.

"The multi-million dollar cases are the easy ones, because there is enough money to go around," Goldstein says. "It's the upper-middle class ones that are more difficult because, for the first time, they have to make hard choices regarding finances."

Goldstein is currently working on an "impossible" divorce case as the couple's assets have plummeted due to the economy. Still, they're not willing to settle.

They've incurred tremendous debt, and their properties have become practically worthless, yet the couple would rather spend more money to argue than resolve matters, which makes her job difficult.

On the other hand, the "recession has required people to resolve things more amicably because people are more sensitive to the costs of the legal proceedings - they would rather spend it on their children's college tuitions," Goldstein says.

The attorneys at Katz, Goldstein & Warren are known for settling "complex cases," on friendly terms or not. And Goldstein is regarded as a "strong advocate" for her clients, Katz says.

With more women entering the workforce since the 1970s and earning incomes comparable to men, "they're more able to earn money and acquire assets after the divorce," Katz says. "And she (Goldstein) strongly fights to make sure that each party gets recognized for their contributions to their marriage."

For Goldstein, "the best part of the job is seeing people grow. You bring order to disorder and allow people to move forward with their lives. There's not always a winner and a loser. The best win you can ask for is moving on and becoming happy from the inside." ■