

THE WOMEN OF GREENE BROILLET & WHEELER LLP

BEYOND THE SINGLE VERDICT

BY CAITLIN KENISTON

We sat down with three women at Greene Broillet & Wheeler (GBW) – Christine Spagnoli, Molly McKibben and Jenna Edzant.

Spagnoli has been a partner with the firm for more than 40 years. Her work has made an incredible impact on the industry. She was the first woman to earn the CAALA Trial Lawyer of the Year award. But equally significant to her were her recognitions that reflect the broader mission of her work. “A lot of trial awards focus solely on victories, but for me, it’s never been just about racking up wins. Yes, trial success is important, but this work is also about the impact we make beyond any single verdict.”

In 2017, she received the Harry M. Philo Award from the American Association for Justice, recognizing her work to advance consumer safety and the civil justice system. Most recently, she was honored with AAJ’s Leonard Ring Champions of Justice award, recognizing her lasting impact in the fight for justice.

Partner Molly McKibben has been with the firm close to two decades. In law school, she had the opportunity to work for the Pepperdine Legal Aid Clinic at the Union Rescue Mission in downtown Los Angeles. There she provided free legal help to the unhoused.

“The experience was transformative,” she says. “Even helping someone



■ JENNA EDZANT, CHRISTINE SPAGNOLI AND MOLLY MCKIBBEN

clear a jaywalking ticket felt meaningful because of what it allowed them to do next. That experience made it clear I wanted a career where I could work with people and make a real impact.”

She found that career as a personal injury attorney.

In undergrad, associate Jenna Edzant’s plan was to research psychological treatments, but realized she could spend her entire career in a lab and never know if she made any real, tangible impact on people’s lives.

Her work in an eating disorder treatment center solidified her decision. “Every day, I saw insurance companies make decisions based on profit over patient well-being. Clients would gain just enough weight to no longer meet the narrow criteria for anorexia, and their insurance would drop them before their mental health

had improved. Many would relapse.”

When she experienced a car accident in her mid-20s, Edzant found a way to help others while standing up to powerful systems. “It gives me an opportunity to advocate for those who are vulnerable and to bring real relief to individuals in devastating circumstances. It’s not just meaningful work—it’s personal.”

Edzant joined GBW as a law clerk in law school. She came on board as an associate in 2021 after passing the Bar.

MAKING THE WORLD SAFER

“What keeps me going, after all these years, is knowing that the civil justice system is often the only real force holding manufacturers accountable,” says Spagnoli. “Time and

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again, I’ve seen how internal tests reveal known hazards—problems that don’t get fixed until they’re dragged into the light in court.”

And Spagnoli has done her part to drag these problems into the light.

From the day she started as a law clerk, it was ingrained in Spagnoli that being a trial lawyer isn’t just about individual cases. “It’s about protecting access to justice on a broader scale,” she says. “At GBW, we’ve always understood that advocating for clients means not only representing them in court but also standing up for them in the legislature. That includes fighting against things like forced arbitration, caps on damages and fee limits—all of which threaten to close the courthouse doors to everyday people.”

To that end, Spagnoli has stayed active in legal organizations and

sought leadership roles. “I’ve had the privilege of connecting with lawyers who share the same mission – to protect the Seventh Amendment. Being part of that larger fight is deeply motivating for me and so many of us at the firm.”

“Every case I’ve worked on has been meaningful — our firm takes on cases that are truly righteous, and it’s incredibly rewarding,” McKibben says.

One case that stood out to McKibben was *Erin Andrews v. Marriott*. Because of that verdict, hotels now use peephole covers and no longer say room numbers aloud during check in.

“It was powerful to see real changes come from that work that makes the world safer for everyone,” she says.

Edzant believes every trial leaves a deep impact and continues to stay in touch with each client after it concludes.

“I still think about the first trial I worked on,” Edzant says. “Our client had suffered injuries that prevented her from having children, and being a mother was incredibly important to her. Because of the result we achieved, she was able to get the support and care she needed—and now, she has a baby. Those moments remind me why I do this work.”

WOMEN IN LAW

When it comes to being a woman in the practice of law, Spagnoli believes one of the ongoing challenges (and advantages) is that women are so often underestimated. “While it can be frustrating,” she says. “I tell younger women to embrace it as a secret power. When people underestimate you, they don’t see you coming. It gives you an opportunity to exceed expectations. I’ve found turning those moments into motivation is not just empowering, it’s effective.”

As a mentor, she encourages women lawyers to own that power, support one another and never let anyone else define their ceiling.

“I think we’ve come a long way,” Edzant says. “I see that every day at GBW. I’m able to thrive because of women like Christine and Molly who paved the way and pushed the industry forward. I’m incredibly grateful for that.”

“We’re getting closer,” she adds. “I hope by the end of my career, we’ll see a legal landscape where women don’t have to second-guess their access to opportunity.”

Through her involvement in various legal organizations, McKibben has seen how collaborative the plaintiff’s bar is. “I have met brilliant attorneys who are always willing to share ideas and strategies. It’s especially meaningful to connect with other women in the field — women who are smart, driven, and focused on making our profession and communities better.”

Like her colleagues, McKibben sees progress for women in the plaintiffs’ bar. “But it’s happening slowly. We need to do more to make this path visible and attractive to women coming out of law school.”

As co-chair of the CAALA Women in Law Committee, McKibben has worked hard to create spaces that welcome women attorneys and encourage open and honest conversation. “It’s about building a community where women feel supported, seen and heard—and where they can thrive.”

“One of the greatest gifts of being a woman in this field is the community,” Edzant says. “The support system among women in law is something truly special. There’s a sisterhood in this profession that shows up for you, without hesitation.”

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