

True Impact

All Christine Weiner ever really wanted in her professional career was to help people in a no-nonsense, compassionate and caring manner -- without any drama or shenanigans -- and to make “a significant difference” in their lives.

Politics didn't work for her. After earning her Masters in International Affairs at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., she worked at the U.S. State Department in Foreign and International Relations. But the bureaucracy and ruthless negativity in D.C. was simply too much for her to contend with on a daily basis.

“I saw my share of bureaucracy,” she says. “It was crushing. You go there as a young person thinking you'll be able to make a big difference to help people, put the U.S. in a good light, create good diplomatic relations, and improve America's image in the world.

“Yet it's so difficult to get anything done when you see how slowly the wheels of bureaucracy



Christine Weiner

As a leading Southern California estate planning attorney, Christine Weiner relishes making “a significant difference” in the lives of her clients and their families.

move and how one person is just a little tiny cog in the wheel,” she adds. “Trying to accomplish anything was impossible.”

Years later, after getting married and raising three children, Ms. Weiner launched a career in law. She had always been interested in the law – even as early as in the third grade. She was enamored with the idea of justice, building a case, selecting a jury and seeing justice prevail.

“The whole ideal of justice and helping people who needed it really appealed to me,” she says. “Seeing that people would have the right things done for them was very interesting to me. I saw how rewarding it could be.”

Ms. Weiner was built to work in law. Even her Political Science professor at Washington State University suggested she go to law school.

“I was one of only a few women studying Political Science -- at that time it was all men,” says Ms. Weiner, who graduated WSU Magna Cum Laude with a degree in Political Science. “It was quite intimidating, so I didn't go to law school then.”

When it came time to get back to work after raising her children, as fate would have it, Ms. Weiner wound up landing work with a close family friend, attorney Larry Ross. He immediately saw something special in his new employee. He encouraged

her to take paralegal classes, which she did – ‘Acing’ each and every one of them. He then told her, ‘OK, let’s just skip paralegal classes and go straight to law school.’”

She did both, attending Western State University, College of Law, and graduating No. 2 in her class. She went on to work for several firms, primarily in business litigation, but that did not meet her criteria of working in a no-nonsense, compassionate and caring environment without drama.

“I immediately knew that litigation wasn’t for me,” she says. “The lawyers were too ‘cut throat.’ I didn’t see myself staying in that role for very long.”

The role she did see herself in was estate planning – an easy choice for her when it came time to make an affirmative decision on her future. She often recalled sitting in on meetings in her first legal position with Larry Ross, who did trusts and estate planning in addition to fierce business litigation.

“To this day, I still remember thinking to myself, ‘How nice is this -- sitting at the conference table with such nice people signing their wills and trusts.’ They were so happy they were getting their affairs taken care of. I said to myself, ‘I think I could work with people like that.’”

Soon thereafter, Ms. Weiner launched her own practice in 1995 and has since emerged as one of the leading and most successful estate planning attorneys in Southern California – one with a strong emphasis on charitable giving. She has been responsible for millions of dollars going to hospitals, schools, private organizations and non-profits through trusts she has built for many of her affluent clients.

“It’s been an amazing and rewarding career,” she says.

Ms. Weiner is already working on the fourth generation of some original clients.

At a time when most people – women or men – would be happily retired, Ms. Weiner continues to work more than 40 hours a week serving clients.

“She is truly amazing -- one of the most remarkable individuals I’ve ever meet,” says one client, Clayton Mayes.

Mayes was thrust into a sensitive situation recently when his best friend passed away, leaving him as co-trustee of a \$40 million estate. Mayes had not met Ms. Weiner prior to his friend’s passing and there was a brief discussion of possibly retaining another attorney.

That changed in a matter of seconds when he met Ms. Weiner face to face for the first time.

“What I saw when we met was wisdom and experience as well as a very cool, calm, collective and rational individual whose decisions are based on principals,” Mayes says. “She is a very honest and straight forward attorney whose comments are very well thought out. If I had to do it all over again, I wish I had done my personal trust with Christine.”

The quality of Ms. Weiner’s work is epitomized by this story from Dave Morse, who recently called Ms. Weiner frantically when he learned his wife’s elderly aunt and uncle did not have a trust. They were rapidly “deteriorating” and Morse felt compelled to get the process rolling immediately.

“I thought they had something in place,” he says. “When I realized they didn’t, I called Christine and within a matter of hours she was on the doorstep with a notary and a witness prepared to do the trust that day, which she did. That’s how efficient she is.”

When Morse showed the trust to one of his closest friends, who happens to be a probate judge, his friend said, “This trust is perfect – it’s one of the best I’ve ever seen. Thorough and complete. This is the way a trust should be created.” — **By Rick Weinberg, California Business Journal**

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