

# ADRIA EAST MOSSING

## Lifelong Leader Turns Talents to PI Law and Needs of Women Lawyers

by Jordyn Reiland



Adria East Mossing is a self-described leader. From as early on as elementary school, Mossing has risen to the top of every organization she has been a part of.

It's a goal she works to achieve from the very first day of every new opportunity she's presented.

Whether it be editor of the high school yearbook, a leadership role in her college sorority, equity partner at a Chicago law firm, or president of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, Mossing has always been ready for the challenge.

Today, she applies that same sense of rigor, passion and attention to detail to her daily work, leading Mossing & Navarre LLC, a personal injury law firm that represents clients in Chicago and throughout the surrounding communities.

"I like my clients. I feel like I make a difference for my clients every day, and you can't say that about a lot of jobs," Mossing adds. "We do good work, and that's a pretty nice feeling."

Her colleagues, competitors and opponents alike agree.

"She's one of the most meticulous medical malpractice lawyers I have had the displeasure of working against," defense attorney Marni R. Slavick of Cunningham Meyer & Vadrine P.C. says jokingly. "She raises the bar, and once you've practiced against her you are better."

Kevin R. Sido, a longtime mentor and colleague, says Mossing was bound for great success.

"I can't say enough about her energy and enthusiasm. To me, that is what really sets

her apart and makes her a zealous advocate," Sido says.

"She would not have gotten here if she had not paid the dues of participation, being involved, showing leadership, and all that goes with it."

### KNOWING THE SCIENCE

Throughout her time at Northwestern University, Mossing was convinced she would head to medical school after she completed her undergraduate degree. Her mother, Mary East, was a nurse and a role model to Mossing, so it only made sense to head down a similar path.

She realized, however, after working in a hospital while in college that the path she was taking might not be the right fit after all.

She did, unknowingly at the time, learn quite a few skills working in the Intensive Care Unit as a ward clerk. That knowledge helps Mossing in her everyday work now.

"I was putting together charts, I was reading doctor's orders, I was ordering tests—all the things that are really important to know about for what I do now," Mossing says. "At the time, I was not thinking, 'How is this job going to help me 10 years later?' But now it's incredible. I'll know if a chart is missing something because I used to put it together."

Once she graduated from Northwestern University in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in English, Mossing realized she wanted to find a job where she could often use two of her true passions: reading and writing.

"I thoroughly enjoyed reading and writing since I was a tot," Mossing says.

Attending DePaul University College of

Law seemed like a natural fit. While at DePaul, Mossing was the managing editor of notes and comments for the law review as well as a teaching assistant for the legal writing program.

After she graduated from DePaul in 1988, Mossing began her career at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, where she started as a summer associate and ended 16 years later as an equity partner.

"When I joined Hinshaw, I was absolutely convinced I was going to stay there my whole career, and from day one, I wanted to be an equity partner," Mossing says. "Every review I had I always said to the partners, 'How am I doing, and am I on track to make partner?'"

While at the firm, Mossing worked primarily on construction litigation and medical malpractice cases.

"I like the sciences. I find them interesting, and that's one thing I like about my job now—every day is different," Mossing says. "Your cases are different, you deal with great experts and complex medical issues."

While at Hinshaw & Culbertson, Mossing worked closely with Sido and the late E. Michael Kelly, two attorneys who were instrumental in giving her opportunities to learn and grow.

As a second-year lawyer, Mossing worked on a case where she represented a client who had a three-story building next door to a well-known developer. Without any permits, the developer dug under her client's building and, as a result, caused significant damage to her client's property, she recalls.

Mossing says the situation taught her to be "resilient, work hard and learn things on her own with minimal guidance," because she

handled the case largely by herself.

"We had to really scratch and claw to prove our client was right. By the time we were done, we won the case. The first line of the judge's opinion was, 'This was completely avoidable had the defendant done what he was supposed to do,'" Mossing says.

Not only did Mossing meet her goals while working at the firm but she did so with three kids under age 4 in tow.

Without a supportive firm, Mossing says it likely would not have been possible.

"You are trying to do it all, have it all, not necessarily doing it all well at the same time. But I think if the firm had not been supportive, I might have quit," she says.

### SWITCHING SIDES, NEW CHAPTERS

After Mossing left Hinshaw & Culbertson, she went on to work for a plaintiff's personal injury firm for a few years where she learned what it meant to "switch sides."

What she did not realize until she made the switch was she was already used to preparing the case from the perspective of the opposing party.

"I prepare the case as if I'm on the other side," Mossing says. "The strength of having both sides has really been a plus because you know where the defense's skeletons are buried."

In 2009, Mossing opened her own firm. Two years later, after deciding to team up with partner and former colleague Jim Navarre, they formed Mossing & Navarre LLC.

Navarre says Mossing is everything you would hope to find in a "good litigator and confident questioner."

The two have known each other since 2005 when they both worked as defense attorneys at Hinshaw & Culbertson.

Navarre says Mossing's experience working on both sides helps a lot in understanding how cases are defended.

"She's also very intelligent and well versed in any of the medical aspects of the case," he says. "Some of the medical concepts can get pretty challenging but not so for her."

He also says he and Mossing share common value systems about how the firm should operate, which is crucial in a partner.

"You have to be able to trust your partner on the financial and litigation side, and she's a person of great integrity," he says.

Mossing says they have been fortunate to only get better and stronger as a firm as the years have gone by.

She says the overall atmosphere of a smaller firm is important because when one person isn't doing well, the whole group is likely not doing well either.

"You spend a lot of time at work, and you want to have a good, positive vibe for everybody," she says.

In 2016, Mossing was elected president of

the Women's Bar Association of Illinois.

At the time, she said the legal profession could do better at increasing the number of women in decision-making roles.

When Mossing started practicing law 30 years ago, only one or two of the 50 equity partners at her firm were women.

Now, Mossing says, "slow progress" has been made, but more change is needed.

"Really, the only way women are going to advance is if they are in positions of power and are able to develop business," she says. "Being a lawyer now is a lot more marketing and putting yourself out there. They didn't talk about networking when I got out of school, but I think now they are good about telling people, 'You need to be networking.'"

Mossing says being president allowed her to meet so many different people throughout the legal community she might never have interacted with otherwise.

Whenever Mossing goes back to DePaul to speak with students, she tells them two things: Be nice and keep in contact with people.

"Those things can really make a difference for you," Mossing says.

### FAMILY ALWAYS

Mossing may work hard, but family is always a priority for her. As a mother to Michael, 25, Jack, 24, and Catherine, 20, Mossing has always wanted her home to be the one where all her kids and their friends come to hang out.

"I feed off the energy in the house," she says.

"My husband always teases me because I would have them be home until they're 50 maybe."

She wants to be a great mom, and it makes sense, she says, considering how great her mom is.

"From her, I got, 'You want to be a working woman, you want to be independent,'" Mossing says. "Every now and then, we'd go to the hospital with her. I always thought, 'She's really a tough cookie. Nice, but a tough cookie.'"

Slavick says Mossing is a role model to her of what a mother and good lawyer can be.

"I look at her and think, 'OK, I can do this,'" she says. "It's miraculous that a woman can have a career like hers and still manage to be all of those other things."

Mossing very much enjoys what has become a fairly regular trip to South Carolina with her brother, Robert East, his wife, Lynn East, and their two children, Bobby East and Kristen East.

Not only does she enjoy the time with family, but she also gets to do one of her favorite activities: laying on the beach with a nice glass of wine and a good book.

One of her favorite books is *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson because it takes place in Chicago and she is an admitted "true crime geek."

If Mossing were not a lawyer, she probably would have thought about being a journalist, especially considering the similarities between the two professions.

"I'm one of those people who draws a lot of answers out of people," Mossing says. ■



From left: Jennifer Kosich, Matt Walsh, Mossing, Jim Navarre at WBAI President's Installation



From left: Bethany Harris and Mossing at U.S. Supreme Court Swearing-In Ceremony