

PROFILE

OF A VOLUNTEER



Stephanie P. Skaff is a partner at Farella Braun + Martel who handles complex litigation including fraud, securities, and intellectual property cases. Once the head of BASF's finance committee, she's now the bar association's incoming secretary. We asked Skaff a few off-beat questions to get to know her better.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE AND WHY?

Alameda. It's the best of both worlds—it's a small-town community but close enough to San Francisco that I can enjoy the urban environment as well. I live in a 1912 craftsman house and share a pool with three neighbors. It's a real throwback to the past.

WHAT WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD HOME LIKE?

I am the daughter of a teacher and an air traffic controller. I am the middle child and I grew up in Clovis in the Central Valley. I lived in the same house my whole life until I graduated from high school.

WHEN I WAS EIGHT, I WANTED TO BE . . .

. . . the president of the United States or an Olympic gymnast.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

I read and I love to travel, especially in South and Central America.

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST PET PEEVE?

I like meetings that start and end on time.

WHO HAS BEEN YOUR MOST INFLUENTIAL TEACHER?

My mom. She was the first person who taught me to be enthusiastic about learning and about new experiences. It's a central part of her personality, and she's passed that on to me by example and by genetics. Whether it's

a new client, a new matter, a new book, or a new place to travel, I embrace new experiences.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN PRESSURE AND STRESS BUILD UP?

My outlets are yoga and running. I am surprised by how much someone with my amount of energy could enjoy being still in yoga. I'm lucky—I adore my family and I love my job—and generally they don't go bad at the same time so I can lean on one when the other gets tough.

WHAT'S A COMMONALITY AMONG THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LAWYERS YOU KNOW?

They have a level of energy and a commitment to thinking creatively for their clients—and an ability to work hard.

WHAT WILL THE LEGAL PROFESSION LOOK LIKE IN TEN YEARS?

My hopeful vision is that it'll be increasingly diverse and that will be reflected at the senior levels in firms and corporate entities so that we match the urban environment we live in. I hope we continue to make the profession exciting, challenging, and intellectually stimulating for new lawyers. And I hope we won't lose trials. People talk about "the vanishing trial," but I hope that won't happen.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU COULD DO OVER AGAIN?

I have lived a pretty regret-free life. All the choices I've made were equally driven by my heart and my head and it's hard to regret things that come from that place.

WHO WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET, LIVING OR DEAD?

Mother Theresa. I'm Catholic, I grew up Catholic. The church gets a lot of things wrong but the one thing it gets completely right is its commitment to social justice. She was both the symbol and reality of that.