

## Member Spotlight: Daena Ramsey

## Trading places: Daena Ramsey was looking for a new challenge – then Cantey Hanger came knocking



Ms. Ramsey is a recognized attorney handling complex litigation in all areas of her expertise.

She is accomplished in both the trial and appellate levels. Daena represents small to large businesses and individuals in all areas of her practice on both sides of the docket and has successfully tried many cases to verdict in state, federal and bankruptcy courts.

She graduated from SMU School of Law in 1988 and obtained her BA from Miami University in 1982. Daena is the proud mom of son Stephen.

Daena Ramsey has seen it all in her career, has run her own firm, and now with Cantey Hanger LLP she's enjoying new challenges.

While it may be impertinent to ask someone their age, the same can also be said about the length of time that person has been practicing as a lawyer. Daena is circumspect about that, but she admits it's 30 years. Ish.

But with age comes experience and she puts that to good use as she represents organisations from small business owners to international corporations and insurance companies. She not only represents clients when a lawsuit is filed, but works to help clients avoid litigation.

Daena also practices maritime law. "In landlocked Dallas!" she laughs. Where there is a navigable waterway or a shipyard in Texas or Oklahoma, you might find her there.

She particularly enjoys working on behalf of small businesses: "What's frustrating is that the legal system in this country is unfavourable to small business owners and it's hard for them to find an attorney that will take their case.

"I get to work directly with the owners and to help them navigate a legal system that is not geared towards the little guy - both in time and expense."

### Back into Practice

Daena recently arrived at Cantey Hanger as a partner with a long, successful pedigree, which fits perfectly with the well established firm. It was founded 139 years ago, making it one of the oldest law firms in the Fort Worth area. It is a multidisciplinary practice including family law, criminal law, business transactions and probate.

She joined in May, having closed her own practice in sad circumstances: "My partner passed away in 2020 at the beginning of the Covid shutdown."

"There are no negatives to being at this firm and a lot of positives."

Several law firms courted Daena when word got out that she was available, but it was Cantey Hanger that attracted her: "They have a Fort Worth office which is attractive to many of my clients, the breadth of the practise area is impressive and because I know the

people, such as the managing partner, from cases we've had together previously and the reputation of this firm is just superior."

"There are no negatives to being at this firm and a lot of positives."

That said, it has been a bit of a culture shock from being a partner in a small practice: "I wanted to not have to deal with the business side, the employment side, taxes and vendors.

"But then I come here and I'm like, well, I'm not in charge anymore so I don't get to make all the decisions. It's a trade-off."

### Trailblazer

As Daena enters her 30 (ish) year as a lawyer, she also recalls the huge changes that have taken place in that time, particularly in Texas and Dallas. She was something of a trailblazer in the sector when she first qualified. Incredibly, she was one of only a handful of female litigation/ trial lawyers.

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And while she always intended to be a lawyer, Daena didn't feel ready to

go to law school straight after college, so instead she worked as a paralegal.

"I was a paralegal for three years but by then I was getting bored because there's only so much you can do as a paralegal," she recalls. "I was writing briefs and doing stuff to get things ready for trial and I was making \$20,000 a year but the lawyers were making \$200,000 +."

In addition, at this time law firms were starting to bring in more computer technology and converting records etc from physical to digital, which paralegals often had to input.

"I thought, 'I'll just be the lawyer and be in charge and I can hire people who can handle the technical side. So off I went to law school."

"When I started, it was a very male-dominated industry here."

But law firms were starting to appreciate that they needed to hire more women, so her skills were in demand when she qualified: "Litigation was where the work was and to me it seemed more interesting than other areas.

With such a male-dominated industry, she had to face up to some dinosaur attitudes, although things have now changed for the better: "It was interesting back then. Once, I was using a computer at the courthouse to look up a docket and the chief clerk came out and told me to get off the comput-

er because only attorneys could work on them.

"Litigation was where all the work was and to me it seemed more interesting than other areas."

"Like all the other women, I got mistaken for a court reporter. Judges would call me honey and I was often asked if I was the male partner's girlfriend. "

"Wow, things have changed since then. It's completely different now and nothing like that."

When she's not fighting her client's corner in court, Daena admits her passion is cycling. It is her great stress reliever and allows time with friends and hanging out with non-lawyers. She has had trips to Italy and Croatia cancelled due to the pandemic, but is scheduling a trip for 2022.

Maybe if work – and the pandemic – allow, she'll be taking a well-deserved break in the not-too-distant future.

## Daena Ramsey

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In 1882, in the booming frontier town of Fort Worth, William Capps and Samuel Benton Cantey formed the law firm that is today known as Cantey Hanger LLP.

Both were talented trial attorneys and quickly earned a reputation as a top litigation firm – a reputation Cantey Hanger has built upon during the past 130 years, as we have evolved into a respected, full-service law firm with offices in three Texas cities.

