

Attorneys Make Practicing Law a True Family Affair

By Anne La Jeunesse, Los Angeles Daily Journal

June 15, 2001 - A lot of parents spend a small fortune sending their kids to law school, and for most, watching their children realize their professional goals is payoff enough.

A few fathers reap an added benefit, however: They share their beloved profession with their children.

Newport Beach attorney Rachel Miller not only followed her father's footsteps as a lawyer, she took it a stride further. Rachel Miller and her father, Thomas E. Miller, both construction-defect experts, are also co-authors and teachers.

The pair have just published "Home and Condo Defects- A Consumer Guide to Faulty Construction," her first and his third book on the topic. Thomas Miller, a graduate of University of California Hastings College of the Law, is considered one of the nation's leading experts in construction-defect law, representing home and condominium association members.

Unknowingly, the Millers provided early proof of the "Bring your Daughter to Work" concept. Rather than flip burgers, Rachel Miller began working in her father's office in her early teens.

"He started pulling me in on the summers doing everything from filing and answering phones to photocopying," Rachel Miller said. She continued to work there during college breaks and while attending California Western School of Law in San Diego.

Flourishing under her father's tutelage, she developed her own niche: handling marketing and client relations for her father's firm.

One of the fondest memories they share is Rachel Miller's graduation from law school.

"He was actually up on stage, he surprised me and called the dean and presented me with my diploma," she said. "It was a really great moment, both of us were holding back tears."

Rachel, who travels the Southwest with her father speaking on construction defect issues, said his influence has been enormous.

"I think the biggest thing I picked up from him was his sense of working with his clients or anyone," she said. "His ability to sit down with a total stranger and make them feel comfortable with whatever their case is, is great."

"It's an incredibly scary thing for someone to have bought a home - the biggest investment of their life - and it is falling apart, and they have no one to turn to, and they have to call an

attorney. He makes them comfortable."

Thomas Miller said working with his daughter has been a "wonderful experience." He credits her with convincing him to move the firm from San Diego to Newport Beach when she realized they were acquiring more clients in Orange County and Riverside, as well as in several other states.

"She's a natural at meeting people and interacting with people," he said. "She just makes people feel at ease and so comfortable - it's uncanny."

Clients appreciate the father-daughter team, Thomas Miller said.

"I find that a lot of people think of it as a smaller, intimate, more responsible sort of relationship. They like to be able to talk to one of 'the Millers,'" he said. "If I'm not there, Rachel is there."

His other child, law-school graduate Matthew Miller, attends Le Cordon Bleu, the prestigious Parisian cooking school.