

SUPPORT STAFF

Staff Legal Assistants play a vital role in the success of the firm

Although our nine lawyers probably get more recognition, the support staff at Pemberton, Sorlie, Rufer & Kershner make our firm what it is, making it possible to provide top-notch service to our clients. Besides the attorneys, 19 people work at our firm. From time to time, we will feature our support staff in our newsletter.

This month, we want to feature our legal assistants, including (in alphabetical order): Susan Blondeau, Sue Briese, Connie Koester, Dorothy McCormick, Marilyn Olson, Sandra Schatschneider, Val Schultz, Leona Swanson, and June Tomlinson. One of our strengths as a firm is our staff of legal assistants. Few firms in our area utilize legal assistants to the extent we do. Many have none at all.

While job specifics vary, each legal assistant works closely with one or more attorneys. Each attorney has one or more legal assistants, with a backup during vacations and other absences. Typically, a lawyer might have a principal legal assistant in a field such as litigation. He or she might work with others of our legal assistants in specialized fields such as probate and family law. The legal assistant is often our main contact with clients when an attorney is on the phone, with clients, or out of the office. In addition, she handles a number of projects which allow us to be doing two or three things at once, thereby meeting clients' needs and deadlines.

She has a great deal of experience, enabling her to answer many questions and move many projects ahead, always working together with the attorney as needed. The attorneys would tell you that the legal assistants may know more about some procedures than the attorneys do.

Legal assistants at PSR&K also play a vital role in keeping things organized and on schedule. They help remind us of deadlines and events. They act as a valuable knowledge storehouse. When legal issues come up, I often ask my legal assistant for the name of a file where we have faced the same issue in the past, or for the name of an expert in a particular field with whom we have previously consulted.

Networking and coordination are another great client benefit provided by our legal assistants. It is a great help to get efficiently into a new area of law by referring to work that one of our attorneys has done before. "Reinventing the wheel" is never very useful, and it always costs the client more money. The legal assistants talk with each other and recall who has worked in a similar area in the past.

Our legal assistants get to know the clients personally and often spend a great deal of time with them, in person and on the telephone. Nothing frustrates a client more than calling an attorney and not getting the call returned. Usually, when calls are not promptly returned by



OUR SUPPORT STAFF

1st row (left to right): BJ Waasdorp, Connie Koester, Susan Blondeau, Sandra Schatschneider. 2nd row (left to right): Leona Swanson, Sue Briese, Nancy Dykhoff, Barbara Mickens, Dorothy McCormick, Trisha Mortenson, Cheryl Sherbrooke, June Tomlinson, Evangeline Johnson. 3rd row (left to right): Brenda Brandt, Karel Reich, Marilyn Olson, Dawn Larson, Val Schultz, Joan Lillevold.

the attorney, there is a good reason: if the attorney is in the courtroom, for example, he or she cannot be reached by phone. This is where the legal assistants come in. A client may ask directly for the legal assistant or the call may be directed to the legal assistant by our receptionist.

In litigation matters, legal assistants often help attorneys evaluate cases. They serve as mock juries to point out case

strengths and weaknesses, helping the attorneys properly prepare a case. At PSR&K, we have utilized the services of legal assistants for many years. They help in providing better and more economical legal services. We are proud of our legal assistants: they are skilled and dedicated professionals who work long hours to see to it that you, our client, are well-served.

*prepared by
Stephen F. Rufer*

LEGAL ISSUES IN FARMING

New publications are available

The University of Minnesota Extension Service has made available a new publication series dealing with legal issues in farming. There are 15 publications available with topics including: agricultural production contracts, farm leases, financing the farm operation, mortgages and mortgage foreclosures, bankruptcy, and tax considerations in liquidations and reorganizations. To order, please contact your county office of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Or, call the Distribution Center at (800)876-8636, or (612)624-4900 for local

calls. These publications are also available on the web at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/Documents/D/F/DF7291.html>. This series provides accurate information but is published with the understanding that the authors and the University of Minnesota are not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services. If professional assistance or legal advice is required, please seek the services of a competent professional.

Funding for the farm legal series was provided through the Rural Options Task Force, University of Minnesota Extension Service.