

A Tale of Two Amys

Dallas attorneys' shared name causes some professional confusion

By NATALIE POSGATE
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Amy M. Stewart received a call one day from an unfamiliar, older male voice.

"Hey, hon," the man said.
"Hey?" she said hesitantly.

Stewart had no idea who the caller was. They spoke for about 30 seconds until the man said, "This isn't my Amy, is it?"

"This is *an* Amy," Stewart replied. "I think you need the other Amy Stewart."

The man was the father of Amy Elizabeth Stewart, an attorney in Dallas who, like Amy M. Stewart, happens to work in business law. He did not have his daughter's number saved, so he turned to the Yellow Pages to reach her.

It certainly wasn't the first time the two Amys were mixed up. Amy M. already had a phone number beside her desk to direct the father to the other Amy Stewart.

"From time to time, I've gotten [the other Amy's] deposition transcripts and court orders," said Amy Elizabeth. She said she "religiously" uses her middle name since the mix-ups began.

Though the name mix-ups have been occurring for several years, the two Amys did not meet until earlier this year, when Amy M. introduced Amy E. as a speaker at a conference in San Antonio.

"We just gave each other a huge hug," Amy M. said. "Some people at first thought I was going to speak and were wondering if I was referring to myself in the third person."

The two Amys share more than just a name: Both are mothers. Both are list-makers. Both are entrepreneurial. Both are active in the American Bar Association, State Bar of Texas and women-focused professional groups.

Most important, both are power attorneys who have hit exciting milestones in their careers: Amy E. founded a law firm that continues to grow, and Amy M. is a partner at Estes Okon Thorne & Carr, the largest woman-owned law firm in Texas.



Jae S. Lee/Staff Photographer

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Insurance Amy

Amy Elizabeth, known by her name twin as "Insurance Amy," recently celebrated her firm's sixth anniversary. Now with seven attorneys, the boutique Amy Stewart Law exclusively represents policyholders in complex insurance coverage and bad-faith litigation. Clients range from small family-owned businesses to high-net-worth individuals to *Fortune* 100 companies.

Stewart started her firm in the fall of 2009 after spending 17 years in Big Law. A graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law, Stewart started her legal career at Gardere Wynne Sewell in 1992 practicing commercial litigation. Five years later, she moved to Wilson Elser Moskowitz Edelman & Dicker, where she was introduced to insurance litigation.

By 2009, Stewart was ready for a change. She always liked the idea of taking on a heavier leadership position, so she sought out the opportunity to spearhead a new insurance coverage practice group at a firm that did not have one. The timing was off, however, because of the recession.

But Stewart still believed in her plan, so she started her own firm. The first year, she represented both policyholders and insurers. After establishing herself, she switched

to her ultimate dream: exclusively representing policyholders.

"I realized in the process of talking to other firms that I believed in my own plan, that I could make it work," Stewart said. "It's the best decision I've ever made."

Six years later, the firm is thriving.

When asked where she sees the firm in the next five years, Stewart said the firm wants to grow — especially by bolstering its national practice. But she doesn't want to rush it.

"We're definitely in expansion mode," she said, but "we want to increase our size in a responsible way."

Coach Amy

Last September, Amy M. Stewart reached a milestone of her own by joining the second minority-owned law firm in her career — a move that also promoted her from a senior associate to a partner.

Stewart left the downtown office of White & Wiggins, Dallas' oldest black-owned law firm, to join Estes, Okon, Thorne & Carr.

The move worked well for Stewart, who had been "eyeing the firm from afar." When an opportunity arose, Stewart said, she got in touch with partner Melanie Okon through a friend.

"I just reached out, and it was

just one of those things that was meant to happen," Stewart said. "I met with Melanie and Dawn Estes at the Mansion for lunch, we had a great visit, and the rest is history."

Stewart took an unconventional path to her legal career. She started her post-college career coaching women's basketball at her alma mater, Wake Forest, and a year later at Tulane.

She later jumped into pharmaceutical sales, but she reached a crossroads when the company went out of business. Stewart said she always wanted to be a lawyer but never considered it seriously until then. A few years later, she got a law degree from the University of Missouri.

She moved to Dallas for her husband's job at the Big 12 Conference headquarters and practiced at Markland Hanley, Cox Smith and Bickel & Brewer before joining White & Wiggins in 2013.

When she's not lawyering, Stewart continues her passion for coaching by working with her 11-year-old daughter's basketball team. But even when she's wearing a lawyer hat, her coaching side still comes out.

"Coaching has kind of infused itself into my entire professional career," she said. "It's still a part of me today." ■