

Grace and Grit

By Julie Zuehlke

Julie Haseman's soft-spoken manner and gentle demeanor cover a tough and determined interior. That's a winning combination for a mom of four and grandma of one who's also an attorney.



Photography by Magic Memories

She thought she'd become a teacher and farm wife and have a dozen kids. She loves kids. She considered being a veterinarian because she loves animals, especially horses, and she loves being outdoors. She also put on her list of possible ambitions to become a psychiatrist or a pastor because of her strong faith.

At no time during her childhood and teenage school years in Hoffman, Minnesota, did Julie Bredy think about becoming an attorney. Life is full of unforeseen turns of events and surprise pathways. Through them all, she knows her life decisions were meant to be.

Julie grew up in a rural area, the active outdoor girl, a gifted student and avid basketball player who was a star on her high school team. Her prowess on the court and determination to succeed translated to grit and that got her through some tough times in her early college days.

She entered college on a basketball scholarship. During her freshman year at Bemidji State, her forward progress came to a stark halt following traumatic personal losses of a brother and two close friends. She fell ill shortly after that and had to go home to recuperate.

She married Craig Haseman in 1981 and was on the farm-wife pathway. It was necessary for her and Craig to consider that she might need to become the breadwinner eventually because of a back condition he was suffering. This was the first idea of law school as a possible career path later.

Julie resumed her undergraduate studies enrolling this time at the University of Minnesota Morris. She continued the pace through her first pregnancy.

Anna was born in April 1983 and now Julie added another overlapping pathway: she was now a farm wife, a student, and a new mom. Sometimes when Julie got up in the night to feed the baby, she would step outdoors to study the sky so she could complete an assignment for an astronomy class.

Two years later, her second pregnancy and running after a two-year-old didn't still didn't slow her forward progress too much on her path to a college education. Right on her due date, she was giving a presentation to several professors in the social sciences department. When they found out her baby was due that day, they gave her an A and sent her packing.

Luckily, Ryan was a few days late that April in 1985. One year later, Julie received her bachelor of arts degree with distinction.

During this time Craig had very successful back surgery and was able to continue farming. They decided she should continue on the path of building a professional career and pursue graduate studies.

Law school seemed a perfect match for Julie, always interested in academics and always a voracious reader. A law career would also

incorporate many of her earlier ambitions to understand human behavior and to help people.

She was already the mom of two toddlers when she entered law school in 1986. They toddled off to school with her to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

She and the kids lived in student housing that was nearly like an international village. The primary caretaker for the kids was a woman from Uganda who lived next door with her own four kids and her graduate-student husband. The convenience was a huge advantage for Julie as she balanced being a mom and law student. They went back home to the farm in Evansville on weekends or Craig would trek to the Cities to be with them.

Julie received her law degree with high honors in May 1989 and passed the bar exam shortly thereafter. By September, she began working with the law firm in Alexandria where she still practices, Tillitt McCarten Johnson (and now Haseman). After six years on the job, she heard the mom pathway calling to her again.

The Hasemans welcomed third child, John, in May 1995 and then Melissa in June 1997. It was nearly like having two separate families of children with the gap between the older two and the younger two.

The oldest, Anna, attended the University of Minnesota and lived with her husband, Dana Woods, at the same student housing in St. Paul where Anna and Ryan had lived with their mom when she was a law student. Ryan and his wife, Renee Haberer, live in Fargo, North Dakota. Their son, Logan, was born on June 1, 2007 -- Julie's and Craig's first grandchild.

Through all the pathways and milestones, Julie has continued living on the family farm in Evansville and practicing law for 20 years in Alexandria. Her areas of focus are estates, trusts, elder law and township law. She gets her "teacher ambition" satisfied through teaching for School District 206 Community Education, estate planning seminars and Sunday School.

Those other pathways, such as becoming a pastor or psychiatrist, still have some of the same skills needed in her law practice. Because she deals with families in sometimes emotional situations, she uses every bit of compassion and courage she possesses. She keeps a strong faith and a toughness inside while she shows a gracious demeanor to the world.

That holds true for fulfilling her absolute favorite life choice of being a wife and mom, and grandma, too. And while she didn't reach the one-time vision of having a dozen kids, she has touched hundreds of lives significantly with poise, perseverance, backbone and heart. *DW*

Writer Julie Zuehlke is also the editor of Definitive Woman Magazine.