



# Hearsay

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## Anchors aweigh

A Boston law firm's recent decision to mandate in-office attendance on designated days of the work week signals that some in the legal industry are rethinking their continuing embrace of remote work models initially adopted in response to the exigencies of the pandemic.

In September, **Ropes & Gray** informed its attorneys that they must be in the office on "anchor days" of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

As reported by the ABA Journal, the new policy went into effect on Oct. 3. Under the firm's prior policy, lawyers were expected to work in the office at least three days a week but were given the discretion to choose the particular days for in-person attendance.

In an internal memorandum, Ropes & Gray Chair **Julie H. Jones** explained the reasoning behind the change in policy.

"We have been reflecting on the bene-

years later.

"I still don't think it works too well," Dennis says. "Part of the reason is capturing time. I don't think people are actually capturing the time that they are working when they are working from home because they are not as focused."

To Dennis, it seems that some attorneys have become more "lackadaisical" in their work habits as a result of being able to work from home on a more or less regular basis. According to Dennis, now most of the attorneys at her firm are in the office at least four to five days a week.

"If you are in the office, you are much more invested in the firm itself and the people around you," Dennis says.

"It really is past time for people to get back in the office," she adds. "It's like 'Casual Friday' turned into an 'Always Casual' kind of thing. To some people, it's almost gotten to the point where it's a 'right' to work from home."

But not everyone agrees with

training, mentoring and personal connections that make up the Ropes & Gray experience for our lawyers."

— PAT MURPHY

## Leading lady

If he had known who he was dealing with, he may have never made the request.

"Rosann, you know that envelope with your bonus inside? I'd appreciate it if you didn't open it," the **Goodwin Procter** partner told the then-second-year associate.

Of course, **Rosann Cacace Madan** tore the envelope open, learned that her male colleague had been issued a check five times the size of hers, and began composing her resignation letter.

Only a week earlier, Madan had been excluded when the Boston firm's real estate department decided to hold its annual luncheon at a Newbury Street establishment with a men's only dining room. The bonus was the last straw.

Admitted to the bar in 1972, Madan then formed with her husband, **Anil**, the Boston firm

confusion for a few seconds before offering up the explanation, prompting a good laugh from the judge.

In 1980, the Madans made some new law. In *Brown v. Brown*, the plaintiff was a wife who had slipped and fallen down the snowy back stairs of her home, suffering a broken hip. She then sued her husband for not shoveling.

The Madans got the case dismissed at the summary judgment stage but lost that result when the Supreme Judicial Court decided that the common law rule of interspousal immunity should not apply.

Anil says Rosann acknowledged at the time that the SJC had made the right decision, even though it was an adverse result.

But it was only a temporary setback. On remand, the Madans secured a defense verdict.

"Justice was done all around," Anil says.

In another case emblematic of Rosann Madan's uncommon thoroughness, the couple defended the smoke detector manufacturer Honeywell after



ROSANN MADAN

an amazing, deep understanding of very complex issues, and not only legal issues," Corr says.

But the diminutive Rosann was also "so full of energy and sass," Corr adds.

After a secretary in the Boston office of Madan & Madan developed a habit of greeting Anil with "good a.m., AM," Rosann's secretary one day retorted, "Say good morning to 'HM' ['Her Majesty'], too."

The moniker stuck, and Rosann would continue to be known as "HM" throughout the office and at home.

What Rosann considered



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days a week, and we're seeing that a more coordinated schedule, with maximum overlap amongst colleagues, is key to creating the experiences that build connections," Jones wrote.

"We know that the office experience has been lacking in part because our office communities do not yet have critical mass, and because we need to do a better job maximizing the quality of our time together," she added.

In terms of deciding which days would be designated anchor days, Jones wrote that Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were the days with the highest level of attendance in the firm's 12 offices during the preceding six-month period.

"We expect to see you in on those days, absent client and business development needs, or occasional conflicts that arise in the lives of all professionals," Jones wrote.

Wellesley Hills attorney **Sheryl J. Dennis** doesn't want to say she told you so, but ...

"If what [Ropes & Gray] was doing was working, they wouldn't have changed it," says Dennis, a founding partner at nine-attorney **Fields & Dennis**.

Dennis has long been a skeptic of the sustainability of the remote working model for the law firm environment, telling *Lawyers Weekly* in a September 2020 interview that her firm was experiencing mixed results with working from home, with some of the firm's attorneys not being as productive in terms of billings or meeting client expectations.

ton lawyer **Eric J. Parker** didn't think weekly work schedules would return to their pre-pandemic practices — and he still doesn't.

"There is simply too much evidence, having now been forced to 'stress test' the concept, that a hybrid work schedule does in fact work for many firms, and that those firms who saw positive results would continue to support hybrid work schedules," says Parker, who points to his own firm, **Parker Scheer**, as an example.

Even so, Parker says he's not surprised that there are firms actively working to return to pre-pandemic work schedules.

"Law firms, and Boston law firms in particular, are not known for embracing change," he says. "Change is scary. But those who manage law firms with an eye on improving efficiency and retention should recognize that the adoption of hybrid work schedules has probably done more to equalize the often-insurmountable challenges that women with small children and dual working couples face each and every week."

Hybrid work schedules have offered those with young children and others with domestic obligations a more rational means of balancing work and personal responsibilities, "for their own benefit and most certainly the benefit of the firm at large," Parker says.

Ropes' chair, Jones, declined to be interviewed. But in an email, a spokesperson wrote that the firm's anchor days "are

cement a reputation as an exacting preparer of cases and tenacious cross-examiner.

Rosann Madan died peacefully on Oct. 24 at the age of 81.

Anil and Rosann Madan proved to be just as good a match professionally as they were personally.

Rosann was "unbelievably meticulous" and relished discovery but had no interest in being in court, Anil says.

Anil was the opposite and gratefully accepted the way his wife's legwork would tee him up for success in the courtroom by simply reading the files she had prepared.

Handling primarily products liability cases, Rosann Madan defended the Coca-Cola Co., Textron, Honeywell, The Stanley Works, Bostitch, Gulf & Western Co., and E.W. Bliss Co., among others.

Along the way, Rosann Madan had her mettle tested, like when she was forced to appear in her husband's stead before notoriously tough Superior Court Judge **James L. Valley**. The judge put her through the wringer to such a degree that Anil felt compelled to buy her a pair of topaz earrings to compensate.

Three months later, the Madans found themselves in Worcester before the very same Judge Valley. The often-mischievous Rosann couldn't resist asking the judge what he thought of her earrings.

After he complimented them, she explained, "I call them the 'Valley Topazes.'"

two of their 13 children, a pair of teenage boys.

Even though everyone thought she was crazy to do so, Rosann insisted on taking the depositions of each of the other 11 children.

The approach paid dividends when one of the daughters testified that she recalled the family dog "going crazy" on the day of the fire — behavior that the dog also exhibited when her father or one of her brothers performed their monthly tests of their home's smoke detectors, she acknowledged.

Anil believes that testimony was all the jury needed to find that the smoke detectors had not malfunctioned.

While Rosann had never taken a single science course, she had an "uncanny knack" to grasp complicated subjects, like engineers' explanations about how machines work, according to Anil.

"I was the beneficiary of all that," he says.

That attention to technical detail never quite turned off, says **Marianne Corr**, who got to know Rosann while Corr was serving as deputy general counsel for Textron. She is now general counsel for the University of Notre Dame.

Corr recalls walking with Rosann down a street in Boston when they came upon a truck parked on a hill, carrying a heavy load. Rosann remarked that the blocks were not set correctly, an accident waiting to happen.

"She had two sides — she

golf tournament. After Anil informed one of the other players that his wife had retired, the plaintiffs' lawyer expressed great relief.

"She was the most dangerous lawyer I ever met," the lawyer said to the other members of his foursome. "She'd smile at you while she pissed right down your leg."

Corr concurs with that colorful assessment of Rosann's legal acumen.

"I was glad she was on my side," she says.

But away from work, Rosann was ever the gracious host who set an immaculate table around which many laughs would be shared, Corr says.

While she had served on the board of Boston Baroque and Anil had done likewise for the Handel and Haydn Society, Rosann's musical tastes were far more eclectic, extending to B.B. King, Linda Ronstadt, Bruce Springsteen and the Dixie Chicks.

The couple traveled extensively, at times with Anil, a private pilot, in the cockpit. The Madans made many trips to Italy — Rosann was half-Italian — and visited India, Turkey, France, Israel and the Czech Republic, among other places, as well.

Corr calls Anil and Rosann "a great pair."

"They played off one another really well," she says.

Anil considers himself to be the lucky one.

"I was privileged to be part of her life," he says.

