

OH, THE PLACES SHE'S BEEN!

Mary Nold Larimore treads new ground in her law practice—and her outdoor adventures

by NANCY HENDERSON

photography by DARIO IMPINI

Day after day, as she scaled the craggy slopes of the Alps, Mary Nold Larimore was glad for the rigorous training she'd endured back in the U.S. To prepare for the grueling Haute Route hike from Chamonix, France, to Zermatt, Switzerland, a few times a week, the adventurous Indianapolis attorney had descended the stairs from her 33rd-floor office at Ice Miller in OneAmerica Tower. Then she climbed the 35 flights to the top of the building and started all over again. When depositions took her out of town, she headed to the hotel gym, adjusted the treadmill to the highest possible incline and exercised as long as she could stand it.

"The training for the trip was really part of the whole experience," says Larimore, 53, who braved the celebrated Alpine trail in 2007. "If I didn't have to train for it, I wouldn't have felt like I had accomplished as much."

Larimore's preparation skills have also propelled her forward as a products liability litigator and co-chair of the drug and device practice group at Ice Miller. Enthusiastic and aggressive in the courtroom, her primary strength lies in studying the science behind a pharmaceutical, manufacturing or toxic tort case and distilling the facts for a jury and judge.

"She's a quick study, she understands this area of the law extremely well, and she's very responsive," says Lisa Warren, assistant general counsel at New Jersey-based Johnson & Johnson, who hired Larimore for the first time in the early 1990s. "She's a straight shooter. She'll tell you what she thinks, not what she thinks you want to hear."

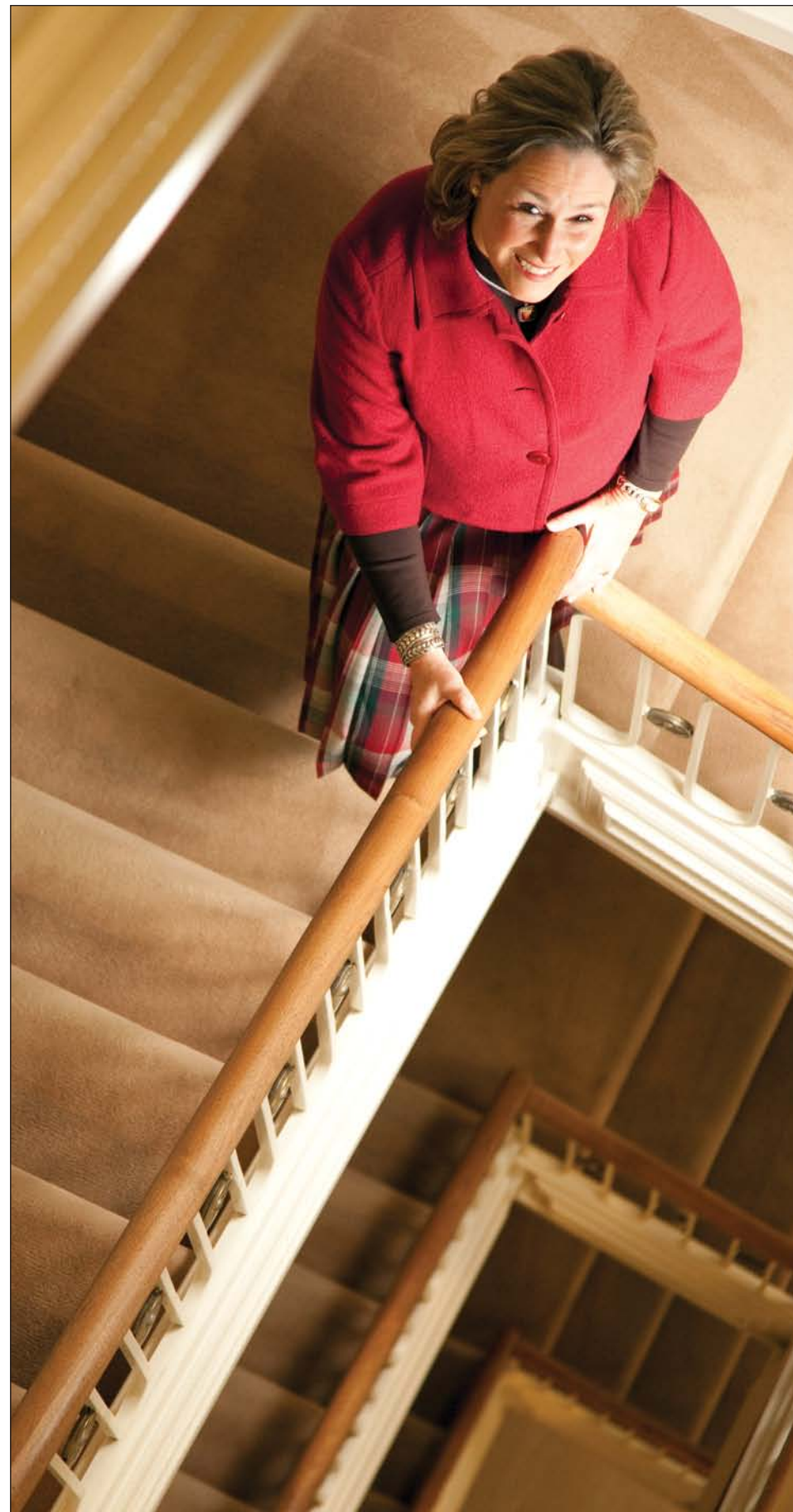
The daughter of two Fort Wayne educators—Larimore's dad headed the electrical engineering and technology department at Purdue University; her mom was an elementary school teacher—she grew up in a household that revered learning above almost every-

thing else. Social and outgoing, she played piano and flute, took up swimming and tennis, and visited the library every week during summer break. Education, in fact, was so important to Larimore's family that she, her sister and her two brothers were seldom allowed to watch TV. One day when she was a teenager, she recalls, "We had violated my mother's television rule one too many times, so she literally took a wire cutter and cut the cord. My dad came home to turn on the evening news and the cord was gone, so she explained why she had done it and he agreed. We went for many months with no television in our home."

Larimore credits a pocket-sized career card for steering her toward the legal profession. Walking home from high school every day, she imagined herself in the various occupations listed on both sides. "I didn't want a job where I was with the same people all the time because I recognized in myself that I would get bored with things very quickly," she says. "I wanted a job where I would do lots of different things, meet lots of different people, and go lots of different places. And I somehow hit upon law."

Her guidance counselor discouraged her from majoring in political science—Larimore was told she'd probably get married and never use the degree—but she ignored the advice and devoured theoretical literature. "I spent my undergrad years reading Machiavelli, Kant, Hume, Rousseau, Locke, Moore. All of the great political philosophers—you name it, I read it. I loved it."

After working several jobs to pay her way through Indiana University School of Law, where she graduated in 1980, Larimore received a number of offers but chose Ice Miller "because I really felt like the people would genuinely take an interest in my career." She was right. Veteran attorneys Geoffrey Segar and Ralph "Buffy" Cohen, who handled a number of medical malpractice,



Scaling the steps of OneAmerica Tower is just a warm-up for Larimore.



pharmaceutical and medical device cases, became mentors, and her specialty surfaced. “It really was just the luck of the draw and I got very, very lucky,” she says.

Her first court experience, in which she defended a wealthy client involved in an altercation at an Indianapolis 500 party, was “very much baptism by fire. [The judge] was well known for his abuse of young lawyers and I looked like I was about 17, so he had a lot of

Trial Lawyers, in late 2008 Larimore completed a 10-year run on the Indiana Supreme Court’s Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure, where she worked to align state and federal rules. “I think that for a trial practitioner, that is extremely helpful,” she says. “The more symmetry you have between the Indiana trial rules and the federal rules of civil procedure, the easier it is to practice in both forums.”

In a firm where 40 percent of the attorneys are female—in 2009

“For me, [trial work is] definitely a roller coaster,” Larimore says. “You’re either screaming up or screaming down, but things are never very calm or predictable.”

fun abusing me,” she says, recalling how the judge kept screaming, “Counselor!” at her during the two-week trial. “I remember at the end of the day, the guys [from Ice Miller] would almost look underneath the table and tell me I could come out now; it was safe. Actually, in spite of all that, it was very exciting. I think that you find out very quickly whether trial work is your idea of a roller coaster or not. And for me it was definitely a roller coaster. You’re either screaming up or screaming down, but things are never very calm or predictable.” Larimore’s team initially lost the case, but won on appeal.

Over the years, Larimore has capitalized on her ability to decipher complex medical and scientific data. During a five-week trial in Rochester, Ind., she used simple illustrations of a mother, father, teenager and dog to explain why TDI, the toxin plaintiffs claimed was released in her manufacturing client’s powder coating product, couldn’t have been released as the plaintiffs alleged. Larimore snared a defense verdict on all counts. “It is very important to recognize that not everybody on the jury is going to ... remember their high school chemistry, if they took it, and they certainly don’t have a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry. It needs to be explained in a way that makes intuitive sense.”

As Indiana’s first female fellow in the American College of

Working Mother magazine and Flex-Time Lawyers consulting company named Ice Miller one of the nation’s 50 best law firms for women, and *The American Lawyer* ranked it No. 1 in percentage of female equity partners—Larimore has been instrumental in securing additional paid maternity leave for lawyers. “There are a lot of lawyers around the country that are very dear friends of mine,” she says. “So I was very attuned to the fact that there were other large firms in the country that had been making that change and I wanted our firm to be on the forefront.”

Larimore has no qualms about representing her clients, either. “I feel very strongly that I am representing some of the best companies in the world, and I don’t say that lightly. I think that the pharmaceutical industry has been wrongly maligned on so many different levels, and it has been incredibly rewarding to have an opportunity to work, not just with the legal staffs at these companies, but with the scientists and physicians and Ph.D.s that have worked so hard on developing these medicines that positively impact health in this country. As a woman, these things have been very rewarding.”

Larimore has always been a daredevil—she’s gone snowmobiling in rural Michigan, hiked in the Rocky Mountains, parasailed in the Alps—but the demanding 13-day trek along the Haute Route with 10 other women in 2007 was undoubtedly “one of the most exhilarating, fun adventures of my life.” Crossing 110 miles of high trails and steep alpine passes, the group trudged from the foot of Mont Blanc to the base of the lofty Matterhorn, stopping at quaint hotels and cheese shops to rest and stock up on food for the next day.

During the warm-up hike, the entourage spotted a herd of wild ibex. “Honestly, it looks like a mythical creature,” Larimore says of the mountain goat with the large, curved horns. “Our guide, who had been hiking in the Alps for years, said he had never seen an entire herd like that, that was basically sitting around on this mountain, on the rocks, literally close enough to touch. It was like they were there for a photo shoot.”

Another highlight came a few days later, as Larimore made the arduous climb up a rocky 4,300-foot ascent alongside Switzerland’s massive Trient Glacier. “You would hear a crack and look over and it would look like diamonds were actually spilling down the mountain as part of the ice would break off. ... I’ll never forget that particular day. You get to the top and you’re so excited that you’ve achieved this.”

Whether she’s hiking one of the world’s highest mountains or defending a client, it’s Larimore’s passion for trying new things that keeps her moving forward. “By nature I’m an optimist,” she says. “I love what I do. I love life. I’m not a complainer.” ◀

Nancy Henderson is the author of Able! How One Company’s Extraordinary Workforce Changed the Way We Look at Disability Today (BenBella Books). She has written about Southern people and places for Parade, Smithsonian and The New York Times.