



Victoria Lawyer Comes *Full Circle*

Many professionals, especially lawyers, will tell you their careers have taken them in unexpected directions.

Sara E. Pope—a Victoria lawyer who concentrates on resort development—is an exception. Sara has steered her course with a definite plan in mind. As a result, after 15 years in law, Sara finds herself exactly where she wants to be, doing what she has chosen to do.

Born in Victoria and raised on the Saanich Peninsula, Sara is thrilled to be back practising law in her hometown after 13 years in Vancouver.

Sara articulated in 1989 with Ferguson Gifford in Vancouver, then joined Henley & Walden, a long-established small firm in Sidney. In this collegial general-practice firm, she received great training and extensive exposure to all types of legal issues and legal services—from Wills

to foreclosure actions to conveyancing and everything in between. After a few command performances in Chambers, Sara soon decided her interests did not lie in the direction of the courtroom.

Wanting to move more in the direction of solely solicitor's work, in 1992 Sara found herself in a big office on the 29th floor of a Vancouver office tower. She became an associate at Owen Bird and was apprenticed to several senior real estate partners.

The pace was furious and the work demanding. At that time, the real estate development clients and the lawyers were generally male. Sara remembers not being respected early on by a male client. The advice she received from her male partner-mentor was, "No matter what happens to you in your law practice, just be yourself."

That turned out to be exactly the right advice. Sara's practice grew; she became a valuable member of the firm. She accepted the offer of partnership in 1996 and remained a partner with Owen Bird until March 2003.

Sara particularly enjoyed a period of years serving as partner in charge of hiring articulated students and associates. She was known as one of the partners who took a personal interest in the students and new lawyers. Her door was always open, regardless of the pressures she was under. She spent countless hours participating in various firm committees and as the chair of the real estate practice group.

While at Owen Bird, Sara developed a specialty niche in resort real estate development, a very complex area of law. Her clients were and still are located in all the main resort destinations of BC—Whistler, Kelowna, Big White, Fernie, Kimberley, and Radium. Soon new clients sought Sara's expert advice for their fractional projects, rental pool agreements, strata property issues, and sale documentation.

Because her law practice had matured to a point where she was relatively independent, Sara decided to make the big leap to "sole practitioner." It was not easy for Sara or her partners to say goodbye, but she was determined to start her own business.

Throughout the years in Vancouver, Sara had often returned to Victoria to visit her parents on weekends. As time went on, it got harder to take that ferry back to Tsawwassen.

After a short period as a sole practitioner in Vancouver, Sara moved her office and home to Victoria. She now works in a restored heritage building, steps from The Empress, great restaurants, and shopping.



Jaime Hall, Sara Pope, and Mary Brunton

