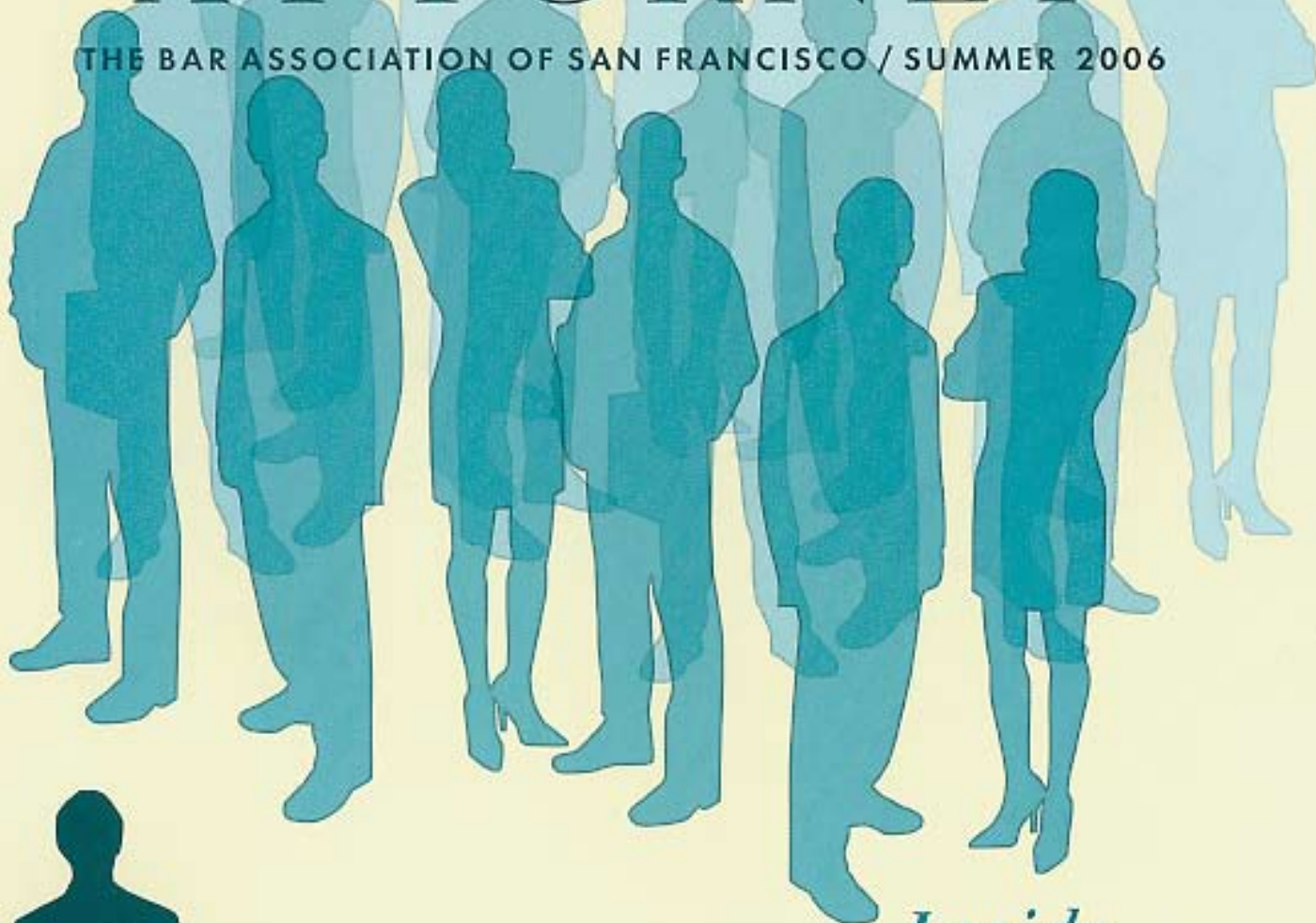


SAN FRANCISCO ATTORNEY

THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF SAN FRANCISCO / SUMMER 2006



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Susan Roos

Susan Roos had made it. She was a woman partner in a large, successful law firm, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton. But with a marriage (to Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati CEO John Roos), and two young children, she was finding the balance tricky. "I felt that my odds of being able to do a better job were better if I wasn't at a big firm," she says.

Her good friend John Cook, who had once had his own firm, was then head of Sheppard Mullin's labor and employment group, and when issues with a major client

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surfaced, Cook proposed a partnership. So eleven years ago this spring, the pair left and set up their own shop. They brought nearly all their existing clients with them, and Cook & Roos was born.

Roos describes it as a large firm labor and employment department, but in a stand-alone shop. "We did it all by the book. We have a great relationship with Sheppard Mullin. But this is a much better place for both of us."

The firm has undergone changes in those years. Cook recently moved to an of counsel

position. Now the firm, known as Cook Roos Wilbur Thompson LLP, includes Cook, three partners, three full-time associates, and two part-time contract associates.

"We all have the philosophy here that we want to have a life. So we give up making lots of money in exchange for having a more balanced situation. At the same time, we all work really hard, we all want to do the best job for our clients, and we want to win."

The firm has never struggled for work, due partly to its lower billable hour rate. The only time they considered folding was during the boom, when litigation slowed and the employment market was so hot the firm had trouble keeping associates.

But they weathered that storm and have consistently turned down offers from larger firms to join them or serve as their California outpost.

"We practice the old-fashioned way. We sit around and talk about cases. There is a real team atmosphere here. We help each other analyze cases, and we don't bill that time. Money isn't everything. We are happy to work with top level cases and clients and not bill 2,200 hours, and not make quite as much money," Roos says. "We know we can attract clients. I am very confident there will always be a job for us somewhere."

Roos says she loves being her own boss and would never go back to a big firm. "It's the best thing I ever did. I love it."

