



Left: Kathleen with her husband of 32 years, attorney James M. Croshal.

Introducing CBA President Kathleen Hearn Croshal

BY BRENDAN BAKER

Kathleen Hearn Croshal has traveled far, not just literally but also figuratively, and not always in a straight line. Kathleen didn't take the typical path to the law; she stepped off the traditional high school-college circuit early on, getting married and having two children before the age of 20.

From Night School to Law School

To better support herself and her daughter and son—and to provide the sort of example that she wanted them to follow—Kathleen returned to academia in her late teens. A high school dropout when GEDs weren't yet an option, Kathleen attended high school classes

at night to earn her diploma. After successfully completing her primary education, she moved with her family to Colorado, where she earned a bachelor's degree in communications and theater from the University of Colorado.

After graduation, Kathleen entered the world of live theater production, acting as a manager of the Heritage Square Opera House and the famous Goldenrod Showboat. However, now in her late 20s and a single parent, Kathleen was more determined than ever to financially provide for her children and to be a positive role model for them. Her theater job consistently kept her away from home at odd hours and was unlikely to provide the foundation she wanted for her children's success.

So, after pragmatically considering a range of options, Kathleen decided to pursue a legal career. She enrolled at the University of Colorado Law School, despite having no academic background in the law and no significant legal experience (other than her divorce and dealing with attorneys through her theater management job). She relates that she "was a bit unprepared, but got it done," while raising two children as a single parent.

"Where's the Brief?"

After law school, Kathleen started her legal career in Pueblo, where she became a deputy district attorney. She then briefly worked for a private firm before opening her own practice, handling general civil matters with an emphasis on family law, as well as criminal matters. At the time, she was one of precious few woman attorneys working in Pueblo. She relates that while the other lawyers in town did not immediately seek to work with her directly, they did help her by sending work her way, particularly court-appointed criminal, juvenile, and mental health cases.

She became involved in the Pueblo legal community and the local bar association. When it came time for the Pueblo Bar to contribute a skit for the then-annual CBA convention at the Broadmoor Hotel, an attorney at Petersen and Fonda P.C. recalled Kathleen's background in theater production and recruited her to help the association put on this event: a comedic musical revue called "Where's the Brief?" In one of those weird twists of fate that many lawyers can tell you about, managing that production put Kathleen on the law firm's radar, and a few years later she was brought on as a new associate. She was the first woman attorney in the firm, and eventually made partner.

Kathleen worked with Petersen and Fonda P.C. in Pueblo for eight years doing civil litigation. She says the best piece of legal advice she ever got was that lawyers are very willing to mentor colleagues, so long as those colleagues have done their basic research before looking



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for assistance. “Do your homework, then you will get help,” she says.

After 16 years of practice, Kathleen was appointed to be a Pueblo County judge in the 10th Judicial District. She filled that role for almost 16 years. In 2011, she retired to free up time to help her youngest daughter with childcare. However, despite her putative retirement, she has remained active in the law, volunteering with the Pueblo office of Colorado Legal Services and acting as a part-time municipal judge.

Giving Back

In addition to her legal work, Kathleen has an extensive record of public service. She has been a member and officer of numerous organizations, including the Pueblo Domestic Violence Community Task Force, the Sangre de Cristo Hospice and Palliative Care board of directors, the Pueblo Arts Alliance, the Boys and Girls Club of Pueblo County and Arkansas Valley, and the Girl Scouts of America Columbine Council. She has served as president of the Pueblo County Bar Association and as regional vice president of the CBA. She is a frequent public speaker on such topics as domestic violence, victims’ rights, child abuse, dependency and neglect cases, AIDS and the law, and the judicial branch of government.

Combining the legal with the theatrical, Kathleen is also the founder and a producer/director of the Pueblo Historical Ghost Walk, which relays various parts of Pueblo’s history via a guided walking tour and ghostly monologues from actors portraying iconic people from Pueblo’s past. The annual event is a volunteer-led



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- 1 Tailgating at a CU football game with granddaughters Makena and Bella.
- 2 Family photo, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.
- 3 Enjoying her two favorite pastimes— theater and travel—at the ancient Greek amphitheater in Siracusa, Sicily, Italy.

fundraiser for the Pueblo County Domestic Violence Community Task Force.

Looking forward to her term as CBA president, Kathleen is excited to dig into the REFOCUS 2020 strategic plan, and she is particularly motivated to bring young attorneys into the fold and to help them grow their careers. She is also passionate about finding ways for the CBA to continue serving attorneys practicing outside of the Denver metro area in Greater Colorado. “The future is the next generations,” she says. “It’s not me; I’m happy where I am. But I am

people-oriented—I like people, and I am still a lawyer who wants to make some difference.” Helping to usher in the future of the CBA is just one more way that Kathleen continues to actively serve her communities.

Kathleen is married to attorney James M. Croshal, a current CBA Board of Governors representative and a past president of the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association. The couple has a blended family of seven children and 13 grandchildren (including a set of twins and a set of triplets), as well as six foreign exchange students from Germany, Italy, Russia, and Tajikistan. In her personal life, Kathleen considers herself a free spirit whose interests include bridge, golf, travel, history, and the arts.

The CBA is exceptionally lucky to have Kathleen Hearn Croshal at the association’s helm for the 2019–20 term. With her experience, approachability, and spirit of public service, we are confident the CBA is in great hands. 