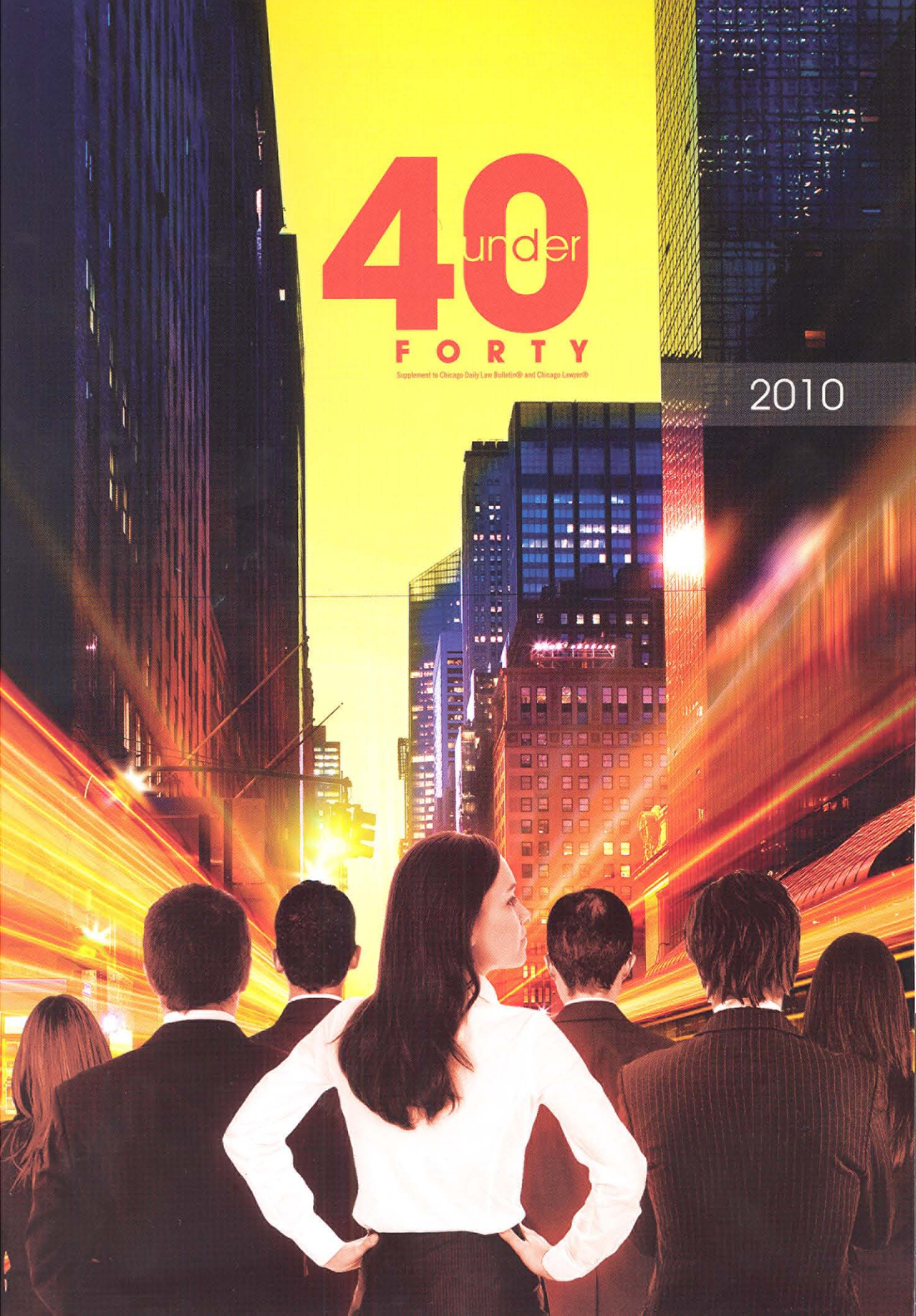


# 40 under FORTY

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**SAMMI L. RENKEN**

**AGE**  
**36**

**LAW SCHOOL**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS**

**AREA OF PRACTICE**  
**HEALTHCARE COMPLEX AND**  
**CATASTROPHIC LITIGATION**

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*"She is calm  
under pressure and  
strives for the best  
for her client."*

**I**n the middle of a tense deposition, Sammi L. Renken, 36, helped everyone in the room to focus on the legal issues that really mattered. The lawyer originally from the small farming and ranching community of El Campo, Texas, relied on her Texas roots to take control of the situation.

The native of Texas, who migrated north after graduating from the University Of Texas School Of Law, is now a shareholder at Johnson & Bell, defends hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and other health-care clients against accusations such as malpractice and negligence. Her skills as a lawyer have not gone unnoticed by her peers.

"I attended a deposition where two lawyers engaged in a heated debate that made the entire room feel uncomfortable," recalls Brittanie E. Hayes, a lawyer at Fedota Childers. "Sammi remained calm and managed to shift the focus back to the case at hand by mediating the heated discussion. The two attorneys looked to Sammi as a voice of reason, and the deposition continued without any disruptions."

"Sammi has a unique ability to defuse any unnecessary confrontations throughout the litigation process while tenaciously advocating for her client," says Hayes, who has represented co-defendants with Renken in three medical malpractice cases.

Michael W. Clancy of Clancy Law, who was on the opposing side from Renken in a medical malpractice case four years ago, praises the way she handled herself in court.

"Over the course of the case it became clear that Ms. Renken was smart, technically capable and wise well beyond her years," Clancy says. "She was collegial while zealously representing her client and managed to carry herself like someone who had several decades' more experience."

In that case, Clancy had filed a medical malpractice lawsuit on behalf of the estate of a woman who'd died in Kane County. Renken's client was eventually dismissed as a defendant — "in no small part due to her work," Clancy says.

"I was impressed by the speed with which Ms. Renken grasped the relatively complicated medical concepts involved in our case and the intellectual dexterity she displayed during the many depositions," Clancy says. He says Renken was especially deft at guiding nurses through their depositions.

Robert Rooth, who has been Renken's legal adversary in four cases, says Renken always shows "tremendous civility." "I have observed Ms. Renken's lawyering skills in various nursing-home negligence cases," he says. "She successfully resolved these cases without trial, by streamlining discovery and engaging in mediation. Her ability to communicate and emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of these cases, to both her client and opposing counsel, greatly contributed to resolution."

In one highly emotional case handled by Renken, "There was no question that the case tugged at the heartstrings of every judge, witness, family member," says Hayes, who represented a co-defendant. "Sammi maintained a level of professionalism and courtesy in every deposition, yet she maintained an unwavering level of dedication to her client by narrowing the case to the actual legal issues before the court."

Kristin Ahmadian, who previously worked with Renken at Johnson & Bell, also observes that Renken is a model of professionalism. "She is calm under pressure and strives for the best for her client," Ahmadian says. "She is always the constant professional in all of her dealings with opposing counsel."

Hayes says she views Renken as a role model, despite her youth. "One cannot help but watch Sammi and think this is exactly the lawyer I want to become," Hayes says. "She inspires young lawyers by taking the time to answer questions and guide them through the many questions that arise. She has a strong dedication to improving her profession by making the next generation even stronger than before."

Renken is a active member in many professional organizations such as the Chicagoland Healthcare Risk Management Society and Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys. In addition she frequently speaks on the subject of Wound Care Litigation and has published numerous articles on Healthcare Liability.

Outside of the office Renken's focus is on her family, her husband Judd and passing on the values instilled by her mom to her daughter Jacqueline.