

# Trailblazer, Villanovan

Diane E. Ambler '78 JD was born to lead, and her Villanova legal education set the path

BY SHAWN PROCTOR

Throughout her legal career, Diane E. Ambler '78 JD has always looked ahead for the next opportunity. In her view, the biggest breaks tend to come when least expected.

One such opportunity came when she was offered the chance to chair the American Bar Association's Subcommittee on Investment Companies and Investment Advisers. Ambler, then a young partner at her law firm, worried that she would not have time for the travel and public speaking required.

So Ambler did exactly what she has time and again during her distinguished legal career—she dove in, confident in her training and education. With that foundation, she was primed for everything ahead.

"It was engaging and fun, and propelled my career in ways that I never would have imagined," says Ambler, who is now a senior partner at K&L Gates LLP and chair of the Board of Consultors at the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law. "Suddenly I was involved with a whole new circle of dynamic people in my industry."

## LEANING IN

It was only one break of many over the course of Ambler's impressive career, which has seen her recognized for reaching the apex of professional excellence while maintaining the highest levels of skill and integrity. She has been a pioneer in the area of mutual funds governance and is a highly experienced practitioner in financial institution regulation under the federal securities laws.

When she began practice, mutual funds regulation, which affects businesses around the world, was still evolving. There was much law yet to be made, and Ambler's practice and reputation grew as the law developed.

As a result, Ambler has been ranked as one of the top lawyers in her field by Chambers USA and Best Lawyers of America; has been listed in Martindale-Hubbell Bar Register of Preeminent Women Lawyers; and has earned a membership in the prestigious American Law Institute.

Ambler says it was in her DNA to lead. She comes from an old Philadelphia Quaker family with very strong, caring and dedicated women. Among others, her great-great-great grandmother, Mary Ambler, led an effort to aid passengers on a train that crashed in what is now Ambler, Pa. The town was later given that name in honor of Mary's leadership. The example of the hardworking, strong women in her family has driven her to find projects through which she could make her mark on the legal profession. "It never occurred to me that I

might be entitled to fewer opportunities because I am a woman," she says.

Her Villanova education reinforced that egalitarian view and gave her confidence that she had the tools needed to succeed in the practice of law.

Ambler holds or has held leadership positions in many organizations, including the ABA Retirement Funds, the Securities Committee of the Federal Bar Association, the Women in Law Empowerment Forum and the National Association of Women Lawyers.

"Diane is a polished, intelligent, dedicated lawyer who takes on every situation with zeal and confidence. She embodies the greatness of Villanova Law and the legal profession," says Mark C. Alexander, JD, Arthur J. Kania Dean of the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law.

When reflecting on her professional accomplishments, Ambler explains, "I put one foot in front of the other. It's amazing where that has taken me."

## SUPPORTING LAW

Young lawyers, especially Villanovans starting out in their legal careers, have reached out to Ambler. She has been thrilled to support and mentor Villanova alumni who have, in turn, often reached back to help other Villanovans.

"I always make time for people. After all, many of the successes I have achieved depended on someone having helped me along the way," she says.

Through her position as chair of the Board of Consultors, Ambler has also had the opportunity to collaborate with the Law School's dean, administrators, faculty and staff, and members of its growing community. She teams with those guiding Villanova Law and steering its curricular development and strategic direction.

Ambler refers to the call from Charles "Chuck" Widger asking her to chair the board as one of the proudest moments of her career.

"It's a very exciting time. What is happening at Villanova is more than evolutionary—it's revolutionary," she says. "Villanova Law is, in many ways, becoming the model for the legal community."

Ambler sees the incredible forward momentum in Villanova Law—from Dean Alexander's new leadership to the energy and intellectual support of alumni, exemplified by Widger—and knows Villanova will continue to elevate legal education across the profession. ■

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