

Bar Talk

PEOPLE AND PRACTICES

THE RECORDER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2002

All in the family

Famed criminal defense attorney Penelope "Penny" Cooper's nephews are keeping the legal practice in the family.

Emeryville's Cooper, Arguedas & Cassman had been home to name partner Penny Cooper for two decades before she retired in 2001. It had also played host to two other attorneys from the Cooper clan: Colin Cooper, a criminal defense attorney who had been with Cooper, Arguedas since 1989, and Kellin Cooper, a former Solano County public defender who joined the firm in 2000.

This year, Colin and Kellin struck off to do their "own thing" in Berkeley, said Colin. Penny Cooper's former law partners, Ted Cassman and Cristina Arguedas, primarily do white-collar crime, whereas he and his relatives did garden-variety criminal work, Colin explained.

Aunt Penny, who says she is "semi-retired" — she did a murder trial with Kellin this year and is a consultant — is an of counsel at the firm. She is thrilled about the office that the lawyers have at 800 Jones St. in Berkeley, which is decorated with pieces from her art collection.

A little name recognition, the legendary trial attorney says, won't hurt the firm either.

"It is always difficult to leave a career that has been so fantastic," said Cooper of her semi-retirement. But, she says, the departure is a little easier knowing a new generation has taken up the torch.

"I am totally dedicated to them," she said "I am just really happy to see it go on."

Meanwhile, Cooper's former law partners, Arguedas and Cassman, have added a new name to their letterhead — partner Laurel Headley, a complex white-collar crime specialist who has been with the firm for 10 years. The new firm name is Arguedas, Cassman & Headley, Cassman said.

— Jahna Berry