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ROPES & GRAY

Securities law expert Julie Jones

CLIENT FIRST, MORNING TO NIGHT

By **VYVYAN TENORIO**

TO Julie Jones, then a young associate at Boston's Ropes & Gray LLP, the technology bubble was an unbelievable head trip. The frenzy of initial public offerings, the crazy valuations, the torrid pace, all had a magnetic appeal that made being the only woman in a roomful of dealmakers and advisers—as was often the case for Jones—a potent experience.

One company, SeaChange International Inc., an Acton, Mass., provider of video-on-demand technology, was an appropriately named milestone in more ways than one. It was the first IPO that Morgan Stanley sent to R&G when it set up shop in Boston and a coming of age for the then 18-month senior associate who led it.

"I remember not only the excitement of a deal but also the real power in being able to command immediate respect because people immediately recognized I could dive in and tell them what the rules of the road were," says Jones.

Now 40, Jones is a self-confessed deal junkie. As one of the fastest-rising female attorneys, she has parlayed her earlier successes into a practice built around the intersection of IPOs and leveraged buyouts. Her credentials are a particularly useful asset when working for private equity clients such as Silver Lake, which specializes in private and public tech deals. Silver Lake was among the PE investors that decided to merge portfolio company Datek Online Holdings Corp. with rival online broker Ameritrade Holding Corp.

Jones' signature deal came in 2005, when

an all-star cast led by Silver Lake launched an \$11.3 billion leveraged buyout—the largest tech deal ever at the time—of SunGard Data Systems Inc. It was a critical point in a career that had been as exhilarating as it was exhausting, says Jones, who found herself listening to Guns N' Roses while driving to work in the morning. With seven large and "very smart" owners, she says she had to finesse many difficult moments in her effort to get all the executives to arrive at a consensus on issues ranging from valuation to management compensation.

Jones lets her attention to detail guide clients so that, as she puts it, "they never felt that they needed to pick up our due diligence memo." For Thomas H. Lee Partners LP's bid earlier this year for CKE Restaurants Inc., Jones says she delved into complex franchise issues so that in a 10- to 15-minute call with THL she could "essentially synthesize everything and tell them where they needed to make judgment calls."

That sits well with PE clients. "She has the ability to see around corners and anticipate problems that may come up," says Todd Abbrecht, managing director at THL. "She's constantly covering all the bases."

In early 2006, Jones was asked to head the 70-strong securities and public company practice, a feat for Jones, who hadn't taken securities law when she was at Cornell Law School.

Jones grew up in Massachusetts in a family where her parents instilled the value of education and hard work. She and one of her two sisters got graduate degrees. There are no other lawyers in her family, but Jones was highly competitive even as a young student.

While in elementary school, she found out her town didn't have a girl's softball team so she joined the boys' Little League



Jones deal junkie

instead. "I was the subject of teasing, but my parents encouraged me to stick to my guns, and I did," she recalls.

Jones majored in economics and political science at Wellesley College, where she developed a passion for women's issues. During the school year, she often worked several jobs to make ends meet. In the summer she found at least two jobs. "I loved Wellesley too much to let tuition bills get in the way!" she says.

Now a mother of two boys, ages 6 and 9, Jones thanks a very supportive husband, a teacher, and her employers, who, with Jones' help, crafted a part-time program that allowed employees flexibility for career development. Jones and her colleagues could work from home and spend more time with her family.

That doesn't mean she works any less. Behind her desk, she has a plaque with a quote from Thomas Jefferson that reads: "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."

Not shy about being driven, she says, "I'm one of these lawyers who wake up in the morning thinking about my clients and who go to bed thinking of clients." ■



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