

A Successful Career Change Never Gets Old

BY DAVID PLASKOW, NJSCPA PUBLICATIONS EDITOR

It takes guts to dramatically switch careers in your 40s with two small children at home. But when you can handle teaching at a boys' reform school in inner-city Cleveland, you can handle a lot of things.

Jody Rorick, CPA, learned to be resourceful at a young age. "I attended high school at The Mountain School in Vermont," says Rorick. "There were no radios, televisions or other modern conveniences there. We were taught to be independent, creative thinkers."

After high school, Rorick attended Beloit College in Wisconsin, but she was miserable. So, she went back home to Cleveland and obtained a B.A. in English at Case Western Reserve University, the same institution where her father, Alan, obtained his law degree.

After some challenging teaching assignments in Cleveland, Rorick felt teaching just wasn't for her. "I did nothing of note for a while, got married, moved to New Jersey and realized I needed to regroup and get a new skill," comments Rorick. So she took some business classes at Brookdale Community College. "I was really into music and literature," adds Rorick. "So I was shocked when I fell in love with accounting. I love the crispness of accounting. The numbers are either right or wrong." She then fast-tracked her accounting career by getting an accelerated M.B.A. degree in professional accounting from Rutgers University. "The goal was to get a CPA certificate," says Rorick. "It never occurred to me not to become a CPA."

Rorick's accounting career began in 1981 at Arthur Young doing auditing of manufacturing companies. In 1984, she moved to Citibank's accounting and advisory area, helping branches with

research on new regulations affecting product introductions.

In 1987, Rorick left the workforce to raise her two daughters, Emma and Alaina. "It was a two-hour commute and I had nightmares about forgetting to get a babysitter," jokes the Middletown resident.

Then, in 1991, Rorick had a "eureka moment" after reading a *Business Week* article titled "Financial Housekeeping for the Elderly." "Many of my family members were doctors, lawyers and teachers – service professionals," notes Rorick. "And eldercare accounting could really fulfill a desire I had to continue that legacy of helping people."

Rorick's first clients were her parents. "They were really what my prototypical client is: a husband who controlled the family's finances and, after he passed away, a wife who was in the dark financially," she describes.

Rorick called the American Association of Retired Persons for some insight and sent out brochures offering her services, but found that wasn't enough. "After speaking with a couple of women who were really pioneers in eldercare accounting, they said I need to network and meet people," she recalls. "A lawyer or a banker isn't going to recommend me based on a flyer. They have to know and trust me."

Part of that networking included becoming active with the New Jersey Society of CPAs and the National Association of Women Business Owners. "The Society has been very helpful in my efforts to grow my business," says Rorick. "I started the Eldercare and



Women CPAs

committees for the Monmouth/Ocean Chapter, and in June I became chapter president."

Gradually, Rorick built her client base. She tells the story of her first (non-family member) client who died before their first meeting. "It's an occupational hazard," claims the sole practitioner.

"Eldercare accounting is about being a financial champion for clients, whether it's tax returns, bill paying, filing insurance claims, budgeting and so on. It's a challenge, because many of the clients I work with have some form of dementia. My client is really the person who hires me, sometimes a son or daughter," notes Rorick. "But I love getting out and meeting people. Many of my clients think of me as a guardian angel, and I embrace that role."

In her spare time, Rorick likes to walk her English cocker spaniels, Forrester and Franklin, swim, garden and read the classics. (Her youngest daughter is named after the lead character in the Jane Austen novel.)

Her advice for those making mid-career course corrections? "Follow your passion. My mother, Evelyn, got a degree from the Cleveland Institute of Art in her mid-40s. But it's also important to be well-rounded, so that you can turn on a dime professionally if you have to." 🧩