

The Lady Is a Champ

IN POLITICAL CONTESTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, 1992 was hailed as the year of the woman. But here in New York City, Judith Livingston made it the year of the woman lawyer.

Livingston, 38, became the first woman and the youngest member inducted into the Inner Circle of Advocates, an "old boys' network" of plaintiffs' lawyers who consistently win huge awards in civil cases.

"It's like a lawyer's hall of fame . . . except you're not retired, you're not out of the game," says

Livingston, who specializes in medical-malpractice law for Kramer, Dillof, Tessel, Duffy & Moore. Moore is Thomas Moore, 50, also a member of the Inner Circle and Livingston's husband of six years.

The 100-member Inner Circle serves as a social organization as well as a kind of post-law-school study group—members talk shop and trade secrets about expert witnesses and new medical procedures. Some call it the most exclusive bar association in the country: Potential candidates who meet the criteria (25 verdicts and at least one \$1-million jury award) still have to wait for an elderly barrister to step down or pass on before they're admitted.

Dan Cathcart, a Los Angeles lawyer and the president of the Inner Circle, says there haven't been any women in the 20-year-old

group because, in general, women have shied away from trial law. "It's a gut-wrenching way to earn a living," Cathcart says, "especially if you want to start a family."

But Livingston, the mother of three young children, is optimistic. "Little do they know—

while I'm the only woman there now, it won't be for very long."

Since joining Kramer, Dillof in 1980, after Hofstra law school, Livingston has won or settled eighteen cases over \$1 million; in 1990, a suit against Brookdale Hospital for the negligent emergency-room care of a 2-month-old child netted Livingston's client \$5.2 million.

In the courtroom, Livingston faces obstacles that most male lawyers don't, such as booming basso profundos "that are impossible to out-

shout. Jurors have a certain perception of what a lawyer should be," she says. "When I walk into a courtroom, I obviously don't fit that perception." Instead, she has the soft-spoken demeanor of the elementary-school teacher she always thought she'd become while growing up in Cedarhurst, Long Island.

Livingston says she could never see herself as a defense lawyer, and that what keeps her in the game is the empathy she feels with victims. "It gets in your blood," she says. "I can't give that up."

ROB PATRONITE



New order in the court: Judith Livingston.