

## ELIZABETH HOCHBERG '03

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I've always felt compelled to be a public servant. I suppose it is because I came from three generations of military men; however, I have no desire to wear a uniform. Growing up in a Washington, DC, suburb, most everyone I knew (and their parents) were either in the military or worked for the federal government, so following

that path seemed natural for me.

My first position with the government was interning at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) after my 1L year. This was followed by a clerkship at the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) the summer

following week, and when I began weekly meetings on yet another project at the National Air & Space Museum a few weeks later. With my contractor's badge I am able to park in Air & Space's first floor parking lot. I was utterly delighted the first time I parked there and realized that I was located ten feet below Apollo 12.

As I'm usually in a hurry, in the middle of my work-day at a museum, I go straight up to the employee area. I don't have a ton of time to stop and smell the roses. But I am acutely aware of how lucky I am to have the opportunity to walk past the Hope Diamond or the Star Spangled Banner as I rush to a meeting.

No day at the Smithsonian has been the same. I have anywhere from 20-40 active contracts or agreements on my docket at any given time. They range among exhibition loans, exhibition design and fabrication, museum construction, book publishing, product licensing, intellectual property and finance, just to name a few. Recently I helped the National Zoo with a purchase order and as a thank-you was invited to have a

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after my 2L year. Through these positions I experienced extraordinarily complex patent prosecution and litigation. Experiencing licensing seemed like the logical next step, so I accepted a position in technology development at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shortly after taking the bar.

After a year at NIH, I left to join the Smithsonian Institution as a contractor. Some people questioned my career choice—to leave federal service to become a federal contractor—but the Smithsonian was hiring contractors at the time and I was willing to try any avenue that would perhaps get my foot in the door at such a unique and special workplace.

Once at the Smithsonian I couldn't believe my luck when I was asked to attend a meeting at the National Museum of American History on my second day. That luck continued when I negotiated a film agreement and attended the film shoot at the National Museum of Natural History later that week. And it continued when I assisted the National Museum of the American Indian with a publishing agreement the

meet-and-greet with the elephants when I delivered the finished documents. The animal keepers hinted that next time I could perhaps meet the giant pandas, so I'm crossing my fingers that another interesting zoo project will find its way to my desk.

There has been one common thread in all of my federal jobs: kind-hearted people who genuinely care about the best way to spend taxpayer dollars and serve the public interest most expeditiously. At the USPTO and USITC, the quest was to protect American innovation. At NIH, it was to save lives. And now at the Smithsonian it is to share and protect America's treasures and provide the best possible experience for all who choose to visit them. I'm proud to be a part of this mentality and am thankful every day that I work in a place where my contributions are valued and enjoyed by potentially millions of visitors. What else could I ask for?