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Climbing Above The Stresses Of Law

Self-described naturalist finds inspiration and invigoration outdoors

By JOAN LEE

Sally Roberts sits behind a desk in her profession as a civil litigator. But thanks to her many outdoor hobbies, like hiking and snowshoeing, she often comes back to work refreshed.

"I have been a hiker for 24 years and have hiked on trails all over Connecticut, mostly on my own," said the 51-year-old Roberts, who's an associate in the Hartford office of Brown Paindiris & Scott. "I love my profession, but I think I am a better trial lawyer for taking the opportunity to get outdoors for all sorts of strenuous adventures. It truly is a spiritual renewal."

Roberts said that hiking "is not the same as working out, which I do as well, to stay fit for hiking."

She also enjoys kayaking and cross-country skiing.

"I have always loved the outdoors, and am also an athlete, who competed in varsity sports," she said.

She was the number-one singles and doubles player for the Radcliffe College tennis team before the school merged with Harvard University. "Then I was number-one doubles with my sister for Harvard," Roberts said.

The transition to hiking came naturally, she said.

"I stay in shape now for hiking the way I used to train for tennis. A strenuous hike is a great stress reliever," Roberts said. "After a seven-mile hike, the ordinary stresses of the practice of law take on a different perspective. You are also testing your physical limits. Many of the hiking trails are along the edges of steep cliffs, and you can easily topple off the cliffs if you don't watch your footing."

A member of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), she will be taking Leadership Training courses so she can become an AMC hike leader, she said.

When Roberts is not at work and not involved in one of her outdoor activities, she

Sally Roberts's hiking hobby has taken her, among other places, up Mount Wachusett in Massachusetts. The Hartford lawyer says such strenuous adventures give her a sense of "spiritual renewal."



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helps Dr. H. Robert Silverstein, who is medical director at the Board of the Preventive Medicine Center, which is based in Hartford.

Roberts was recently installed as president and chairman of the Board of the Preventive Medicine Center, which provides resources and information on conventional, alternative, and complementary medicines as well as advice on nutrition, including macrobiotics, cooking classes, and lectures.

Roberts said the center is dedicated to "promoting a realistic, supportive, holistic approach to health—achieving disease prevention and reversal, where possible, through a combination of innovative, traditional, and alternative methods."

Roberts, who has worked with Silverstein

for 20 years, said she is a practitioner of the dietary principles and philosophy of the center: "In a nutshell, I 'walk the talk.'"

Roberts, who calls herself a naturalist, said ever since high school, she has "identified everything I can in the outdoors, from the trees, birds, wildflowers, to animal tracks. I carry a small pad to jot down notes as I am hiking, along with pocket field guides, which are especially useful for identifying animal tracks in the snow," she said.

The more interesting tracks she has seen include moose, weasel, and wild turkey, she said.

Roberts said she fits in all her activities "by burning the midnight oil and the candle at both ends." ■