

[GENIUS]

## Teenager Heads to Court—As Counsel

FOR CHRISTOPHER A. LILLY, A MEMBER OF the Los Angeles law firm TroyGould, there seemed little risk involved in hiring Kathleen E. Holtz out of the UCLA School of Law. After all, even though Holtz hadn't yet received her bar exam results, she was bright and confident, got good grades, and had been an articles editor at the *UCLA Law Review*. But Holtz was also the youngest law school graduate the UCLA dean's office can remember. Could clients and other TroyGould attorneys adjust?

Holtz, now 19, was only 17 when she interviewed at the firm. She is a dozen years younger than the average California lawyer admitted to the bar, and TroyGould's youngest associate by nearly a decade. Although the State Bar doesn't keep age records, many suspect Holtz is the state's youngest attorney.

Still, "Once everyone met her, it

was a no-brainer," says Lilly. Now, colleagues say, Holtz fits in well at the 33-attorney business and litigation firm, where lawyers tend to be entrepreneurial and risk-takers by nature.

"She will progress as fast as her own work ethic" allows, says TroyGould attorney Alan B. Spatz.

And that could be pretty fast. Bored to tears three weeks into first grade, Holtz advanced to second grade and never looked back. The Los Angeles native started college at age 10 and law school at 15.

TroyGould tries to treat Holtz like any other associate, Lilly says, which is certainly how Holtz prefers it. She downplays her achievements and cringes before labels such as "genius."

"We don't see her coming down the hall and say, 'There's the prodigy!'" Lilly explains.



Kathleen E. Holtz

Aside from her age, Holtz's legal career at the TroyGould litigation group has begun in the usual way. She has been to court, has worked on a trial involving a contractual dispute, and says her biggest challenge is adjusting to the day-to-day realities of legal practice. It's little wonder, then, that she has since moved her residence to a quieter district in her neighborhood.

"I'm old now," Holtz says. "I need more sleep." —Rebecca Beyer