

# Professor Susan J. Stabile

## Many interests, many lives

### **You play the accordion?!**

Yes. I took lessons from about age 9 to 11. Although I have had my accordion for about 40 years, I played it almost not at all during my adult life. But about six months before I came to St. Thomas I was encouraged to start playing again. I started taking lessons shortly after I arrived in the Twin Cities. I'm at the point where I will occasionally play in front of other people, but still have too much leftover insecurity about my abilities to really perform in public.

### **How did you end up practicing law in Hong Kong?**

The firm I started with [Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen and Hamilton] had a small Hong Kong office at the time. I spent a number of years as a Buddhist and asked my firm to send me to Hong Kong so that I could be in proximity to native Buddhist communities. My work in Hong Kong was largely for American clients with business in Asia or for non-American companies that were, for one reason or another, subject to American regulation.

Before moving there, I had been to Asia twice before on vacation. I spent a total of three and a half years living in Asia - a year and a half at the law firm in Hong Kong then the next two years living in Buddhist communities in Nepal and India.

### **This would definitely be something else people might be surprised to know about you...**

Yes, people would probably be surprised that I was an ordained Tibetan Buddhist nun for a year while I was living in Nepal and India. By the way, I looked really good bald. (Buddhist nuns and monks keep their heads shaved as a sign of renunciation.)

I became a Buddhist in law school. I meditated at a Tibetan Buddhist place in New York, resulting in my

desire to move to Hong Kong. While I was working in Hong Kong I took a number of trips to places in Thailand.

Ultimately, however, I decided that if I was going to be serious about Buddhism that I had to really give it

### **Why did you leave Asia?**

What made me come back was that the Tibetans live in exile. It is hard for them to support western people. I knew at some point I would have to go back and earn some money. I



my all. So, I gave away everything I owned, packed a backpack and left. I have almost no possessions that predate 1989...with the exception of my accordion; it is one of the few things I have from prior to my return to the U.S. in 1989.

was concerned when I hit the two year point that if I stayed away from legal practice much longer, it would be more difficult to get back into practicing law. I had barely read a newspaper while I was living in the monasteries.

So I went back to New York. The day I returned Cleary [Gottlieb, Steen