

## Titan Of The Plaintiffs Bar: Susman's Kalpana Srinivasan

By **Suzanne Monyak**

*Law360 (May 15, 2019, 2:32 PM EDT)* -- Susman Godfrey's Kalpana Srinivasan clinched one of the largest verdicts in the country at more than \$700 million in a trade secrets case last year. But she didn't initially plan to make news; she thought she wanted to cover it.

A comparative literature major and former managing editor of the storied Yale Daily News, Srinivasan joined the Associated Press as a reporter in 1997 covering telecommunications, writing about telecom policy on Capitol Hill and at the Federal Communications Commission and broadband and media company mergers.

"I love that pace of daily journalism. I liked that you had to work fast and get something out," Srinivasan told Law360. "You don't really have the luxury of writer's block or of getting too caught up in your words and thoughts."

But after four years reporting from the sidelines, Srinivasan realized she wanted to "have a dog in the fight" and launched a now-15-year legal career punctuated by nine-figure wins and settlements against companies like Spotify and Amrock that's been anything but slow-paced.

Now a partner at Susman Godfrey LLP in the firm's Los Angeles office, where she's worked since 2005, Srinivasan has made her name as a star plaintiffs attorney in intellectual property disputes, landing her a spot among Law360's 2019 Titans of the Plaintiffs Bar.

In what several of her colleagues described as one of the largest verdicts in the U.S., Srinivasan convinced a 12-member jury in Texas state court last year to award \$706.2 million to her client, data analytics startup HouseCanary Inc.

HouseCanary, the defendant in the case, had levied counterclaims against Title Source Inc., now known as Amrock, accusing the insurance company of stealing and misusing the data firm's trade secrets. The judge

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**What Motivates Her:**  
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eventually bumped up the judgment to \$740 million with fees.

Srinivasan, who served as co-lead counsel for HouseCanary, says she spent more than 100 days last year in San Antonio for that case, which culminated in a seven-week trial.

She is also representing HouseCanary in separate but related pending litigation in Texas federal court similarly accusing Quicken Loans, an affiliate to Amrock and the largest mortgage lender in the U.S., of misappropriating the data company's proprietary information.

"I often have clients that have very valuable intellectual property and might be dealing with a bigger company that feels they can use that as leverage to take something they're not entitled to," Srinivasan said. "I really value being able to represent companies that feel that they've been wronged by that and are not going to be pushed out of the marketplace because of the conduct of a bigger company."

Her record of wins and favorable settlements over the past year makes clear she can push back.

In May 2018, she scored a settlement valued at over \$100 million for a class of songwriters in a class action against Spotify USA Inc. over royalty payments. She has also represented members of the 1960s rock band The Turtles against music giants SiriusXM and Pandora Media Inc.

And in September, just months after notching the verdict against Amrock, she won class certification for millions of cellphone consumers in what some have called the largest class action in U.S. history. That suit accuses Qualcomm Inc. of hiking the patent licensing fees it charges cellphone makers who use Qualcomm's patented chipsets — costs that are eventually passed on to consumers. The Ninth Circuit has agreed to hear an interlocutory appeal of that certification order, which is still pending.

"That's the pinnacle of most people's career and that's just a typical year for her, and she's just getting started," said Steven G. Sklaver, a partner at Susman Godfrey who has worked with Srinivasan in numerous cases over the past decade, including in the recent litigation against Spotify, Pandora and SiriusXM.

Even the California federal judge who appointed Srinivasan to co-lead the Qualcomm class action praised her trial chops.

"Of all the plaintiffs' counsel in these consolidated cases, Ms. Srinivasan is the only attorney who has tried a case before this court, and Ms. Srinivasan was excellent at trial," U.S. District Judge Lucy H. Koh wrote in a May 2017 order.

Srinivasan's colleagues paint a picture of a driven lawyer, "brilliant legal thinker" and a "natural intellect," and a "tour de force" who has "smoked" big-name partners from other firms at trial and doesn't ever "lose her cool," even in high-stress situations.

"She's brilliant, she's got a lot of gray matter," said Henry Gradstein of King Holmes Paterno & Soriano LLP, who worked with Srinivasan on the Spotify litigation as well as in the lawsuits against Pandora and SiriusXM. "Some people are just born into this world with incredible intellectual ability."

Max Tribble, a partner at Susman Godfrey and co-lead counsel in the HouseCanary litigation, also touted her ability to best much older attorneys representing larger corporations at trial.

“It’s like David and Goliath. She consistently takes them down almost every time; it’s uncanny,” he said.

Her colleagues are also quick to point out that she’s a great mom to a toddler. “Her son is awesome. You’re going to be writing about him someday,” Tribble said.

Tribble added that she is also “famous” among the staff at the Hotel Contessa in San Antonio, where the pair stayed for three months during the HouseCanary litigation, for consuming what he swears was no less than 100% of her body weight in chili con queso, one of the few vegetarian options available at the hotel.

Srinivasan’s co-workers call her a leader at the firm. Srinivasan sits on Susman Godfrey’s executive committee and is heavily involved with the South Asian Bar Association of North America and of Southern California, where she previously sat on the executive boards.

She is considered to be a mentor as well. Marc Seltzer, a partner at Susman Godfrey’s Los Angeles office who is representing the consumers alongside Srinivasan in the Qualcomm litigation, said that she’s always available for questions from other attorneys and often acts as a teacher for younger lawyers at the firm. Colleagues say the associates at Susman Godfrey look up to her, and Sklaver called her “part of the future of the firm.”

“Everyone wants to be like Kalpana, everyone wants to be a titan of the bar someday,” Tribble said.

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg and Alyssa Miller.