

TLAW TODAY

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We've Come a Long Way: A History of Women on Tennessee's Appellate Courts

By Christina Henley Duncan

For the first time in history, three women are serving simultaneously as U.S. Supreme Court Justices, to wit: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. Likewise, for the first time in history, three women are serving simultaneously as Tennessee Supreme Court Justices, to wit: Janice M. Holder, Cornelia A. Clark, and Sharon G. Lee. To truly understand the significance of women serving on the bench, a historical review is helpful. This article focuses on the Tennessee appellate courts.

Tennessee became a state in 1796. Prior to statehood, the courts were handled by territorial judges who served from 1790 to 1796. Tennessee's first Constitution, adopted in 1796, did not create a state court system. District or Superior Judges served from 1796 to 1809. The Supreme Court of Errors and Appeals was created in 1809 by the legislature and was composed of two judges. The second Tennessee Constitution,

"If women do not apply, they will not be appointed. If women do not run, they will not be elected. All women who are interested in serving as judges should strive to reach that goal."

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adopted in 1834, provided for a three-member Supreme Court. The third Constitution, adopted in 1870, created the current five-member Supreme Court system. The legislature created the Court of Appeals in 1925 and the Court of Criminal Appeals in 1967. For nearly two hundred years, only men served as Tennessee appellate court judges.

Judge Martha Craig Daughtrey was the first woman to serve on both the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals and the Tennessee Supreme Court. Judge Daughtrey served on the Court of Criminal Appeals from 1975 through 1990. Judge Daughtrey served as an associate justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court from 1990 through 1993. In 1993, Judge Daughtrey was selected by President Bill Clinton to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, where she continues to serve as a senior judge.

Justice Penny White was the second woman to serve on the Tennessee Supreme Court, appointed in 1994. Justice White had previously served on the Court of Criminal Appeals from 1992 to 1994.

The three women currently serving on the Tennessee Supreme Court are the only other women appointed to the position. Justice Janice M.

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Holder was appointed by Governor Don Sundquist in 1996 and was the first woman to serve as Chief Justice, serving from 2008 to August 31, 2010. Justice Cornelia A. Clark was appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen in 2005 and is currently serving as the Chief Justice. Justice Sharon G. Lee was appointed by Governor Bredesen in 2008. She had previously served on the Court of Appeals from 2004 to 2008.

The twelve-member Court of Appeals currently includes two female members. Governor Sundquist appointed Judge Holly M. Kirby as the first woman on the Court of Appeals in 1995 and appointed Judge Patricia J. Cottrell in 1998.

Two women also serve on the twelve-member Court of Criminal Appeals. Judge Norma McGee Ogle was appointed in 1998 by Governor Sundquist. In 2008, Governor Bredesen appointed Camille R. McMullen as the first African-American woman to serve on the Court of Criminal Appeals.

Women are also serving in increasing numbers in the lower courts. Currently, there are twenty-six women out of 154 active trial judges and twenty-three women out of 151 general sessions judges, according to the listing on the Tennessee Administration Office of the Court's website.

In order to continue to meet and increase TLAW's goal of supporting women on the bench, women must continue to be involved in the process. Female attorneys are encouraged to seek appointment to commissions involved in the election and evaluation of judges, including the Judicial Nominating Commission and the Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission. No one should ever be appointed or elected solely on the basis of race or gender. Diversity among the judges, however, is important to justice.

If women do not apply, they will not be appointed. If women do not run, they will not be elected. All women who are interested in serving as judges should strive to reach that goal.

We have come a long way, and we are not finished! *TT*

Christina Henley Duncan is TLAW Corresponding Secretary and a member of the law firm Rogers, Duncan & North in Manchester, TN, where she practices in the areas of personal injury, wrongful death, motor carrier liability, products liability, social security disability, family law and estate administration.

President's Letter

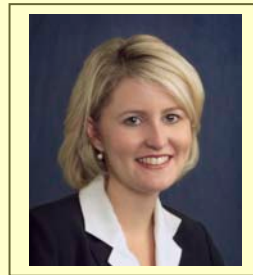
By Rebecca Blair

What an honor it is to serve as the President of TLAW this year. For more than twenty years, TLAW has served a valuable role in the effort to increase the number of women on the bench and to achieve the full participation of women lawyers in the rights, privileges and benefits of the legal profession of this great State. Today, three of our five Supreme Court Justices are women, including our current Chief Justice and our immediate past Chief Justice. Women lawyers also can be found today on all other levels of our appellate and trial court bench. Women lawyers in this State serve as Special Masters, District Attorneys, Public Defenders, and Court Clerks. When there are decisions to be made about our State legislative branch, TLAW has earned a voice in the debate.

And while some wonder why we do not now close up shop and go home, having helped accomplish so much already, others of us know that there is so much more yet to be accomplished by the women of this State and our Bar. TLAW is committed to helping those women continue to achieve their goals. We strive to keep doors open and opportunities available.

To that end, our goals for the year are lofty. Our board has resolved to increase membership. We will be calling on each of our members to identify and reach out to women lawyers in our legal

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TLAW President Rebecca Blair recently launched her solo law practice, The Blair Law Firm, in Brentwood, TN.

community who have not yet learned of the value of membership in TLAW. We hope to have each current member add at least one additional member to our roll before the end of the current membership year.

We will continue to provide valuable and relevant CLE to our members and the Bar at large. Plans are underway to present a winter CLE as well as our annual convention CLE.

We also plan to present meaningful opportunities for networking and fellowship across the State. Each of our Regional Directors is currently planning at least one networking event in each of the grand divisions.

This newsletter is a valuable tool in furthering our goals. Revitalized this year through the efforts of our talented and dedicated newsletter editors, we plan to keep you abreast of pertinent information about our legal system and opportunities for advancement. We also hope to encourage and inspire you with the lessons and experiences of veteran members of our Bar.

I hope you will join us on this journey. I hope to see you at our networking events. I plan to learn alongside you at our CLE programs. I hope to grow with you as we spread the word of this wonderful organization to our fellow members of the Bar.

I look forward to working with you. *TT*

2010–2011 Board of Directors Sworn in at Annual Meeting

By Hon. Amy Hollars

Tennessee Lawyers' Association for Women (TLAW) held its annual convention in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 3 and 4, 2010, in conjunction with the Tennessee Bar Association's annual convention. TLAW members who gathered in Nashville enjoyed content-rich CLE on topics of current legal interest, networked with attorneys and judges from across the state, and installed a strong new team of leaders for the organization.

Judy M. Cornett, Associate Professor of Law at the University of Tennessee, has devoted her very considerable talents to researching, analyzing, and writing about summary judgment law in Tennessee, both before and after *Hannan*. In TLAW's first CLE segment, Cornett described the elegant burden-shifting analysis of Tennessee's summary judgment rule in a presentation that managed to be engaging and practical as well as scholarly. Considering certain post-*Hannan* cases, Professor Cornett urged attendees to consider (1) exactly what is meant by "negating" an element of the plaintiff's claim, and (2) under what circumstances a defendant might successfully demonstrate that the plaintiff cannot prove an essential element of his case "at trial."

Bill Dean, an expert in the area of electronic discovery and digital forensic services, presented TLAW's second CLE offering, "E-Discovery in the Routine Case." Mr. Dean reminded us that the updated Federal Rules of Civil Procedure now expect companies to preserve and produce electronic evidence, and many states are following suit. Electronically stored information (ESI) is now the primary method of storing information, raising new challenges for clients and counsel. Outlining various stages of the e-discovery and forensic investigation process, Mr. Dean suggested that even technophobes can learn to draft the right



The 2010–2011 TLAW Board of Directors is sworn in by Chief Justice Janice Holder.

interrogatories and requests for production regarding ESI and can advise their clients to implement systems to store and collect information properly.

After an afternoon of stimulating and useful CLE, TLAW members walked to the nearby offices of Stites & Harbison for a reception in the firm's beautiful glass-walled conference space overlooking downtown Nashville. Devoted TLAW Membership chair, Marietta Shipley, attended even though ambulating on crutches. TLAW was pleased to be joined by a number of attorneys from the host firm (Stites & Harbison), who shared stories of the recent May flooding in Nashville. TLAW is always gratified by the interest and support shown to our organization by the members of the Tennessee Supreme Court, and on June 3, TLAW was especially honored to welcome all of the justices to our reception.

Early on Friday morning, June 4, TLAW business was conducted at the Annual Breakfast Meeting. TLAW installed the following officers and board members, who were sworn in by Chief Justice Janice Holder: President **Rebecca Blair**, President Elect **Wynne Hall**,

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Annual Meeting from page 4

Treasurer **Linda Knight**, Recording Secretary **Debra House**, Corresponding Secretaries/ Newsletter Editors **Christina Duncan** and **Amy Everhart**, West Tennessee Director at Large **Beth Bates**, Middle Tennessee Director at Large **Maria Salas**, and East Tennessee Director at Large **Rebecca Franklin**.

After the business meeting, TLAW convention registrants enjoyed complimentary admission to the Gubernatorial Forum, which was jointly sponsored by the Tennessee Bar Association, TLAW, the Tennessee Alliance for Black Lawyers (TABL), and the Tennessee Asian Pacific American Bar Association (TAPABA). The forum included an issues briefing by the candidates, a question-and-answer session, and an opportunity to meet and speak with the candidates in an informal setting. A Legislative Update featuring lawyer-legislators, and co-sponsored with the TBA, TABL, and TAPABA, rounded out the CLE offerings for the TLAW convention.

Please mark your calendars now for the 2011 TLAW convention to be held in Chattanooga on June 16 and 17, 2011. *TT*

The Honorable Amy Hollars serves as a judge for the Overton County Circuit Court in Livingston, Tennessee.



Immediate Past President Amy Hollars, President Rebecca Blair, and Sue Palmer.



Treasurer Linda Knight, TLAW Executive Director Lisa Smith, and Marnie Huff.

View from the Bench

A Conversation with Judge Vanessa A. Jackson

By Christina Henley Duncan

The Honorable Vanessa A. Jackson is the Judge of Circuit Court, Part II, for the Fourteenth Judicial District of Tennessee. She was appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen after the death of John W. Rollins. She was elected as the Democratic candidate in the primary on May 4, 2010, and was elected Judge in the general election on August 5, 2010. Christina Henley Duncan recently interviewed Judge Jackson.

Why did you decide to apply for this judicial position? I was an attorney engaged in private practice for thirty years, and I still very much enjoyed practicing law and the interaction with my clients and fellow lawyers. I was also fortunate to have law partners who were not only professional colleagues but also personal friends. However, after thirty years in private practice, I was ready for a new challenge. The opportunity to serve as judge provided that challenge. In addition, I had always been interested in public service, and serving as judge allowed me to use my legal experience in service to our community.

You were appointed by Governor Bredesen to fill the Judge's position left open by the death of Judge John W. Rollins. What was your experience with the Judicial Selection process? The selection process consisted of completing a lengthy application, which included several essay questions, a questionnaire concerning my personal background, a background check and fingerprinting by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, a public hearing and an interview with the Judicial Selection Committee. This was the first time in my life that I had been fingerprinted. The application was the most difficult part of the process because it required a

tremendous amount of information concerning my professional and personal life. It required me to gather information about trials that I had handled throughout my career and to submit samples of my legal writings. The essay portion of the application placed limitations on the number of words in each essay. As you know, it's very hard for lawyers to say anything in a limited number of words, and it was a struggle to write meaningful essays within the word limitations. The rest of the process was more enjoyable. The members of the Judicial Selection Committee were very cordial and put me at ease during the interview process. Although I felt some pressure during the process, it really was a positive experience.

After being in office for a few months, you then had to run for the position in a countywide election. Tell us about your contested primary election. This was my first time to run for public office, and I really did not know what to expect. A campaign is physically and emotionally demanding. It was very difficult to work full-time as judge and then campaign in the evenings and on weekends. In our judicial district, a candidate is expected to get out and meet the voters. I attended numerous community events, as well as going door to door to meet the voters. Fortunately, my husband was my staunchest supporter, and we spent many hours riding the roads of Coffee County and talking with people in the community. Although we were exhausted, we met wonderful, friendly people and made a lot of new friends. Throughout the primary campaign, my opponent and I both ran issue-oriented, forthright campaigns. After the election, I was very fortunate to get my primary opponent's endorsement and support in the general election.

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Tell us about your contested general election.

As with the primary election, it was physically exhausting to fulfill my judicial duties and try to campaign during my “free” time. Almost every Saturday from May through the August 5th election, I attended several events. I remember one Saturday during which I started with a breakfast at 7:00 a.m., attended five events during the day, and ended about 10:00 p.m. with a charity fundraiser. On weekdays after adjourning Court, my husband and I went door to door throughout the county. There are over 600 miles of roads in Coffee County, and I think I have driven almost every mile. I ran as a democrat in the general election, but I’m proud that I received widespread bipartisan support. I attribute this bipartisan support to the fact that my campaign was based on the theme and message of “integrity and experience.” Throughout the campaign, I did not engage in negative politics or attack my opponent. I tried to inform voters about my qualifications and thirty years of experience. In other words, I focused on why voters should vote FOR me, and not why they should vote AGAINST my opponents. After the election, many people expressed to me their frustration with negative politics and said they appreciated the fact that I had consistently run a positive campaign.

Do you have any interesting election stories?

I did gain some interesting insights about the people that I met throughout the campaign. In our county there are two towns, Manchester and Tullahoma, and there are numerous small communities. These towns and small communities have a great sense of community pride, and residents care about their neighbors. Many of the events that I attended were fundraising events held in community centers to benefit organizations that serve the community, such as local volunteer fire departments or rescue squads, or to benefit

members of the community who had fallen on hard times. I was touched by the enormous generosity that I witnessed. I was also touched by the friendliness of the people I met. On many occasions as I went door to door, I was only able to visit a few homes because everyone wanted me to come in, sit down and talk for a while. Very often, I was invited to have dinner. We often become discouraged by the negative news reported by the media. During the election campaign, I was reminded of the decency and generosity of the majority of people.

How has the position of Circuit Judge differed from your expectations? I was a trial attorney for thirty years before becoming judge. I thought the transition from attorney to judge would be easy. It isn’t. As an advocate for one’s client, an attorney is focused on convincing the judge or jury of his or her position. As an attorney, I was convinced and zealous about my argument or position when I appeared in court. Making the transition from wholehearted advocate to impartial judge was much more difficult than I anticipated.

What is the hardest part of the position? One of the hardest parts of the position is the realization that in some cases whatever decision I make will not be an adequate resolution of the parties’ problems or issues. This is particularly true in domestic relations cases involving children and in criminal cases.

Prior to being on the bench, what type of private practice did you have? As I said previously, I was in private practice for thirty years. Over that period of time, I represented people from all walks of life, as well as many small businesses. As with many attorneys who practice in smaller communities outside the metropolitan areas, I combined a transactional practice with a litigation practice. I handled a wide range of cases in areas such as personal injury, property damage, real estate

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Diary of a Freshman Lawyer It's Not Easy Being Green...or Is It?

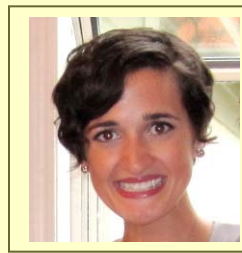
By Maria Spear

Strike up a conversation with any recent law school grad and you might walk away feeling slightly gloomy. I know this because I used to be a gloomy law school grad. But since moving from New York to Nashville, my outlook on my chosen profession has changed for the better. Sure, we young lawyers are lacking confidence — the job market looks bleak, we're insecure and inexperienced, and, more likely than not, we're up to our eyelids in those lovely student loans. All of these Debbie Downer facts aside, life as a new attorney in Tennessee is not all that bad — in fact, I'm a bit enamored with it.

Open Arms. Having gone to law school and worked in New York before moving to Nashville, I was pleasantly surprised at how friendly, helpful and supportive I found the Tennessee legal community. Even before I moved here, the people I reached out to welcomed me with open arms. Attorneys in Nashville were happy to have me in their offices, offer advice, extend themselves and offer to share their contacts so I could meet more faces in the Nashville legal community. This was virtually unheard of in New York City, and for that, I believe I am far better off in Tennessee than the green attorneys in New York.

Being green means people are willing to help, because everyone has been there at some point, and this makes us more likely to lend a hand later on. A woman named Linda Bocchi, my supervisor at the Alliance of Artists and Recording Companies, offered us interns (all of whom were women) one bit of advice on our last day: "Help each other." In this alpha-male industry, it is so important that women help one another, and the Tennesseans I've encountered have that down pat.

Work hard, play hard. Maybe it's a tired fact, but it's



Maria Spear will be sworn in to the Tennessee Bar on November 2 and is currently working with CMT in entertainment law in Nashville, TN.

true: Things are different now. Not too many years ago, the "goal" for your average attorney was to land a prized spot in a massive law firm, make a six-figure salary, and sleep four hours a night under her desk. Those days are, in large part, gone. We members of Generation Y would rather take less money and have a real life, complete with time for yoga, to volunteer, to spend with friends and family, and to relax. One thing that's great about Nashville is that even though it is cosmopolitan, life is just easier. I remember receiving a pro-bono project and nervously asking the other party if I could research his question the next day. His answer? "This is Tennessee, not New York." Because we're young and have no real responsibilities aside from ourselves, Gen Y attorneys don't mind working late and putting in the extra hours when necessary, because we probably don't have a spouse or child who'll notice our absence come six o'clock. In Tennessee there's time to stop and smell the roses, and unlike other parts of the country, one isn't looked down on for taking time to go to the park on a weeknight.

Y2K capable. Computers...Internet...social networking...bring it all on. We've been using Facebook since college, email since fifth grade, and computers since we were learning our multiplication tables. Online real estate is key for a law practice these days, and navigating the web is second nature to the young attorney. Not only would bringing on a green attorney lighten your own workload, but it

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A Day in the Life of TLAW Member... Judy Goans

Job title: Principal Associate, Nathan Associates (www.nathaninc.com), an economics and management consulting firm, one of the oldest in the Washington, DC, area. I work in the international division of the company, where I provide technical assistance on intellectual property to foreign countries.

Job location: I generally work from home in Clinton, TN, with occasional visits to my home office in Arlington, VA — or else I am in the field. I travel close to half of the year. Work locations in the last year have included Cairo, Alexandria, and Ismailia, Egypt, and Vientiane, Lao PDR. My work has taken me to Serbia, Mozambique, Ecuador, and Colombia.

My typical work hours: Theoretically, 8:30 to 5:00, but often quite different. One of the projects with which I work is 11 time zones away. Another is 7 time zones away. So we shift our work hours to be able to communicate as needed.

I spend my typical work day: Writing or teaching — but to be fair, there really is no typical work day, which is great for me! I spend a lot of time preparing briefing papers for government officials and conducting training. In 2010, I provided training for judges and prosecutors in Egypt on evaluating intellectual property infringement; training on the Madrid Protocol and trademark examination for employees of Egypt's Trademark Office; and in Laos, I worked with the head of the patent department to develop procedures and help that country begin to examine its growing backlog of patent applications. A lot of my work has involved performing assessments of a country's intellectual property system and making recommendations for ways they can improve. Last year, I revised a textbook on intellectual property. I had originally developed the book to use in training lawyers on intellectual property in Egypt. The revision was made to use in training judges in Colombia.



My top time-saving tips: 1) Copy all interested parties on emails: Otherwise, you wind up making the same explanations over and over. 2) Good work deserves more than one use. It takes less time to update a presentation than to start from scratch. 3) One phone call beats a dozen emails if the subject is nuanced. Emails are convenient, but the loss of information content (compared with a conversation) can lead to all sorts of misunderstandings and lost time.

One way I strive to achieve work/life balance: Hahahahaha — oh, wait, I suppose some people actually do that. When I worked in Washington, the prospect of a spooky parking garage provided motivation to leave by 7 p.m. Working from home decreases the boundaries between personal and work life, so the temptation is to keep on working and let the project determine the work hours. I try to keep things in balance by taking some personal time during the week. Today, that meant lunch on the deck and chatting on the phone with my sister. Creating a better distinction between work and personal time is one of the areas I am trying to improve. Wish me luck!

My favorite way to spend my time when I'm not working: Doing genealogical research, playing Sudoku. *TT*

War Stories: Lessons from Our Bar Leaders

Find Flow

By Marnie Huff

I've had reason in recent years to consider what "the good life" means. We've all heard the cliché — "work/life balance." Positive psychology tells us that external rewards may be strong motivators — we work hard for a good salary or public acclaim. But internal satisfaction will give us joy, as when we conduct a well-run meeting or see a simple "thanks" in the eyes of a pro bono client. In any event, shall we all agree that the good life is not feeling annoyed and exhausted, responding to a set of endless interrogatories? Or feeling like no one is listening?

To write this column, I revisited one of my favorite books, *Flow* by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihali. "Flow" is the "state of mind in which people are so involved in an activity, that nothing else seems to matter . . . [our] consciousness is harmoniously ordered, so we pursue what we are doing at a particular moment "for its own sake." *Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990) at 4–5. I recalled my memory of a personal optimal experience — paddling in a canoe with my friend Brenda through some tricky rocks on the Hiwassee River in East Tennessee. We were so in synch, we didn't

need to say a word to each other, let alone yell out a warning.

As Csikszentmihali says in *Flow*,

[W]e have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like. . . . Optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen.

Id. at 3. We achieve the sense of "flow" when we are stretching our bodies or minds to achieve something, whether we're rock climbers, factory workers

"[W]e have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate."

immersed in figuring out a better way to build a car on an assembly line, or lawyers at the top of our game in court as we zone in on a witness.

It took me a long time to see that I don't get satisfaction from a volume law practice. At one point in my career, I was grateful for the steady diet of Chapter 7 bankruptcy cases coming my way as a panel trustee. But my marriage to Ted Carey changed things. I didn't have as much time for work. Or maybe I didn't want to spend as much time at work. So I left private practice to spend a total of two years as a law clerk for Bankruptcy Judges Keith Lundin and George Paine, and for then-U.S. Magistrate Joe Haynes. I returned to my first love — research and writing — and recharged my batteries. In hindsight, this was one step forward (before some steps backward) to leaving litigation practice, with gratitude for all I had learned and experienced, to ultimately become a mediator. I love the words on my ABA Section of Dispute Resolution mug: "When we listen, people talk."

We don't need to do anything exotic to recharge our batteries, but I propose that we all consider some type of a sabbatical. It can

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could also expand your practice. Social networking has evolved from a means for people to keep in contact to a way for companies, brands and professionals to reach out to consumers and potential customers in an effort to expand a new kind of brand recognition. The young attorney knows that this works for law firms, too, and has the knowledge and familiarity with social-networking tools necessary to grow a practice and engage in the online community.

So really, being green isn't all bad. Yes, lack of experience might sometimes make us insecure, but we have a lot of things going for us, and the strong communities in Tennessee seem ready and eager to welcome us and let us shine. *TT*

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take many forms — change our weekends so we replace a few hours at the office with more time with family, friends, volunteer work, or a new sport . . . spend a month caring, and being totally present, for a parent . . . take a real vacation without an electronic device at our side. Let's revitalize. Perhaps we'll return with a mindset to experience more "flow" moments in our professional and personal lives! *TT*

Marnie Huff owns *Margaret Huff Mediation*, offering mediation, arbitration and workplace conflict management training in Tennessee. She is a Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 31 Listed General Civil Mediator and is on the rosters of mediators for the federal courts in the Eastern and Middle Districts of Tennessee. Her website is located at www.MargaretHuffMediation.com.

TLAW 2.0: Blogs to Watch

Blog: Ms. JD

URL: www.ms-jd.org

Description: "Changing the face of the legal profession," Ms. JD is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that "seeks to support and improve the experiences of women law students and lawyers." Ms. JD also maintains a library collecting resources about women in the law.

Recent Blog Topics: The impact of diversity on corporate performance, planning for family and being stuck between the proverbial rock and a hard place, and, on the lighter side, a recap of episodes of *The Good Wife*.

Blog: Corporette

URL: www.corporette.com

Description: Recognized by the *ABA Journal* as one of the most popular blawgs of all time, Corporette is a fashion and lifestyle blog for women professionals.

Recent Blog Topics: What to wear when you're laid off and looking, a bun in the oven and a mother in court, 10 things you should know about a business lunch.

Events and Contributions

We welcome your contributions to *TLAW Today*. Please send calendar entries, event notices, photographs, milestones, achievements and article ideas to Amy Everhart at aeverhart@aeverhart.com.

Album

West Tennessee Reception, April 2010



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disputes, probate, zoning and annexation, contract disputes, divorce and child custody. I tried numerous cases in Coffee County and all the surrounding counties. I appeared before the Tennessee Court of Appeals, the Tennessee Supreme Court, and the U. S. District Court. In addition, I was involved in matters before the Tennessee Human Rights Commission and the Employment Security Board of Review.

Tell us about your family. I'm married, and my husband is my best friend and supporter. He encouraged me to apply for the judgeship and to run for election. During the election when I was in Court and unable to campaign, he went out every day to put up signs and talk with voters. I am also very lucky that he is a gourmet cook. He often prepares dinner for us, which is quite a treat after a long day in court. We have one married daughter. She is a speech pathologist who works for a home health care agency. She and her husband live in the same town as my husband, and it's a blessing to have them so close. I keep dropping hints about grandchildren, but so far it hasn't worked.

You raised a daughter while in private practice. Do you have any suggestions for young mothers or mothers-to-be for balancing family and career? I am certainly not an expert on combining career and family, but I did have a great example to follow. My mother had a career. She was a teacher who later became a middle school principal. As a child, I was always very proud of her. Both she and my father instilled in me the belief that there were no limitations on what I could achieve.

As every working mom knows, it isn't easy to combine a career and motherhood. Very often there isn't enough time in the day to do everything you feel needs to be done. But I do believe that

"balance" is the operative word. I tried, not always successfully, to balance the time I spent working and the time I spent with my daughter. I know the phrase "quality time" may be overused, but when I was at home with my daughter I gave her my undivided love and attention. I think she is a well-rounded, confident and compassionate young woman, so maybe I did something right.

What, if anything, would you have changed about balancing your family and career? Hindsight is wonderful. I look back and remember the times I felt stressed because I didn't have enough time to clean house or cook the perfect meal. I now realize that many of these stressful things were actually not that important. The old adage — don't sweat the small stuff — really is true. If I could change anything, it would be to relax more and really enjoy the time with my family.

What advice would you give attorneys who aspire to be a Judge? For a trial judge, I believe that extensive litigation experience is invaluable. A trial judge needs a thorough understanding of application of the rules of evidence and procedure. I don't believe you can get that kind of understanding from just reading the rules of evidence or procedure. One needs the hands-on experience of applying those rules in a trial — or many trials. I can't imagine how difficult it would be to sit as a trial judge unless you had actually experienced the voir dire and jury selection process, the direct and cross examination of witnesses, etc. I would encourage anyone interested in serving as judge to obtain litigation experience.

I also believe that those who serve as trial judges must have a strong sense of compassion and fairness. For me, involvement with community organizations and charities and my church helped me to see the struggles and obstacles that so many people face every day. I would encourage anyone aspiring to be a judge to be very involved and participate in organizations that serve the community. *TT*