

Lunch with Legends: Dee Pregliasco

Lindsay E. Volk



In mid-December, the Young Lawyers Section hosted an evening cocktail hour with the Counsel Emeritus Section at Woodhaven Country Club. The small group of attendees enjoyed their beverages and came up with an idea: 'we should do this again.' The impressive wealth of knowledge and volume of horror stories spread among the Counsel Emeritus attorneys made for great a cocktail hour, brimming with banter that would be well-placed in a Woody Allen movie. The shared sentiment that the older, experienced attorneys have knowledge that the younger attorneys are dying to hear, led us to initiate a very informal "Lunch with Legends" lunch series!

The Young Lawyers Section is always looking for ways to connect their membership to members of the bar without the stress and general distaste of a forced 'networking event.' In January, I received a call from our current LBA President, Amanda Main, asking if I would like to kick off the "Lunch with Legends" series by having lunch with Dee Pregliasco, of Pregliasco Straw-Boone Doheny Banks & Bowman fame, to which I happily agreed. After a short e-mail exchange, we set to meet downtown at Zoe's Kitchen on a Tuesday.

I had the advantage of being able to stalk my legends' biographical information prior to our lunch, thanks to her firm's website and having briefly met Dee at the aforementioned cocktail hour. When we sat down together, I confessed to reading up on her and let her know I was excited to hear firsthand about her forty-year legal career.

Not one to focus on herself, she instead jumped right in to getting to know me, asking about law school and my career thus far. We compared and contrasted my experience at law school in the early 2010s in San Diego with her experience at the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law in the mid 1970s. I asked Dee about being a woman in law school during that time. She informed me that her graduating class had 52 women, whereas the class the year before her had only seven women.

Most of Dee's female classmates were wives and mothers as well, whose first duty was to

care for their loved ones at home. "They didn't know what to do with all of us," Dee laughed.

At one point, Dee was offered a part-time job, with better pay and fewer hours, but she was unable to take it because the university refused to allow her to modify her class schedule. Her male classmates questioned why she would have to leave the library every day at 5 p.m., even during finals, instead of pulling the late study hours. They, unlike Dee, had the privilege of taking for granted that their spouses were at home, taking caring of their children so that they could study. Dee, on the other hand, was a single mother, balancing the rigors of law school with a part-time job and a young son at home.

After graduation and admission to the bar, Dee joined the Commonwealth Attorney's office in 1978, where she was the second female attorney to work in the office. She had 75 jury trials in four years. I asked if she felt that they were trying to test her and see if she could 'hack it.' Dee smiled, and said that may have been the case at first, but that others would bring cases to her because they knew she could handle it. Being a new Assistant County Attorney myself, I am in awe of this fact: 75 jury trials in four years, as I am currently preparing for my first jury and bench trials.

Dee became a district court judge in 1983, one of the first few females on the bench and then joined the Jefferson County Attorney's Office from 1983 to 1986. As Dee's current family law practice keeps her away from criminal district court, I happily reported to her that there are currently more women than men sitting on the district bench.

After reflecting on her time in circuit and district court, Dee gave me her primary piece of advice she imparts to younger lawyers: at the end of the day, your reputation is all you have, so make sure to always keep your word. She stressed both the ethical consequences and the social ramifications of trustworthiness, saying "Don't be that person that can't be trusted!"

Her second piece of advice was to always take notes when speaking to clients on the phone, as you can never remember every detail of the conversation. I smiled and told her that is one of my favorite file organization tips that I practice. Every client file I keep has its own individual notebook.

I asked her about her career after the County Attorney's office, learning that she served as president of the Jefferson County Women Lawyers Association and was honored by the LBA as the first recipient of the Judge Richard Revell Family Law Practitioner of the Year award in 1995. Dee worked for a private firm for over a decade before opening her own practice in 1998. Dee states she waited a little too long before making the leap, but took quick solace in 'hindsight is 20/20.'

She reflected briefly on her firm, her great partners, and how much she has enjoyed working with clients in family court. We

played the Louisville game and chatted about whom we know in common and I learn that Dee is a board member for the Legal Aid Society, where I worked for two years before joining the County Attorney's Office. Dee enjoys supporting Legal Aid with both her time and talent, and she stressed the importance of giving back to the community.

When we ended lunch abruptly, so that I could hurry back to district court for a felony PC hearing, I reflected about how wonderful it was to meet such an amazing woman. Her career accolades aside, she went to law school at a time when few people expected women to work outside the house, much less in a court room. It was a joy to get to know her, as she truly is a legend!

Are you a "legend" or experienced Louisville attorney who wants to spend a lunch hour with a member of the Young Lawyers Section? OR, are you a member of the Young Lawyers Section that also likes lunch? Please contact the 2017 Chair of the Young Lawyers Section, Hammad Khan at hkhan@laslou.org, for more information on how to participate in the next "Lunch with Legends."

Lindsay E. Volk is an Assistant Jefferson County Attorney. ■



LAW POEM

IN REMEMBRANCE OF PAUL HIBBERD

Douglas Haynes

Smiles don't count for much in the law
Nor do displays of kindness or civility in court.
Paul never expected extra credit.
The gravity pull for closure is strong.
We all know that nature abhors a vacuum.
Whether Paul's passing creates one that endures
Remains to be seen and felt.
But those of us blessed by his presence
Fully well know how enduring this vacuum will be.
Peace can come on a golf green.
Peace can come sharing a belly laugh.
Peace can come over a beer.
Peace can come with a dumb joke.
Peace always comes between friends.
Farewell Paul. Farewell.

Douglas Haynes is a family law attorney and mediator with Fernandez & Haynes in Louisville. ■



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