Becky Klemt is a lawyer in Laramie, WY (with the five-person firm of Pence & MacMillan). On Aug. 17, 1988, she wrote a letter.

It was only one letter—"just one funny letter" as Becky describes it. But these are the "reviews" of The Becky Klemt Letter, by various lawyers, judges and clients, as quoted in an article in The Wall Street Journal (Sept. 6, 1990) ("A Lady Lawyer in Laramie Writes A Landmark Letter"):“Hilarious"... “a masterpiece"...”a jewel"... “brutal"... “skewers the pretentiousness of big-city lawyering with incomparable wit"... “the pot-shot heard round the world"... the “most photocopied letter in legal history"... “the best writing (ever done) on legal stationery.”

Tom Scott of Midland (Bullock, Scott, etc.) got copies of the letters from Becky after reading The Wall Street Journal article and—since The Letter was not printed in that article—suggested that it be published in full in this column. So here it is, together with two other letters which set the scene for The Becky Klemt Letter:

Laramie, Wyoming  July 19, 1988
Mr. Stephen G. Corris
Attorney at Law
Irvine, California
Re: Broomell vs Broomell
Civil No. 16424

Dear Mr. Corris:

This firm obtained the enclosed Judgment against Defendant, Stephen H. Broomell, on June 4, 1987.
The Judgment remains only partially satisfied and there is due and owing as of this date principal and interest in the amount of $4,239.84. Interest accrues at the rate of $1.06 per day.

Would you please advise whether or not you would be interested in collecting on this Judgment and, if so, your fees for doing so. It's entirely possible that a letter from you to Mr. Broomell will be all that's needed.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Pence and MacMillan
Becky N. Klemt

Laramie, Wyoming  August 8, 1988
Ms. Becky N. Klemt
Pence and MacMillan
Laramie, Wyoming

Dear Ms. Klemt,

I apologize for not getting back to you sooner, but I have been in and out of the office for the past six weeks. Seems that there's never enough time.

I want to thank you for offering me the opportunity to collect the judgment on behalf of Ms. Marcia L. Broomell, but, I must decline.

Without sounding pretentious, my current retainer for cases is a flat $100,000, with an additional charge of $1,000 per hour. Since I specialize in international trade and geopolitical relations between the Middle East and Europe, my clientele is very unique and limited, and I am afraid I am unable to accept other work at this time.

I am enclosing the copy you sent of the judgment and again, Ms. Klemt, I thank you for your thoughts. It was very nice of you.

Very, sincerely,
Stephen G. Corris

Laramie, Wyoming 82070
August 17, 1988

Stephen G. Corris, Esquire
Attorney of Law
Irvine, California 92715

Dear Steve:

I am in receipt of your letter to me dated August 8, 1988, regarding collection of a judgment against Stephen Broomell.

Steve, I've got news—you can't say you charge a $100,000.00 retainer fee and an additional $1,000.00 an hour without sounding pretentious. It just can't be done. Especially when you're writing to someone in Laramie, Wyoming where you're considered pretentious if you wear socks to Court or drive anything fancier than a Ford Bronco. Hell, Steve, all the lawyers in Laramie, put together, don't charge $1,000.00 an hour.

Anyway, we were sitting around the office discussing your letter and decided that you had a good thing going. We doubt we could get away with charging $1,000.00 an hour in Laramie (where people are more inclined to barter with livestock than pay
much inasmuch as he did not become a geopolitical developments. Also, negotiations. Hoke MacMillan has actual-
tioned newsmen insist on calling Illinois the Midwest, to us, if it's between New York and the Missouri River, it's the Middle East.

Additionally, although I have never personally been to Europe myself, my sister just returned from a vacation there and told me lots about, so I believe it would be of some help to you on that end of the negotiations. Hoke MacMillan has actually been there, although it was 15 years ago, so you might have to update him on recent geopolitical developments. Also, Hoke has applied to the Rotary Foreign Exchange Student Program for a 16-year-old Swedish girl and believes she will be helpful in preparing him for trips abroad.

Another thing you should know, Steve, is that the firm has an extensive foreign language background, which I believe would be useful to you. Hoke took Latin in high school, although he hasn't used it since then. Becky N. Klemt, who took a Phoenix law school, says, aims "to convince the legal profession that they are still in Europe," (I got my first copy in March 1990 from a Phoenix lawyer.) Since then, Becky has received "hundreds of telephone calls from Europe, job offers, legal referrals from places as distant as London, and marriage proposals"—as well as visits from out-of-Wyoming lawyers, including two New York attorneys who "think she is the funniest lawyer in America."2

What's next for Becky3 (who told Tom Scott she is "certainly enjoying my 15 minutes of Andy Worhol" fame)? Well, the judgment is still uncollected—and is still drawing interest at the rate of $1.06 per day.

Becky, is there any way to make a federal case out of this—and trick the ex-husband into fleeing to Texas? You're welcome in my court anytime! And I'm sure we will have plenty of Texas lawyers—who enjoy practicing laws much as you obviously do—volunteer to act as local counsel without charge in the Broomell case.4

1. Don't panic! Depositions v. Trials will return in the next issue. Lawyers, judges and others have already sent more than enough contributions for another year of columns in our Epic quest—not including the ones that are so dirty (albeit hilarious) that I can't even sneak them by the editor in a footnote.

2. According to The Wall Street Journal article, "the obligation to truthfully answer scores of calls and letters...has turned Ms. Klemt into something of a prairie philosopher. Law school, she says, aims "to convince the overconfident that they are truly superior." Of legal pomposity: "Most lawyers refuse to itemize it in their bills."

3. And what of Steven G. Corris, the "butt of a thousand faces"? According to The Wall Street Journal article, Mr. Corris "concedes" he overstated his fees to Ms. Klemt; he says his usual charge is closer to $500 an hour. "I get calls from one Washington firm and two in New York," he says, "basically asking, How are you pulling this off? They wanted a piece of my action. I said get lost."

4. Actually, Ms. Brookell lives in Austin, TX. The Wall Street Journal article ends with this quotation from her: "Sure, sure it's all incredible. Now a thousand lawyers know about my plight, and not one of them can be bothered to collect my money!"

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Alaska Wilderness Travel........... 71
Austin Services ................... 64
Bynum, Beck & Poe ............... 22
CDR Associates ................... 47
Capitol Commerce Reporter ...... 19
Daniels-Head Insurance Agency, Inc. ................. 9
Dewberry Engraving Company ...... 14
DOCU MERGE ..................... 48
Excelsior-Legal, Inc ............... 77
Expert Resources, Inc ............. 30
Fiduciary Research, Inc.
(Missing Heirs) ................... 24
Global Tracing Services, Inc ....... 20
Government Liability Services, Inc. ............... 56
Gray Petroleum Management Company ................ 53
Herrera, Frank .................... 25
International Genealogical Search, Inc. ................ 12
Invest ............................ 17
Lawyer's Aid Service, Inc. ....... 11
Lawyers Now ..................... 59
Legal Directories Publishing
Company, Inc. .................... IBC
Lewis, James LeRoy & Associates .... 52
NatWest International Trust Corp .... 3
Owl Software, Inc ................. 16
Parker-Giffin Publishing Co Insert Physicians for Quality ....... 83
Prentice Hall Corporate Services .. 27
Prescott Legal Search .......... 85
Quest Attorney Investigations .... 50
Specialization, Texas Board of Legal ...... 86
Specialty Software, Inc. .......... 36
State Bar of Texas Institute Schedule .................. 15
State Bar of Texas Insurance Trust ... IBC
State Bar of Texas Legal Forms .. 67, 68
State Bar of Texas Professional Development Program .... 74
Stewart Title Guaranty Co ........ 4
Texas Corporation Supplies, Inc .... 7
Texas Lawyers Insurance Exchange ... 89
The Ultimate Trial Notebook ...... 90
West Publishing Company ........ BC

More et cetera

Jerry Buchmeyer is a federal dis-
trict judge, Northern District of
Texas, in Dallas. If you have a
contribution to the et cetera column
send it to Judge Buchmeyer, U.S.
District Court, Northern District of
Texas, Dallas, TX 75242.