



Jillian Marullo was the high scorer on the February 2013 bar examination. From left: Texas Board of Law Examiners (BLE) Executive Director Julia Vaughan, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson, Jillian Marullo, Texas Supreme Court Justice Don Willett, and BLE member E. Lee Parsley. Marullo, an associate with the Houston office of Liskow & Lewis, is a December 2012 graduate of South Texas College of Law.

The Right Direction

BY JILLIAN MARULLO

THANK YOU, CHIEF JUSTICE JEFFERSON, JUSTICES AND JUDGES, MEMBERS OF THE BAR, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND FRIENDS FOR BEING WITH US TODAY. I am truly honored to be standing here in front of my new colleagues. First off, I would like to offer a heartfelt congratulation to every person in this room. Today is the culmination of all of our hard work.

Last Friday I was having a glass of champagne in Paris, enjoying a much-needed post-bar-exam, pre-real-life vacation and celebrating passing the bar, when my cell-phone rang. I was a little annoyed when I saw the call was from an unknown number in Texas, so I hit the ignore button. The caller was persistent, so I reluctantly answered on the second try, intending to inform whomever was on the other end just how much international roaming fees are and to ask where I should send my bill. When the caller identified himself as Justice Don

Willett of the Texas Supreme Court, I heard Jerry Seinfeld's voice in my head say, "Who is this? Uncle Leo?" After he assured me that the call was not about "an overdue library book or unpaid parking ticket," I thought surely he was going to tell me that there was a problem with my exam (or worse yet, my passport). Fortunately, that was not the case. Unfortunately, he had even worse news: I had to give a speech. And just like that, my relaxing vacation ended in a whirlwind: I landed in the States on Friday, wrote this speech on Saturday, and drove to Austin on Sunday to get sworn in on Monday. I can't wait for life to calm down once I start working ... tomorrow.

I would like to start by recognizing some very special people who were instrumental in leading me to this day. Having such an amazing support network contributed to my success in ways that I simply cannot quantify. In fact, now that the craziness of law school and the bar exam is behind us, it is

important for us *all* to look back and thank those who made this moment possible. Not only did we sacrifice through it all, but so did our friends and family. Look around at the number of people who came here today to witness this extraordinary accomplishment. If I had to guess, I would say that each and every one of you in the audience, at some point, heard the words “You just don’t understand what I’m going through.” But the truth is that you did understand, because you were going through it right there with us. It is because of your support and understanding that we are here today, and on behalf of my colleagues, I thank you.

I would like to thank my boyfriend, Aaron. Without your encouragement I would not be standing here today. You have been so patient with me these last three and a half years. You actually understood when I explained that I was very sorry, but we were going to have to cancel your birthday this year (and the next year, and the next ...); I had to study for finals. You risked your life countless times coming into my office to see if I needed anything. You kept me alert when I was studying by using our smoke detector as a kitchen timer. You have kept me sane through everything, and for that I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you to my family. I could not have made it here today if you hadn’t believed in me. You have always motivated me to do better and have given me the love and support necessary to achieve my goals. Dad, when you made me sign a contract before heading to undergrad agreeing that I could only get a car if I got a 4.0, I thought “Challenge accepted!” And, “I should probably go to law school to find a way out of this unconscionable contract.”

Finally, I would like to thank the faculty of South Texas College of Law for giving so much of their time to ensuring that its students succeed. Through their actions and commitment to the community, the deans and professors at South Texas help us remember why we went to law school in the first place: because we are inspired by the idea of service to others.

I would also like to take this time to congratulate my fellow South Texas alum, John Hoover. You might not know this, but this is the first time in recent history that the top two bar exam scorers were from the same law school. This speaks volumes of the talent and commitment of the South Texas professors and administration.

While I don’t have anything profound to say or any brilliant advice to share, there is one thing that I would like to

FEBRUARY 2013 BAR EXAM PASS RATE INFORMATION

The table below shows the number of graduates from each Texas law school who took the bar exam for the first time in February, the number that passed, and the percentage that passed.

LAW SCHOOL	TESTED	PASSED	PASS RATE
Baylor	45	43	96%
St. Mary’s	48	36	75%
South Texas	115	98	85%
SMU	26	19	73%
Texas Tech	22	21	95%
Texas Southern	21	14	67%
Texas Wesleyan	53	47	89%
U. of Houston	29	26	90%
U. of Texas	22	19	86%
TOTAL	381	323	85%

emphasize to my new colleagues before I wrap up. From this moment on, class rank and bar exam scores no longer matter. We are moving from a world in which we are graded by professors and the Board of Law Examiners into one in which we will be evaluated by our clients and our peers. We will be judged not by a number or percentile, but by our integrity and our actions.

I think that Dr. Seuss said it best when he wrote, “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who’ll decide where to go.”

As we embark on this journey, it is my hope that we will always have the strength and courage to act with dignity, strive for justice, and choose to do what is right, even if that means steering ourselves down the more difficult path.

Thank you. **TBJ**

THE ONLINE LL.M. IN ESTATE PLANNING AND ELDER LAW

CLASSES OFFERED LIVE AND COMPLETELY ONLINE!

- Full-time option—ideal for recent J.D. graduates
- Part-time evening program for practicing attorneys
- 24-credit hours—program can be completed in two years part-time; one year full-time

Accepting applications for September 2013.

Professor Frederick D. Royal, Program Director 413-782-1422 • 413-782-1426
froyal@law.wne.edu • www.law.wne.edu/llm



SCHOOL of LAW
WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY | **WNE**

Attorney Janella Combs Kamai of Johnson & Combs, P.C., studies online from Kodiak, Alaska.