

# The Judge's Daughter: Humor = Smart

BY PAMELA BUCHMEYER

It's true, humor makes you smarter. That's according to neuroscientist Ori Amir, a professor at Pomona College in Southern California and one of the leading researchers on the way the brain creates and understands humor. He also does a little stand-up comedy on the side, too. You can catch his act on YouTube.

"My dream is to become a professional stand-up," he jokes on stage. "And an amateur neurosurgeon. That way I can cut up brains for fun."

Seriously, MRI tests show that jokes are not mere frivolous diversions. They exercise our body's most important muscle, the brain. Humor floods regions of our brains with neurons that light up an MRI like a Christmas tree, and that is quite healthy indeed.

Professor Amir also says that humor is a natural stress reliever—it lowers cortisol, the stress hormone, thus dispelling many clouds of worry. I wrote Professor Amir to suggest that he use attorneys for his next experiment—I'll let you know when I hear back. After all, no one knows worry and stress quite like the legal profession, and it's important for us to find a little relief. No one believed that more fervently than my late father, Judge Jerry Buchmeyer, who penned a legal humor column for the *Texas Bar Journal* for 28 years.

Looking for a little diversion myself, I recently enrolled in a Shakespeare class. My study notes on Shakespearean disparagement appear below and I think you'll find them amusing. For example, Shakespeare wrote this insult in *Troilus and Cressida*: "He has not so much brain as earwax."

This line made me laugh so hard that I nearly fell out of my chair. The teacher made me sit in the corner with a dunce hat. Somehow, I think Professor Amir would have liked that.

It's always great to hear from you. Don't be a stranger. You can reach me at pambuchmeyer@gmail.com.

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**JUDGE JERRY L. BUCHMEYER** (1933-2009) grew up in Overton and served as a federal judge in the Northern District of Texas after being nominated in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter. His monthly legal humor column ran in the *Texas Bar Journal* from 1980 to 2008.

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## Not So Fancy in the Country

The response to a vignette in my last column entitled "Cattle vs. Attorneys" was overwhelming! To recap, Sharon E. Giraud, of Fort Worth, submitted an amusing exchange where a big city attorney kept insisting that land used for cattle grazing was "not being used for anything."

This prompted Patrick Zummo, of Houston, to send in the following exchange. A big city lawyer was deposing Zummo's client, a ranch owner, about the value of his rural real estate.

- Q: So Leon County has its own appraisal district?  
A: Yeah, Leon County has its own appraisal district.  
Q: What's it called?  
A: ...Probably just Leon County Appraisal District. I don't know.  
*We're not too fancy in the country.*

Or in the city either to boot. I've personally worked with a good number of appraisal districts in multiple states and none have been creatively named.

Kenneth W. Burch, of Pasadena, was similarly inspired to send in the following excerpt. While attending law school, Burch's friend worked as an adjuster for a major casualty insurance company. He was called upon to review a major truck and auto collision on a public road that passed through several ranches.

Report sent to the home office: "The accident happened about

50 feet north of a cattle guard. Unfortunately, there were no witnesses to the accident."

Boss back in Hartford, Connecticut: "I'm confused—you say the accident happened close to the guard but there were no witnesses. *Was the cattle guard drunk, asleep, or what?*"

It's at times like these one wishes a cow could take the witness stand.



## Delivering Wit

The talented Sharon E. Giraud, of Fort Worth, returns for round two in a contest for lawyers that we shall henceforth call "Did I Really Just Say That?"

From a Child Protective Services case in which a child was born before paramedics could arrive with an ambulance:

- Attorney Ad Litem: Did you know you were pregnant when you gave birth?  
Mother: Well, YEAH!

**Shakespearean Insults**

Yes, the Bard of Avon is brilliant with prose, meter, character, and plot. But did you know that Shakespeare was also a master of insults? I have no doubt that you'll soon decide to include these lines in your daily practice. After all, knaves abound around us.

"...beetle-headed, flap-eared knave!"

*The Taming of the Shrew*

"...whose tongue outvenom all the worms of the Nile."

*Cymbeline*

"I must tell you friendly in your ear, sell when you can: you are not for all markets."

*As You Like It*, advice on romance

"...there was the rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril."

*Merry Wives of Windsor*

"...it will be stinking law for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese."

*Henry VI, Part II*

"His wit's as thick as Tewkesbury mustard!"

*Henry IV, Part II*

Tewkesbury Mustard is still actually being produced in the English town of well, Tewkesbury. The food company's online promotional materials include some bragging rights:

"The Best Mustard in England as described by Thomas Fuller's *Worthies of England* in 1622. We are continuing a tradition that dates back before the 16th century. An artisan product that was famous throughout the land, mentioned in Shakespeare's *Henry IV...*"

Well, context is everything. No need for Tewkesbury Mustard to mention that the Bard's endorsement wasn't entirely a compliment. That's funny and also smart. **TBJ**

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is an attorney and award-winning writer who lives in Dallas and Jupiter, Florida. Her work-in-progress is a humorous murder mystery, *The Judge's Daughter*. She can be contacted at [pambuchmeyer@gmail.com](mailto:pambuchmeyer@gmail.com).

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