

# *The Judge's Daughter:* GRANDMA GOES TO LAW SCHOOL

WRITTEN BY PAMELA BUCHMEYER

I ATTENDED LAW SCHOOL WITH "MAX," my father-in-law's retired business partner. We youngsters thought he was ancient at age 68. Max's nickname was "The Most Senior 1L," and a few folks grumbled that Max had taken a seat from a more deserving candidate and that perhaps he'd made a generous donation to the dean. Max didn't care. He was living his dreams and happy to be there.

Max and I sat together in contracts class, and when I confessed that I'd never even read a contract much less signed one—not a lease, not a job offer, not even an application for a credit card—Max didn't laugh. Max had executed thousands, of course, and he shared with me some sage advice.

"In contracts, you never get what you deserve. You get what you *negotiate*." I was soon learning much more from Max than from my law professor.

I thought of Max this week when I found in my father's old boxes yet another funny book titled *Grandma Goes to Law School, Why It's Never Too Late to Live Your Dreams*, by Jeremy Goldstein, who was writing about his mother.

My dad was Judge Jerry L. Buchmeyer, a U.S. district judge who wrote a humor column for the *Texas Bar Journal* for 28 years. Jeremy's mother was Jeanette Goldstein, who graduated from Syracuse Law School at age 83 and who was profiled by the *New York Times* as a senior citizen law student. Jeanette enjoyed her eight children and 24 grandchildren, but retirement in Florida didn't suit her so instead, she enrolled in torts.

One of her law professors said that when Jeanette pulled a luggage tote packed with textbooks across campus, she looked like "a little old lady lost at La Guardia [airport]." But Jeanette didn't care, she was living a lifelong dream.

Jeanette graduated from law school, receiving an award for her appreciation of learning, but sadly my friend Max did not. He passed away during our December holiday. I still think of him from time to time and know that I'm a better person and a better lawyer for his kind instruction.

It's always good to hear from you 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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## Expressly Yours

For the record, I'm sure that 83-year-old Jeanette Goldstein would have loved representing the long defunct Texas corporation South Eastern XPress Inc. in the following deposition of a truck driver.

Q: And then where did you go after [that employer]?

A: I went to work for this company out of Fort Worth called SEX.

Q: SES?

A: SEX, South Eastern Express.

Q: *And what did you do for SEX?*

A: I drove trucks.

[Discussion off the record.]

Q: And how long did you drive for SEX?

A: I'm not sure. It might have been six months. I'm just not sure.

## Leaning on Justice

The following deposition witness was a landscaper and a preacher who claimed to have been injured in a pawnshop when a gun accidentally discharged.

Q: Now . . . you're saying that you had been leaning over the counter [at the pawnshop] talking and horse-trading . . .

A: Leaning over the counter? No, no.

Q: That's what you testified to earlier.

A: No. No. I didn't say *leaning over*. I said I was *leaning on* the counter.

Q: Well, isn't that leaning over?

A: No, sir. Leaning over is meaning I'm hanging over towards you. That's over. That's what the over means.

Q: All right. Well, I don't want to split hairs with you.

A: Well, I mean, that's the truth. *Truth is the light, Brother. That's it. Leaning over. Leaning on.*

Certainly words to live by. It could be my new personal motto: “Truth is the light, leaning over and leaning on.”

### Gesundheit

A savvy and stuffy court reporter took down this exchange in a criminal trial in Houston. The witness was a police officer stating his opinion as to the cause of a traffic accident.

Q: Have any of your opinions changed after all this stuff that they’ve told you and all this stuff that they’ve shown you?

Opposing counsel: Objection, vague.

Witness: No.

Court reporter: [loud sneeze].

Q: *Bless you.*

Opposing counsel: Are you saying that to the witness or the court reporter?

Q: Good question.

### Wait, Did He Just Say That?

From a case in which a property management company may not have checked the credentials of an employee who was later accused of bad acts against residents. The president of the management company testified about hiring protocols.

Q: So, you’re saying that either Kathy G. or Laura S. failed in their job duty to check out—

A [interrupting]: I’m not saying that.

Q [continuing]: —Mr. Smith’s employment past?

A: I’m not saying that.

Q: Well—

A: You’re saying that.

Q: I am saying that.

A: I am not saying that.

Q: Okay. What are you saying?

A: I’m not saying anything.

And when a disgruntled former faculty member of one of our state’s fine educational institutions took the stand:

Q: And who is your supervisor?

A: My supervisor is the provost and the executive vice president of the university.

Q: And who is that?

A: At this point, it’s Dr. Ronald McDonald.

The witness failed to add, “I’ll have fries with that.” **TBJ**



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