

The Judge's Daughter: SUMMER CAMP CHUTZPAH!

WRITTEN BY PAMELA BUCHMEYER

THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS ARE OFF TO SUMMER CAMP, AND I WANT TO GO, TOO! Their programs sound so exciting—zoo keeping, filmmaking, robotics, surfing, paleontology. Nothing at all like my girlhood summers spent at Camp Thorn Tree, where we mastered four “S” skills underneath a hot Texas sun: sweltering, spitting, swear words, and swilling down Kool-Aid. My own plans for this June sound so boring. CLE at the Holiday Inn with endless PowerPoint slides and a lunch of soggy turkey sandwiches. Maybe I could start my own summer camp—for adults, for lawyers. I’ll call it Camp Chutzpah!

Camp Chutzpah will employ real camp “counselors” to share all kinds of crafty skills practically guaranteed to help one’s career at the law firm or at the courthouse. And I’ll be inspired by the following crazy summer camps that actually do exist!

Circus Arts Camp: teaching low-wire aerial acts, juggling, clowning, unicycle-riding, stilts, and trapeze tricks (Circus Arts Conservatory, Sarasota, Florida).

Spy Camp: learning martial arts, surveillance tips, rope knots, disguise techniques, code-breaking, reconnaissance and rescue missions (International Spy Museum, Washington, D.C.).

Shark Camp: explore shark biology, STEM labs, engineering projects, shark teeth ID, spiny dogfish shark dissection, and shark tagging demo (The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, Chatham, Massachusetts).

Pirate Camp: ahoy buccaneers, learn how to talk like a pirate; study mermaids, krakens, and scallywags; and hear the history of mutiny and mayhem (Colonial Quarter, St. Augustine, Florida).

Action and adventure ahead! Hope to hear from you soon, pambuchmeyer@gmail.com.

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.

Hello Again Counselor

Michael Petty, presiding judge of the municipal court in Cedar Hill, wrote in recently:

After a jury brought back a verdict of guilty in a criminal trespass case, the homeless pro se defendant addressed the court, “Your Honor, I wish to be declared indignant.”

“So Declared!” said Judge Petty.

John Denholm, of Houston, sent an excerpt from his deposition of a wife about the birth of her son, where it became very important to clear up one crucial point.

Q: [Your baby boy] was born in November of 2020, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there any troubles with his birth?

A: No.

Opposing counsel: Objection, form.

Mr. Denholm: What’s the objection?

Opposing Counsel: I mean, what would she know?

Mr. Denholm [sagely]: She was present at the birth, I’m assuming.

Opposing Counsel: Oh.

Mr. Denholm: I said were there any troubles with his birth.
Q [dotting every “i”]: You were present at your son’s birth, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have any trouble with the birth?

A: No. Other than almost not making it on time, no.

Self-Evident Selfie

From a trial in El Paso proving that in today’s world of selfies, you can never be too sure.

Q: . . . Would you look at this picture and tell me if you recognized the person in that picture?

A: Yes, that’s me.

Q: Okay. Now you did not take that picture, did you?

A: No, I did not.

Q [leaving no stone unturned]: But you were present for that picture?

A: Yes.

Dear Mr. Lawyer

A Dallas attorney received a flattering letter from an inmate

already serving time. “Sadly,” the lawyer reports, “this may be the best offer I’ve received all year.”

Mr. Lawyer: . . . I’ve been going to the law library reading the books with the lawyers in them and I ran across some good lawyers. But out of all of them I couldn’t find a lawyer that could match your knowledge in the law . . . I said to myself, if I ever wanted a lawyer . . . it would be you, Mr. Lawyer. Mr. Lawyer, sir, I would like to have you as my lawyer. The only problem is, is the money, which I haven’t got any. . . . [Sic]

Typographical Arrows [Errors]

Bloopers and blunders abound in documents despite the presence of spell check or perhaps because of our overreliance on it. Yet, one or two letters can make all the difference. In a case involving a restaurant:

Interrogatory: Identify all persons, of whom you are aware, who claim to have knowledge of the king of alcohol beverages consumed by John Doe . . . [kind]

Presumably John Doe drinks Budweiser, the “King of Beers,” per its marketing campaign.

This next example is particularly sad. As part of a year-end review, a large company instructed their attorneys to

provide a description of all pending or threatened claims and litigation, specifically:

. . . all matters with respect to which you have been engaged . . . in the form of legal consolation. . . . [consultation]

It appears this client prefers “solace and comfort” to the good old standby “advice and counsel.”

Quips & Quotes

“The lawyer’s vacation is the space between the question put to a witness and his answer.” —Rufus Choate in *Works of Rufus Choate*, 1862

“Legal writing is one of those rare creatures, like the rat and the cockroach, that would attract little sympathy even as an endangered species.” —Richard Hyland in *A Defense of Legal Writing*, 1986. **TBJ**



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