



# EQUAL TIMES

## BEXAR COUNTY WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Last month we hosted the President's New Member Party, and what an event that was! It was the perfect evening to reconnect with friends, "old" and "new," at Judge Renee McElhaney's beautiful Monte Vista home. It was great to see so many new and familiar faces, alike, enjoying great conversation, great food and great wine. We even had a surprise appearance by El Rey Feo, Richard Ojeda, and his royal court to give us a "taste" of Fiesta. Thank you, Judge McElhaney, for opening your home for this event, and a special thanks to Katherine Noll and Tiffanie Clausewitz for all their planning efforts. It truly was a great party!



Emma Cano

And, speaking of Fiesta, the fun, vibrant celebration unique to San Antonio is almost here. It is a great time for our City, and this year, the BCWB wants to celebrate with you. To help kick off Fiesta, Julian Gold is hosting a pre-Fiesta fashion event exclusively for the BCWB on Thursday, April 19. We hope to see you there!

Whatever your plans are for Fiesta, enjoy and be safe!! Happy Fiesta!!

#### Upcoming Events:

April 3: BCWB Law Day Luncheon with Fox Tech High School at The Plaza Club

April 19: Julian Gold Pre-Fiesta Fashion Show

April 26: Around Town Luncheon

May 2: BCWB Monthly Luncheon at Club Giraud

May 8: BCWB CJP Night



### APRIL 2012

#### In this issue:

Mentors, Mentees, and Margaritas!	2
Winners of the Fox Tech High School Law Day Contest	2
Help the Bexar County Women's Bar Celebrate Law Day!	3
Judicial Spotlight: Judge Barbara Nellermoe	4
President's Party a Rousing Success!	7



Connie Basel



Hella Scheuerman



Lisa Alcantar

## Mentors, Mentees, and Margaritas!

By Connie Basel

On March 1, 2012, the Bexar County Women's Bar Association (BCWBA) mentee/mentor committee and the Women's Law Association (WLA) held its Spring networking mixer at the Taco Garage on Broadway.

We were thrilled to have so many first-year law students attend, despite the fact that legal briefs for legal research and writing were due. This truly illustrated student commitment to the BCWBA/WLA and with their interest in forming lasting relationships.

Gaylia Brunson kicked off the mixer by facilitating the introductions and leading a group discussion covering attorney practice areas and work/life balance. Dean Bracey then spoke about the importance of active participation in organizations and building both formal and informal relationships. Judge McElhaney wrapped up the discussion by encouraging the law students to observe court proceedings and to consider the Bexar County court internships this summer.

The BCWBA and WLA would like to extend a thank you to all who attended. I would like to send a special thanks to Julia Mann and Gaylia Brunson for stepping in at the last minute and assisting with the event.

## Winners of the Fox Tech High School Law Day Contest

By Hella Scheuerman

Previously, the Bexar County Women's Bar Association asked Fox Tech High School students to submit entries for the local Law Day Contest. The students submitted entries for the editorial and poster contests. We are pleased to announce the results of the Law Day Contest. The winners of the editorial and poster contests are listed below:

First place winner of the editorial contest: Wimberleigh Johnson.

First place winner of the poster contest: Rosalinda Mitchell.

Second place winner of the poster contest: Adelind-Iris Settles Sifuentes.

Third place winner of the poster contest: Stephanie Cruz.

The first place winners of the editorial and poster contests will have their submissions entered into the statewide Law Day contest.

## May Luncheon Announcement

By Lisa Alcantar

Please join us at Club Giraud on Wednesday, May 2nd, as we welcome Cox Smith shareholder Jane E. Bockus. Jane will discuss Women in Litigation. RSVP by Friday, April 27, 2012 by emailing [events@bexarcountywomensbar.org](mailto:events@bexarcountywomensbar.org). The cost is \$25 (\$15 for students), payable online or at the door. For more information, contact Lisa Alcantar ([lalcantar@prdg.com](mailto:lalcantar@prdg.com)) or Denise Drake ([ddrake@coxsmith.com](mailto:ddrake@coxsmith.com)). We hope to see you there!



Hella Scheuerman

## Help the Bexar County Women's Bar Celebrate Law Day!

By Hella Scheuerman

Please mark your calendar for our annual BCWBF/Fox Tech High School Law Day Luncheon, scheduled for April 3, 2012 at Noon at the Plaza Club.

This year's Law Day theme challenges students to explore the theme "No Courts, No Justice, No Freedom." We have invited the students at Fox Tech to submit essays, photographs or posters exemplifying this year's theme. We will present the winning student in each category with a cash prize, and display their work at the luncheon. Also, Catherine Torres-Stahl, a BCWB member and former Fox Tech student, will provide first-hand insight regarding this year's Law Day theme.



This is a great mentoring opportunity for both the students and our members. Please make every effort to attend. The cost is \$25, payable at the door or online. For more information, contact Hella Scheuerman at [hschc@allstate.com](mailto:hschc@allstate.com).

### BCWBA Lites

Judge Barbara Hanson Nellermeoe was inducted into the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame on March 31, 2011.

Natalie Hall has joined AT&T's litigation department. Natalie was formerly a Shareholder with Cox Smith Matthews Incorporated.

Please welcome these new members to the BCWB:

Stefanie Benyard  
Laurie Burns  
Deneen Donnley  
Margaret Hopson  
Ann Leafstedt  
Cristina Nelson  
Rachel Reuter  
Cassia Ysaguirre





Tiffanie Clausewitz

## Judicial Spotlight: Judge Barbara Nellermoe

By Tiffanie Clausewitz

**SPOTLIGHT  
ON**

I met the Honorable Barbara Nellermoe at a reception for incoming law students just before beginning my first year of school. I remember thinking at that moment, “This is someone I would like to get to know!” Luckily for me and you, she agreed to share her history and insights for this month’s “Judicial Spotlight.”



**Q.** Tell us a little bit about your history as an attorney and then judge.

**A.** I was very fortunate to launch my career as a law clerk. I started at the federal level, clerking in succession for Judges Fred Shannon, William Sessions, and Edward Prado. Then after 10 years in commercial litigation, including 3 years as a solo practitioner, I again gravitated to in-house positions at the Fourth Court of Appeals, serving the administrations of Chief Justices Al Chapa, Phil Hardberger, and Alma Lopez. I loved the opportunity to close to door and just sort out what I thought was the correct result given the law and the facts involved and make that recommendation in a memorandum or draft opinion to the appellate panel, then respond to their queries, and sometimes draft a minority (dissenting) opinion. So, when a bench opened up, I decided to run. Not having the benefit of a governor’s appointment, it was close – but I lost that first race. However, I learned a lot about the process. Four years later, several people encouraged me to run again for another open bench, and this time I was successful. It is a profound privilege to serve in this capacity, one I hope to continue for several more years.

**Q.** As with more and more women – myself included – law is a “second career” for you. What did you do before going to law school, and what prompted you to make the switch?

**A.** I knew at age 16 that I wanted to be a lawyer. But that was the 1960s, and it was obvious that the guys were groomed to enter law school and the gals were directed into teaching. So, I taught school for about 15 years – elementary grades, junior high social studies. Then armed with a master’s degree in history and sociology, I moved on to college teaching. The research on my thesis, conducted at the law library at the University of Minnesota, was titled “The Recovery of Property Rights for English Married Women.”

By the mid-1970s, the second wave of women’s rights activists gathered steam with efforts to pass and ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. I created a Women’s Studies Program at Waldorf College in Iowa and also taught other history and Marriage and the Family courses there. I discovered foremothers like Belva Lockwood and Sojourner Truth and was inspired by my contemporaries on the front lines who were opening doors for women, breaking the glass ceilings in many non-traditional places. I knew I had to find a way to get to law school! (con’d on next page)

## Judicial Profile (con'd)

Q. Tell us about your history with the Bexar County Women's Bar, and the impact it has made on your practice and understanding of our legal community.

A. I joined BCWBA as soon as I entered private practice, was elected to the board at a time when there was a bit of tension because big firm lawyers were sharing leadership with solos. But the organization weathered it nicely under the presidency of Shirley Ehrlich. A monthly one-page newsletter had been created on a mimeograph machine, no kidding. As we entered the computer age, I took up the task of renaming and expanding Equal Times, with the creative layout talents of Shelly Bennack McCullough, finally relinquishing a very enjoyable duty as editor and contributor when I was elected President in 1996. It was a privilege to present The President's Award that year to Hattie Briscoe, the first black female lawyer practicing in San Antonio. I also inaugurated the first President's Brunch (which I believe has since morphed into the annual president's party). It originally invited past presidents and the president-elect to gather and share our institutional wisdom and how to expand the crack in that glass ceiling by bringing new opportunities in bar activities to our members. I continue to believe that BCWBA provides great opportunities for members to gain leadership experience and help our sisters advance in our profession.

Q. What have you learned from your spot on the bench about the strengths of women litigators?

A. About six years ago, four lawyers were sitting at their respective counsel table, I was on the bench, and my court reporter and substitute bailiff were present in the courtroom. We all looked at each other in amazement. We were all women! It was a really cool moment!

I love watching good lawyers of all persuasions ply their craft. And strong, accomplished women are wonderful to see in action. And many times, they are young associates, as well as seasoned attorneys. They are prepared, have prepped their witnesses, have three copies of the case law highlighted, and can think on their feet. They also know when to stand their ground and when to concede. It is the mark of a true professional. A good lawyer can be surprised by the evidence revealed by the opposing party, and when the emerging facts present new risks to the client, a good lawyer will spend the recess crafting a settlement or nonsuiting a weak claim and focusing on what can be salvaged. I admire that effort because the client is the focus, the one who counts in the end.

A. Do you have a mentor or role model in the legal field, who has helped guide you and your practice as an attorney and now judge?

Yes, some historic, some in real time. I learned invaluable lessons from each of the judges I worked with on the federal and appellate benches. Judge Carol Haberman, who was the first female district judge in Bexar County, was my predecessor on the bench and was generous with her advice. Judge Martha Tanner, who is retiring this year, has a wealth of experience and I call upon her regularly as a sounding board.

Q. Tell us a few of your favorite things.

A. Book? Usually, it is whatever I am currently reading. Just read the Stieg Larsson trilogy and I'm finishing a PD James mystery that Lisa Vance loaned me. Next up is the biography of Steve Jobs.

Movie? *Bird Cage*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Midnight in Paris* (I'm a romantic).



## Judicial Profile (con'd)

Restaurant? We are so lucky to have a wide selection in San Antonio, and I do try to keep the neighbor restaurants in business.

Q. If you could give one piece of advice to up and coming female attorneys, what would it be?

A. If you find yourself frustrated with another attorney, resist the urge to follow him/her down to a lower level of professionalism. Instead, go to another woman, a more experienced one, and lay it out. See how she might approach the situation. Some people have a knack for handling things like this. Maybe it was their experience in competitive sports that gives them a problem-solving tool today. Or maybe they just have a special insight or focus that can be helpful in surviving an intimidating or uncomfortable situation.

*The Honorable Barbara Nellermoe was elected to the 45th District Court of Bexar County in 2003. Judge Nellermoe is the Editor in Chief of the San Antonio Lawyer magazine and a past president of the Bexar County Women's Bar Association. Both organizations have recognized her contributions by honoring her with the Belva Lockwood Outstanding Lawyer Award and the SABA President's Award for Outstanding Service to the Bar, respectively. Most recently, Judge Nellermoe was inducted into the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame on March 31, 2011.*

*Judge Nellermoe has been and continues to be active in community service, currently serving on the board of the St. Luke's Lutheran Health Ministries Foundation, the San Antonio Chamber Chair, and the Development Board of Texas Lutheran University. She has been married since 1965 to John Nellermoe. Their daughter, Sara, is a TLU graduate and works for CBS in Minneapolis.*



## BCWBA Lites

Shannon Elizabeth Loyd was recently named a partner in the San Antonio law firm of Gravely & Pearson, LLP. She joined the firm in 2006 as an associate.

Shannon has been licensed since 2004 and has extensive experience in litigating cases involving insurance bad faith, construction defects and employment law. She is licensed to practice in Texas as well as the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Districts of Texas.

Shannon represents homeowners and business owners against their insurance companies for claims involving breach of contract, common law and statutory bad faith and violations of the Texas Insurance Code and Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

Her construction litigation experience includes helping consumers to recover damages from general contractors and subcontractors due to construction defects, as well as from sellers and realtors due to misrepresentations regarding defects.

Shannon also represents employees involving claims of wrongful termination, including workers' compensation retaliation, harassment, and discrimination.

Shannon received her legal education from St. Mary's University School of Law (J.D.) and did her undergraduate work at Texas A&M University (B.S.). Shannon resides in Boerne with her family.

## President's Party a Rousing Success!

By Tiffanie Clausewitz

On Thursday, March 24, BCWB President Emma Cano welcomed about 40 members to the annual President's Party, hosted by Judge (and BCWB Board Member) Renee McElhaneey at her beautiful home. In addition to enjoying drinks and hors d'oeuvres, attendees were treated to a visit by Rey Feo himself, Richard Ojeda, and his court! Thanks to everyone who attended this fun event!



Tiffanie Clausewitz







# IT'S FIESTA TIME AT JULIAN GOLD

Please join us for Ladies Night Out  
featuring  
Margaritas, Lite Bites, Open Bar, Door Prizes,  
all the latest trends for Spring, and more!

Exclusively for ...

## THE BEXAR COUNTY WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

Thursday, April 19th, 2012  
5:30-7:30PM

*Julian Gold*



4109 McCullough Ave. San Antonio, Texas 78212