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PROFESSIONAL BULLETIN  
FOR THE  
BELL COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
**PARALEGALS**



**MEMBERSHIP - 21 MEMBERS**

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Courtesy of Snopes.com and Daily Mail, December 31, 2008

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Article written by Ed Poll  
Courtesy of LawBiz Tips Ezine

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

I would like to thank all of our members and of course the new members who attended our Membership Drive on July 30 at the Deadfish Grill. I thought it was rather successful. We had 23 attendees; 3 of these were new members. I would like to welcome the new members and hope they enjoyed their first meeting.

The winners of the \$50.00 gift cards were: Mary Jane Serna; Jeanie Yarnell and Billie Sue Scales. Thank you ladies for participating in our Membership Drive.

We will start having lunch brought to the meetings from McAllister's Deli for \$6.25 a person. This will include a choice of ham, turkey or roast beef sandwich, a bag of chips and a cookie. Members still need to bring their own drinks. I will send out an email the Monday before the meeting each month and will need RSVP by the following Wednesday at noon.

*Cindi Evetts*

**BOARD MEETINGS** will be held at McAllister's Deli in Killeen from noon to 1:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

**NEXT BOARD MEETING:**

**OCTOBER 8, 2009**

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS** are held in Judge Mischian's courtroom from noon to 1:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

**NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING:**

**OCTOBER 15, 2009**

**BCBA PARALEGALS**

**'09-'10 OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT** – Cindi Evetts

**VICE PRESIDENT** – Brooke Johnson

**SECRETARY** – Mandy Cazares

**TREASURER** – Cathy Beaman

**PARLIAMENTARIAN** – Billie Sue Scales

[bcba\\_lad@yahoo.com](mailto:bcba_lad@yahoo.com)

## **Getting to Paralegal**

### ***Contributed by Lisa Devlin***

My Name is Lisa Devlin. I am a paralegal for Martin L. Alvey, P.C., in Portland, Oregon. Our firm specializes in Social Security Disability, Personal Injury, Workers' Compensation, and Longshore cases.

Being a paralegal had been my goal since I first stepped foot into my first legal position. I absolutely love what I do, and the feeling of helping people is truly the reward of our profession, whichever side you are on.

I was working at a very popular hotel chain, in reservations and at the front desk. That position started to overcome my life as I was the only one who understood the computer system in the hotel. I was being called in to work in the middle of the night to fix problems in the system. I was passed up for promotions on two occasions. The only reasons I was passed up, was for not having an educational background and because they would not promote me above my supervisor. Knowing that I was the one being called in to fix everything, and I was covering the other shifts when folks called in sick, I had difficulty understanding their reasoning for not promoting me.

A neighbor knew of an opening for a legal secretarial position. I set up an interview and went in to see the attorney. He was ready to hire me when I found out that the owners of the building that he was in was actually looking for a receptionist. I called the attorney back and advised him that I would feel more comfortable with a receptionist position, as I had no legal experience, nor any formal education. He understood.

I got the receptionist position, which was literally just answering the phones for the all of the tenants in the entire building. I was able to do this for a month or so, with books to read to keep me busy all day long. I was so bored that I started reaching out to some of the attorneys in the building who had no assistants to see if they needed help with things while I was answering phones. I started organizing files, learned dictation, and did some limited typing. Unfortunately, the secretary for the attorneys whom I worked for became ill and was out of the office for some time. I was now able to do a lot of their dictation and document preparation. I was reading statutes and laws at home to get myself familiar with Family Law and Tax Law. After a couple of months, the secretary was healthy enough to return. I then returned to just answering phones and doing the little things that I was able to get, here and there, from other attorneys. After nine months in this position, I was completely bored and needed a challenge.

The attorney that I had originally interviewed with had a secretary by this time. There was two of the attorneys in the building sharing space, who had an opening for a shared secretary position. I applied and got the position. I was working half days for each of them with benefits of a full time employee. In the mornings, I was working on Personal Injury, Probate, Criminal, and Malpractice cases. In the afternoons, I was working on Workers' Compensation, Social Security, and Personal Injury cases. Again, I was reading statutes, laws, and literally anything I could put my hands on to assist in my goal to be a legal paralegal. I worked under a wonderful and experienced paralegal, and I learned a great deal from her.

After several months, one of the attorneys decided to move her practice downtown. At first, I worked two and a half days for this attorney. She then decided that she needed someone in the office more than half of the time. So, she asked me if I wanted to stay on, just not quite full time. I hated driving downtown and did not want to take mass transit. I was hired full time by the other attorney specializing in Workers' Compensation, Social Security Disability, and Personal Injury. I continued to read and learn as much as I could.

About nine months later, our paralegal had found another position and gave her notice. I thought our world was going to fall apart. The new paralegal and I did not get along very well. After another month or so, I was laid off. My attorney wrote me a wonderful recommendation letter. I tried to find something else in the legal field, but without formal education beyond my high school diploma and/or work experience it was very hard to find anything. It was getting close to Christmas, and I had to find something as I had two young children at home who needed Christmas. My husband was laid off, one week to the day, after I was let go. By the second week in December, I couldn't wait any longer and I had to take whatever I could find.

A close friend of mine worked for a collections company, and basically got me a position collecting payments on mortgage loans. I was moved to three different departments in just a month or so. The last department I worked in involved collecting payments on mobile home and FEMA Loans.

**(Continued on next page)**

This was really hard for me to do as I was the only one handling these loans. I did not have much guidance and was pretty much hung out to dry. I worked extra hours with my friend in the foreclosure section, which was also hard to do because of the emotional aspect of the work. After a couple more months, I really couldn't take it any longer and started putting in applications all over.

I received a call back from one firm and set up an interview. I walked into the interview and the managing attorney said something like, "just so you know, this position is for a paralegal position for one of our partners and he is the most anal person you will ever meet". I was so scared and nervous that I wanted to leave immediately. The attorney came in and was really nice to me. I left the interview feeling good that I could learn a lot from working in this position. It was to do Workers' Compensation Defense, and I would be working for only one attorney. After a week or so, I was called by the managing attorney and offered the job.

I was so excited, I gave notice to the collections company that same day. After not receiving a raise for any of the moves I had made there, the collections company tried to keep me by offering more than what I would get paid at the law firm. I respectfully declined and gave my two week notice. My last day was a Friday. The following Monday, I started my new position at the law firm. While we were filling out new hire paperwork, the managing attorney told me that he called my previous attorney to get more details about me and to see if I would be able to handle this new position. My previous attorney told him that he did not think so.

After further consideration, my previous attorney (Martin L. Alvey) called the managing attorney back and told him that he thought that I would indeed be able to do the work as a paralegal if I was given a lot of guidance. So, I was really happy as he was right. I learned quickly and continued to read as much as I could, to learn as much as I could. I worked with another paralegal and she showed me the ropes. If I had any questions, she would answer them. After a year or so, the other paralegal left the firm, and she was replaced by someone else who was new to the workers' compensation system. Therefore, I taught her what I knew and had learned.

After another year or so, the paralegal returned to the firm but as the office manger. I worked 50-60 hours a week regularly, working at home, and working late at the office. My attorney regularly worked seven days a week. I learned a lot working for him. We even went to baseball games together with our families. We had a great working relationship.

I was saddened by the direction in which the office politics were headed. One afternoon, my previous attorney, Mr. Alvey, came in our office to do a deposition. After he was finished, I asked him if he could come into my office for a moment. I asked him if I could use his recommendation letter again, because I felt that I needed to get out of my situation. He said yes, and asked me to call him that night.

Apparently, after he left our office Mr. Alvey had called our paralegal which previously worked at our firm and they talked about me. He asked her if I would be able to do the legal assistant position there and if she thought I would come back to work for him. Mr. Alvey's current legal assistant had become very ill and he had a part-time assistant filling in. Apparently they decided I could do the job.

So I called Mr. Alvey that night as had requested. He offered me a job as his legal assistant.

So, I gave my notice at the defense firm, which was really tough for me to do. There were three attorneys there whom I just adored. My attorney was tremendous in teaching me things. The managing attorney was both fun and serious at different times and always kept things entertaining. We had another attorney who dabbled in just about every type of law, and he was fun to be around. My last two weeks at the law firm were really rocky. I was training my replacement, and trying to make sure that I did not forget anything. I created a procedures manual for her to use as a guide. I also created a very elaborate forms directory for just about everything she needed to do. My last day at the law firm was on a Friday, and on the following Monday I was back at my original firm as a legal assistant for Mr. Alvey, rather than a legal secretary.

I have been back working for Mr. Alvey for 4 and a half years and I absolutely love it! Mr. Alvey and I have a wonderful working relationship. And I continue to read statutes, CLE materials, and anything else I can get my hands on.

Over the years, I have heard many times that I was not a paralegal or a legal assistant because I have not had any formal paralegal education or certifications to become a registered paralegal. I have talked myself out of taking online courses so many times because I am tired of hearing that from people. I am now going to focus on taking the NALA exam, as PACE will not recognize my work experience; and I will be happy with that.

**(Continued on next page)**

In my opinion, having a degree does not always translate into competence or success. From my own experience, I have seen that those degrees really do not get you ready for the day to day challenged you face in a law office or a paralegal position. I started at the bottom and I have fought like crazy to get where I am. I am only interested in taking the NALA Exam for myself, as it is almost required to be a certified paralegal or to have a degree to get into a paralegal position. However, I am not leaving my current position as I am very happy where I am.

I had a career defining moment a couple months ago. I had a client come in, hug me, and then he said, "Lisa, if your goal was to make a positive impact in someone's life, you have succeeded." Tears immediately fell, and I thanked him. This is why we are working late hours, working on weekends, and doing everything we do. This is a very rewarding career field and I would recommend it to anyone. And I would encourage folks to secure the degrees and certifications necessary to reach your goals.

**About the Author:**

Lisa Devlin is a Paralegal in Portland, Oregon where she works for attorney Martin L. Alvey and specializes in workers' compensation, social security, personal injury and Longshore cases.

**Taken from ParalegalGateway.com**

**PINK HEALS TOUR '09** - A crew of firefighters is touring the U.S. in a pink fire truck to raise awareness for the fight against breast cancer. "Cares enough to wear pink" is the theme of the national tour which is supported by communities across the country. The Georgetown Fire Department and Georgetown Firefighters Association are sponsoring the stop in Georgetown on Wednesday, October 21. The firefighters who travel with the pink truck all have pink bunker gear. All the firefighters and everyone who they can get to wear the shirts will be wearing the pink shirts when the pink fire truck comes to Georgetown. They invite all breast cancer survivors to sign the truck. It's pretty cool for Georgetown because the truck is only coming to 6 cities in Texas during this tour. For details about the tour, see [www.pinkribbontour.com](http://www.pinkribbontour.com).



Information courtesy of Kathy Taylor

## JASMINE THE GREYHOUND

In 2003, police in Warwickshire, England, opened a garden shed and found a whimpering, cowering dog. It had been locked in the shed and abandoned. It was dirty and malnourished, and had clearly been abused.



In an act of kindness, the police took the dog, which was a Greyhound female, to the nearby Nuneaton Warwickshire Wildlife Sanctuary, run by a man named Geoff Grewcock and known as a willing haven for animals that had been abandoned, orphaned or otherwise in need.

Geoff and the other sanctuary staff went to work with two aims to restore the dog to full health, and to win her trust. It took several weeks, but eventually both goals were achieved.

They named her Jasmine, and they started to think about finding her an adoptive home.



But Jasmine had other ideas. No-one remembers how it began, but she started welcoming all animal arrivals at the sanctuary. It wouldn't matter if it was a puppy, a fox cub, a rabbit, or any other lost or hurting animal, Jasmine would peer into the box or cage and, where possible, deliver a welcoming lick.

Geoff relates one of the early incidents. "We had two puppies that had been abandoned by a nearby railway line. One was a Lakeland Terrier cross and another was a Jack Russell Doberman cross. They were tiny when they arrived at the centre and Jasmine approached them and grabbed one by the scruff of the neck in her mouth and put him on the settee. Then she fetched the other one and sat down with them, cuddling them."

"But she is like that with all of our animals, even the rabbits. She takes all the stress out of them and it helps them to not only feel close to her but to settle into their new surroundings. "She has done the same with the fox and badger cubs, she licks the rabbits and guinea pigs and even lets the birds perch on the bridge of her nose."

Jasmine, the timid, abused, deserted waif, became the animal sanctuary's resident surrogate mother, a role for which she might have been born. The list of orphaned and abandoned youngsters she has cared for comprises five fox cubs, four badger cubs, 15 chicks, eight guinea pigs, two stray puppies and 15 rabbits.



And one roe deer fawn. Tiny Bramble, 11 weeks old, was found semi-conscious in a field. Upon arrival at the sanctuary, Jasmine cuddled up to her to keep her warm, and they went into the full foster



parent role. Jasmine the greyhound showers Bramble the deer with affection and makes sure nothing is missed. "They are inseparable," says Geoff. Bramble walks between her legs and they keep kissing each other. They walk together round the sanctuary." "It's a real treat to see them."

Jasmine will continue to care for Bramble until she is old enough to be returned to woodland life. When that happens, Jasmine will not be lonely. She will be too busy showering love and affection on the next Orphan or victim of abuse.



Full time Legal Assistant/Paralegal needed for well-established local law firm with diverse areas of practice. Experience preferred. Applicants should be proficient typists. Experience with an office calendaring system and document management system is a definite plus. Applicants must have the ability to work independently and be able to work as a team player. Good written and oral communication skills are required, and bilingual in Spanish is a plus but not required. Salary commensurate with experience. For more information, please contact Mary Jane Serna at 254-690-5688.

Solo practitioner looking for paralegal or legal secretary with family law experience. Please contact Michael Miller at 520 South Main Street in Belton.

Submit resume at [millermi@vvm.com](mailto:millermi@vvm.com) or fax to 254-939-3996.

### RECENT LAW CHANGES THAT WENT INTO EFFECT SEPTEMBER 1

**S.B. 61** requires children to ride in booster seats until they reach age 8 or a height of 4'9"

**H.B. 55** prohibits the use of a cell phone while passing through an active school zone without a hands free device.

**H.B. 339** prohibits a "driver" under 18 years of age using a cell phone at any time anywhere, with or without a hands free device.

**H.B. 55** prohibits a bus driver from using a cell phone when a minor is on the bus.

**H.B. 337** requires all occupants of a vehicle to wear a safety belt, no matter the age or where they are seated.

**H.B. 1290** mandates that Texas health insurance plans must cover cardiovascular screening for men over 45 and women over 55 to assist in the early detection of heart disease.

**H.B. 1310** mandates that minors younger than 16 1/2 may no longer use a tanning bed in Texas, and minors between the ages of 16 1/2 and 18 must have parental consent to use a tanning bed in Texas.

(Courtesy of Juanita Weir)



### HISTORY OF NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

**NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY** was started in 2000 by the Alliance for Children's Rights through the generous support of the Freddie Mac Foundation, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and others.

In November 2000, the National Adoption Day sponsors worked with law firms, state foster care agencies, child advocates, and courts to complete hundreds of foster care adoptions in nine jurisdictions nationwide. In November 2001, 17 jurisdictions participated in National Adoption Day. In 2002, Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and Target became National Adoption Day partners, helping 34 cities across the country finalize 1,350 adoptions and celebrate adoption.

By 2003, courts and community organizations in more than 120 jurisdictions coast-to-coast finalized the adoptions of 3,100 children and celebrated adoption. In 2004, courts and community organizations finalized the adoptions of more than 3,400 children from foster care in 200 events in 37 states.

Today National Adoption Day is celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico as more than 300 events are held each throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt. In total, more than 20,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day.

This year National Adoption Day will be held  
**November 21, 2009.**

For more information please visit  
[www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org)

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

**ELEANOR BOSL - 9TH**  
**BONNIE DAVENPORT - 6TH**  
**ANGELICA ESPINOSA - 25TH**  
**SHERRY GONZALEZ - 11TH**  
**SYLVIA SANTANA - 24TH**  
**RACHEL RENTAS - 17TH**  
**DEBORAH SIMS—11TH**

## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

**MARISSA BRAUCKMILLER—11TH**  
**MANDY CAZARES—16TH**  
**CANDY WILLIAMS—18TH**  
**SUSAN MONTGOMERY—19TH**  
**MARIA GALVAN—28TH**  
**ROXANA PETERSON—30TH**

## August born

Very ambitious. Brave and daring attitude. Devoted lover. Sensitive nature. You get jealous easily. You also get angry very easily. You are proud of your achievements. Attention seeker. Very generous. Easy going. Strong character. Born to be successful. Observant. Creative bent of mind. Caring and loving. Faithful friend.

WishAFriend.com

WishAFriend.com

## September Born

*Wise and humble. Inspiring character. Cool in difficult situations. Altruistic and sympathetic. You love traveling. Knowledgeable beyond your years. Industrious. Understanding nature. Friendly with all. You like helping others. Fun to be with. Loyal lover. Good looker and great dresser. Confident.*

## SHARE YOUR STORY

**This newsletter is about YOU and all the great work being performed by our members on the job as well as off the clock. Favorite snapshots (with story), get well wishes, birth announcements, wedding announcements and any other information that is important to you is welcomed. Please send information to:**

**[melissabartonwood@bcswlaw.com](mailto:melissabartonwood@bcswlaw.com)**

## "PUT YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST"

BY: ED POLL

Those who are regular readers of [LawBizBlog.com](http://LawBizBlog.com) may have seen my recent post about some personal challenges for my wife Paula and me that have led us to place renewed emphasis on taking care of ourselves—from better diet to personal time for relaxation. Our goal was simple and important: Reduce the stress that causes health problems. Stress, of course, is part of the job description for lawyers, and too many feel that they are somehow shirking their responsibilities if they are not stressed out. This attitude is both self-defeating and dangerous.

Consider the issue of billable time. Targeting six billable hours a day seems adequate, yet multiply five days by 50 weeks and it provides only 1,500 hours per year—well below what most firms target. Raise the target to eight hours of billable time a day and you get to 2,000 hours a year, which is close to what most firms expect. Yet how can lawyers get that many billable hours in per day and do business development, continuing education, pro bono work, and take care of personal responsibilities to a spouse, children and other family members?

Lawyers work hard, though not necessarily harder than other people. The thought of 2,000, 2,500 or even more, billable hours is one indication of workload. But in this instance, the billable hour is only a method of accounting; it is not the reason we work long hours. We work long hours because we love what we do; we love helping people; and we want to earn more money to better take care of our loved ones. Billable hours merely provide a method of accountability for those clients who may not otherwise see the value of what we do.

The airline mantra for dealing with loss of cabin pressure, *put your own oxygen mask on first and then attend to your children*, applies here. The equivalent in a law practice is to take a deep breath and really assess the demands that your practice places on you. Taking the time to think things through is the equivalent of a deep breath that restores perspective. Technology often conspires with traditional attitudes to make lawyers think they always know what needs to be done, and that they can do it if they just work hard enough and fast enough. That's asking far too much of anyone, and trying to do it often produces self-defeating fear and stress. A thousand-mile journey is nothing more than a series of steps; take them one at a time.

As lawyers, our real job is to help others and make their lives better. I truly believe that most lawyers, at heart, love their profession. As Confucius said, "Pursue a job you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life." The trick is to get past the distractions and stress so you can see your career for what you want it to be, and allow yourself the time you need to pursue it in a personally satisfying way.

Courtesy of:  
[LawBiz Tips Ezine](#)  
 August 4, 2009 issue

## TEXAS NOTARY LAW AND PROCEDURE WORKSHOP

A State Notary Commission instructor will teach current and prospective notaries how to take acknowledgements; administer oaths; comply with state record keeping requirements and follow new legislations. You'll get answers to your notary public questions. Current, new and non-notary participants who would like to apply for a notary public commission, will benefit from this three hour workshop being offered this fall.

Thursday, November 12

Temple College

1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

\$130.00 Fee

Course Code: CE6830

For additional information:

254.298.8625

[www.templejc.edu](http://www.templejc.edu)

(click on "Community Education")

**NEW LAWS GO INTO EFFECT  
FOR NOTARY PUBLICS THIS MONTH.**

BELL COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

PARALEGALS

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