

A Day in the Life



What is life like for women attorneys? Three women with different careers in the law share a glimpse at a typical day in their lives.

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8:30 a.m.

I arrive at my office after a 30-minute commute, make some coffee, check Facebook, and then print relevant work-related e-mails for our files.

Having encountered a computer glitch of unknown origin a few years ago that strips attachments from my saved e-mails, I do try to make sure we have good paper files. In the 30 years since I started practicing law, I've seen a lot of changes in technology, and I'm sure there's more to come. In the old days, I would dictate a letter into a machine, give the mini-tape to my secretary, review her draft and make changes (perhaps several times), wait for a final document to sign, and maybe direct that it be faxed instead of mailed. Back then, I was on the phone 75 percent of my workday. Now, phone calls are increasingly infrequent, and e-mail and even text messages are preferred by clients as means of communication.

9:30 a.m.

A client comes in to be prepped for his deposition tomorrow. Since business cases are so seldom tried, pre-trial proceedings such as depositions are extremely important. The lawyer who breezes through a deposition prep session is asking for trouble. This particular client thinks he knows the law, and he is wrong. When he repeatedly exclaims "that can't be right," I have to stop working with him on factual recall to, again, explain the claims against him, the law that applies, and the litigation strategies to which he has previously agreed. Fortunately, difficult clients are rare. I hope this one will stifle his natural tendencies to be argumentative and self-important tomorrow.

Noon

Twice a month I attend meetings of Altrusa International of Downtown Dallas, Inc., an international community service and leadership-building organization. My Downtown Dallas club, which has about 65 members, is actively combatting illiteracy and encouraging education in our community. Today, we discuss plans for our annual fundraiser, Dessert First, a chocolate and champagne party that provides the money (last year, approximately \$85,000) to our associated foundation for its grants to agencies with which we work to "educate families for a better tomorrow." Many of my best friends in Dallas are members of this Altrusa club, and I have great Altrusa friends all over Texas, the county, and the world. I try not to miss my Altrusa meetings.

1:30 p.m.

More and more of my practice these days involves estate and probate issues. I have a call with opposing counsel, a guy who was one of our associates years ago, to discuss his failure to provide in discovery any documents that I have not previously given to him. He's objecting on the basis of relevance to documents he'll have to use at trial to prove his case. I thought we'd trained him better! I ask my legal assistant to draft a shell for a motion to compel.

2:00 p.m.

One of my law partners asks me to sit in on a call with her three new clients, who have been sued by their former employer for breach of their employment agreements. The relief sought includes repayment of severance monies long since spent and preclusion of employment by any competitor for the next two years. Needless to say, these individuals are nervous, especially since a court has already granted a temporary restraining order against them and

their new employer. The clients have many questions. We talk for some time about preparations for the temporary injunction hearing that is set for later this month.

5:30 p.m.

I leave work to head to rehearsal for *Bar None*, a follies-type show which pokes fun at lawyers, the law, and current events, and which funds the Sarah T. Hughes Diversity Scholarships at SMU's Dedman School of Law. I have directed *Bar None* since I was a baby lawyer, and we're about to put on the 29th annual production, "Kinky Suits." I cast everyone who auditions, and therefore we have a wonderful assortment of lawyers and legal types in *Bar None*, singing, dancing, and acting. The cast, about 50 strong, will sell tickets, ads, and sponsorships to their friends and colleagues, and we should net about \$80,000 as a result of this summer's four-night production. Rehearsal is fun for me, since I get to be in charge, and I am beginning to see the evidence of all the work we've done thus far as the show begins to gel.



Martha and the participants in *Bar None*.

8:00 p.m.

I'm finally home. Three cats, one dog, and the World's Best Husband are happy to see me. ☺



Carol Wild Scott

*Veterans Consortium Pro Bono
Washington, D.C.*

3:30 a.m.

Alarm goes off—downstairs for the treadmill. First four kitties want their snacks. Onto the treadmill for at least 2 miles at the 3.5 setting plus the 2* incline.

7:30 a.m.

Begin rounds of e-mails about Government Relations Committee Issues Agenda issues nominated by V&MLS for the agenda. Respond to insistent series of e-mails requesting review of a lengthy set of disability questionnaires for veteran friend-of-a-friend. (I will review, but not now—over the weekend.) Telephone begins to ring.

4:25 a.m.

What to wear? Get ready for work (what is the weather prediction/what will be comfortable this morning and afternoon?)

5:10 a.m.

Back to the kitchen to gather lunch, make list for husband, out the door by 5:20 to the 5:40 van pool 8 miles away. Usually make it by a hair. The van is a piece of work—no shocks and overhead refrigeration. Doze on the way in, dropped off at the corner across from my building. Pick up my *Washington Post* at the concierge desk.

8:00 a.m.

Begin to get cases placed with volunteer attorneys and explain to each the process. Cautionary do's and don'ts. Seven to eight calls achieve placement of three cases. Two need special medical knowledge, so have to mine the database for likely volunteers. In between, field a call from veteran who needs help with everything; try to point him in useful direction. Leave phone message for attorney who has taken on a consortium case at the Court. Get partway through the list before leaving for Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office for Veterans Mental Health program.

7:00 a.m.

Into the office, make the first batch of coffee, get cereal and check the e-mail. FBA Veterans and Military Law Section (V&MLS) working on event in Chicago—respond to that e-mail, review the rest for immediate attention—several regarding consortium cases. Several responses to earlier queries about availability of volunteers to take cases. There are enough takers to refer four or five cases. Several will need later responses.

8:35 a.m.

Manage to get a cab two blocks away. Arrive at the program on time. Security, as always, an issue. Program covers several new initiatives, including closer cooperation between chaplains and mental health practitioners. At question opportunity, I inquire about cultural competence and the near total absence of culturally competent mental health services for Native American vets and lack of recognition or implementation of traditional healing in assessment or treatment of Native vets. Answer I received was typically cultivated for publica-

tion; they really are not prepared or equipped to deal with it, but at least it is on the record. During break am approached by public relations guy with Native heritage thanking me for the issue.

11:15 a.m.

Lunch with friend I have not seen for more than year. Great to catch up.

12:55 p.m.

Cab back to the office. Review e-mails and voicemails. Chair of section board has issue to discuss and will call after 3. E-mail from Bruce Moyer re: section issue nominations.

1:30 p.m.

Staff meeting on lengthy agenda. Way too many cookies on the table. Lively discussion.

2:30 p.m.

Place another case with complicated medical toxic exposure issue; placed with attorney with good medical background, dad who is a doctor. Short meeting with consortium director. Follow up on outstanding e-mails that have to be answered today. Convention program needs organizing; e-mail to chair of Section on Energy, Natural Resources, and the Environment to set up lunch to finalize the approach and the speaker list.

3:45 p.m.

Telephone conference with attorney in Houston looking for specialist in Hepatitis C for one of his clients who lives in Maryland. Attempted phone call to director of Veterans Services of Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma to discuss trip out there last week. Left vocemail and message with my cell in it.

4:10 p.m.

Last-minute desk clearance as will not be back in until Thursday. Will call National Congress of the American Indian (NCAI) on the way home to review strategy on the caretaker provisions of the Veterans Omnibus Bill in the Senate.



Dawn E. Stern

*DLA Piper LLC
Washington, D.C.*

5:00 a.m.

Somehow, 5:00 a.m. always seems to come too early. The good news is that our 4-month-old baby slept through the night, so I had a rather restful

night's sleep.

6:30 a.m.

After preparing bottles, cleaning spit-up off my shirt, and making

4:35 p.m.

Van late, but does arrive. As I am second to last stop, time is an uncertain commodity. Call NCAI as soon as I am settled. Good suggestions from them, so the suggested changes in approach should get some traction.

4:55 p.m.

Call from consortium volunteer with questions about taking case back to the Board of Veterans Appeals. She is on board to take it back, has done all the right things, so just needed a suggestion or two and a little encouragement. She will keep in touch as she navigates that process. Her mentor will be a great help.

5:10 p.m.

Read the rest of my paper and try the crossword. This one works well and provides respite from the day's hassles.

6:05 p.m.

Back at the Park and Ride in Linden, Va. Hubby waiting. Fifteen-minute ride home, catching up on what was planted in the garden, what supplies we still need to encourage everything to grow. Still no line on resource for aged manure (pity some of what I left in D.C. can't be repurposed!). NPR's Marketplace has encouraging market report.

6:20 p.m.

Now the question of what to fix for dinner. Leftovers and a salad will do nicely along with the evening news. Still some of the rhubarb pie left for dessert. It was great to find rhubarb in the stores again. Makes great pies. Discuss homework with 11-year-old grandson. Math is great, reading better, history still a challenge. Can't lean too hard, as he has improved so much in the last year. Never argue with a kid with three stripes on his junior black belt. At 8:00 p.m. he is cut off from his computer games.

8:00 p.m.

Kitchen straightened, dog and cats fed, dishes in progress. I'm done. Back upstairs. ☺

sure mommy brain hasn't caused me to leave something at home that I need for the day, I head to the office. Before I do, I make sure to get a big smile from our daughter, which gives me the boost I need to get through the day. Thank goodness for my incredible husband who takes care of her in the morning so that I can get out the door.

7:00 a.m.

I enjoy a few quiet minutes to myself on the subway. These days, alone time is at a premium.

7:30 a.m.

I'm at my desk. The office is still quiet, so I'm able to settle down at my desk, check e-mails, and get ready for what the day has in store. I make a to-do list (once again, to ensure that mommy brain doesn't let anything slip through the cracks).

8:30 a.m.

Before I start on my work for the day, I have to take a moment to pump. Oh—the joys of motherhood.

9:30 a.m.

A partner walks into my office. A client has called with an urgent matter that will likely require filing a bid protest with the Government Accountability Office within the next three days. So much for my organized to-do list and plans for the day. But, as a government contracts litigator, this is the kind of work and compressed schedule that I relish.

10:00 a.m.

We have a conference call with the client. They provide us some background about the matter, and it is clear they have viable grounds for a protest. Fortunately, we have a few days to review the client's files, strategize, and prepare the filing. But, it will definitely be a busy few days.

11:30 a.m.

Pump interruption.

Noon

The client has sent over a host of e-mails. I skim them to be sure we have what we need to begin an effective review. I ask the client to send over a few additional documents that I think will be central to our evaluation of the issues.

12:15 p.m.

My phone bings. The nanny has texted a picture of our baby playing on the floor with our dog. Of course, as a proud new mom, I have to show it to some co-workers.

12:30 p.m.

I take a few minutes for lunch. Fortunately, we have a great salad bar at the cafeteria in our building. And —since I'm getting a salad, I justify buying a cookie to snack on later.

2:30 p.m.

Time for yet another pump interruption.

3:00 p.m.

I continue reading the documents. Now, I have enough background to be able to start thinking about the structure of the protest and the arguments that we can make. I think we have some very strong arguments, and I'm excited to put pen to paper.

3:30 p.m.

Snack time! I eat the cookie that has been staring at me all afternoon.

4:00 p.m.

I meet with the partner that is working on the protest with me. We compare notes and discuss strategy.

4:45 p.m.

I print copies of the documents that I am going to take home with me to read later. I start reading one of them and then realize what time it is.

5:00 p.m.

I run out the door to make sure that I am home in time to relieve the nanny. Once again, I get to enjoy just a few minutes to myself on the subway. But, this time, I use it to finish what I was reading when I had to leave the office.

6:00 p.m.

My favorite time of the day. I arrive home to a big, toothless baby grin, and the stress of the day somehow disappears. We spend time playing, singing, and laughing.

7:30 p.m.

My husband arrives home, and we try to enjoy dinner together. We take turns eating one handed while holding the baby.

8:30 p.m.

It's time for the bedtime routine—bath, feeding, reading a book, and singing our daughter's favorite lullaby (Billy Joel's "She's Got a Way About Her," of course!).

9:30 p.m.

Because talking simply requires too much energy and brain power, my husband and I watch one of the many shows that we've been "meaning to get to" on our DVR.

11:00 p.m.

Time for bed. 5:00 a.m. will once again come too early. ☹

