

# Hon. Jane Triche Milazzo

by Emmy Schroeter

*Emmy Schroeter has served as a career law clerk to Judge Jane Triche Milazzo since August 2014. She is a graduate of the Louisiana State University Law Center, where she served as editor in chief of the Louisiana Law Review. She currently serves on the Board of the Federal Bar Association New Orleans Chapter's Younger Lawyers Division.*

**A**s Judge Jane Triche Milazzo always says, the best judicial training she ever received was teaching elementary school. Judge Milazzo's unconventional path to the federal bench has made her uniquely well-suited, exceedingly pragmatic, and unassumingly humble. Lawyers in the Eastern District of Louisiana find Judge Milazzo's courtroom to be an enjoyable place to practice and her straightforward sensibilities foster professionalism and communication between the parties.

Judge Milazzo was born and raised in small-town Napoleonville, La., as one of eight children. The daughter of Risley "Pappy" Triche, a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives and the mayor of Napoleonville at the ripe age of 24, Judge Milazzo was no stranger to politics and the law. Her father, a gifted litigator, grew up in Napoleonville and was the grandson of a district attorney, judge, and senator. Her mother, Clara Triche, was also a native of Napoleonville and was the daughter of a farmer. She was the grounded, moral rock that kept the family centered. At 10 years old, Judge Milazzo realized the fragility of life after the tragic death of her younger sister. This life-altering event taught her to enjoy the gift of family and friendship—a lesson she cherishes to this day.

Although Judge Milazzo would eventually follow in her father's footsteps, she first started down a different path. In 1977, Judge Milazzo earned her bachelor's degree in history from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La., and had four children, Richard, Anne, Jerome, and Joseph, shortly thereafter. She later began teaching at a local Catholic elementary school.

At the request of her father, she left teaching in 1986 and began working as his legal assistant; at that time, her father was no longer involved in politics and was instead focused on his legal practice. She recalls carrying his briefcase and keeping him organized in his prolific trial practice. It was at this time that she recognized her love of the law and the courtroom. After several years working with her father, Judge Milazzo broached the subject of attending law school. Expecting her father to discourage the idea in favor of her family obligations, she was pleasantly surprised when he responded, "Go, you're like a duck in water." She spent the next few months preparing to attend law school.



At the age of 32 with four young children in tow, Judge Milazzo enrolled at Louisiana State University Law Center. She began each day at 2:30 or 3:00 in the morning, prepared for class, and then commuted more than an hour from her home in Napoleonville to LSU's campus. Despite being a nontraditional student, she finally felt that she had found a place where she fit in and a subject at which she excelled.

Judge Milazzo graduated from Louisiana State University Law Center in 1992. After graduation, she joined the family firm in Napoleonville—making her the only female lawyer in rural Assumption Parish. Women in the area sought her representation and felt more comfortable sharing their struggles with her than with many of her male colleagues. In Napoleonville, Judge Milazzo cultivated a "small town" practice where she represented both plaintiffs and defendants in matters ranging from medical malpractice to family law. Judge Milazzo considered her practice the best of both worlds, as it allowed her to handle small, local matters as well as complex litigation that required travel across the state.

Despite the success of the family practice, Judge Milazzo's mother continued to keep the family grounded. Judge Milazzo recalls she often said, "My dad was not a very educated man, but he always said he trusted two people: his priest and his lawyer." Judge Mila-

zzo often reflected on this saying as a constant reminder of her sacred obligation to the people she served.

In 2008, Judge Milazzo was elected to the 23rd Judicial District Court without opposition; she was the first female elected to that position. Lawyers in the area were excited to finally have a female perspective on the state bench, and Judge Milazzo's unconventional path to the judiciary proved an asset to her position.

On March 13, 2011, Judge Milazzo's acumen as a judge was recognized by President Barack Obama when he nominated her to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. She was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on Oct. 11, 2011, and sworn in on Oct. 12.

Discussing her service on the federal bench, Magistrate Judge Jay Wilkinson put it best: "Judge Milazzo exhibits as much good sense, practicality, and on-the-button legal instincts as any judge I have ever seen in this court. Along with her conscientiousness, I figure these traits must come in large part from her genes, since her late and much-revered father was one of the real lions of this court's bar for decades." Fellow District Court Judge Lance Africk echoed these sentiments: "When executing her judicial duties, Judge Milazzo combines a keen intellect, strong work ethic, engaging personality, and a homegrown compass that adroitly discriminates between right and wrong. Having grown up in a loving household replete with energetic discussions about politics and life lessons, Judge Milazzo learned at an early age that in order to achieve success, it is critical that one show respect for the viewpoints of others, including those with whom one disagrees. Her judgment is only clouded when it comes to her beloved LSU Tigers."

As a judge, she has also had the opportunity to serve as a mentor to law clerks and female lawyers alike. One law clerk, Stephanie Murphy, clerked for Judge Milazzo at both the state and federal court levels. Discussing Judge Milazzo's influence on her legal career, Murphy said, "During my three years of clerking with Judge Milazzo, she taught me that I could be a friend, a mom, a wife, and a daughter all while being an active legal professional. She illustrated hard work, integrity, professionalism, respect

for all that entered her courtroom, a true passion for the law, and gratitude for being a member of the judicial process. Now, in private practice, I see many women in awe of her every day as she exemplifies these things to her female interns, colleagues, and members of the bar. She is a shining example of how far an intuitive female mind, hard work both at home and in the office, and being true to yourself can get you. Oh yes, and how a fabulous pair of shoes never hurts!"

During her years in private practice, Judge Milazzo was active in several legal organizations and served as president of both the Assumption Parish Bar Association and the 23rd Judicial Bar Association. She was also a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association House of Delegates, where she served as a member of the Legislative Committee and as chair in 2007. As a state judge, she served on the executive committee of the District Judges Association. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the New Orleans Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Judge Milazzo now resides in New Orleans with her husband, John Milazzo Jr., a retired banker, renowned jambalaya chef, and avid Costco bulk shopper. As Judge Africk said, "she and her husband John, a success in his own right and known by all of us for his good cheer and culinary talent as a Cajun chef, have rapidly become crowd favorites among the bar and bench." The Milazzos enjoy spending time at their home on Lake Verret, entertaining their six children and three grandchildren, and cheering on the LSU Tigers. Two of Judge Milazzo's children, Anne and Richard, joined the family tradition of practicing law and both enjoy diverse local family law practices. ☺

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en. In 2013, she was introduced to Kara Van de Carr, the president and founder of Eden House New Orleans, a home and treatment program for victims of human trafficking. In 2014, Judge Lemmon brought a spotlight to the issue at the FBA National Convention in Providence, R.I., by organizing a continuing legal education program on the topic and nominating Van de Carr for the Hon. Sarah T. Hughes Civil Rights Award, which she won. Judge Lemmon also organized the human trafficking CLE program presented at the 2016 Women in the Law Conference in New Orleans.

The Lemmon family legal legacy continues with Judge and Justice Lemmon's children. Four of their six children attended Loyola Law School; three are practicing attorneys and one is a Louisiana state court judge in the 29th Judicial District Court for the Parish of St. Charles. The two nonlawyers of the Lemmon brood serve the community in different ways: one is a children's psychologist and the other is a social worker specializing in preventing violence against women. The Lemmons have 13 grandchildren—11 boys and two girls. ☺