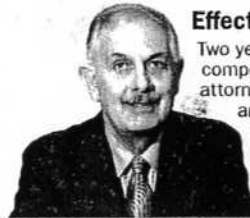




Family Ties

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Josh M. Fredricks works to preserve the old-time values of his father's days as a lawyer and a judge.

JUDICIAL SPOTLIGHT
PAGE 5



Effects of Reform

Two years after workers' compensation reform, defense attorney George Woolverton and others in the legal system discuss how the changes have affected their work.

BUSINESS PAGE 7

Punitives Slashed

A Superior Court judge slashes a \$175 million punitive damages verdict against chemical manufacturers in a Central Valley underground water pollution case to less than \$13 million. For the complete story go to www.dailyjournal.com

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Lebanese-American Lawyer Struggles With Being a 'Citizen of the World'

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The United States is a nation of immigrants.

More than one in four California residents came here from foreign lands, and 13 percent of the state's lawyers — 19,000 attorneys — are immigrants.

In this occasional series, we look at some of those attorneys and their pursuit of the American Dream.

Martin My

By Anne Marie Ruff
Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — Wafa Hoballah has a typical Lebanese joie de vivre. She greets international clients with a musical 'Bonjour' or 'marhaba,' inviting them into her office filled with Islamic ceramics, Buddha images, West African figurines and travel picture books.

She was born in Dakkar, Senegal, where her family did business. She was raised in Lebanon and educated in Leba-

non, Austria and the U.S. She received her master of laws degree from McGeorge School of Law.

She is a sole practitioner working in the areas of international business and corporate law between the U.S., Middle East and West Africa; and immigration, including asylum cases. She is admitted to practice in California, Washington, D.C., New York and Lebanon.

Hoballah travels frequently among the three continents where she has lived and has family. She is the president of the board of the International Visitors Council of Los Angeles, a charter board member of the Lebanese American Foundation and chair of the board of the African Community Resource Center. She is also a founding member of the Los Angeles-Beirut Sister Cities Organization and was part of a recent delegation to Beirut.

She told her story to Daily Journal Staff Writer Anne Marie Ruff.

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ROBERT LEVINS / Daily Journal

"I didn't come to the U.S. to make my millions or to take my piece of the pie, but for education," Wafa Hoballah said.

Tossing Conviction, Panel Blasts Judge for Inserting Herself in Trial

By Laura Ernde
Daily Journal Staff Writer

An Orange County judge scolded six years ago for her unorthodox style in the courtroom returned to the hot seat again this week.

Superior Court Judge Susanne S. Shaw repeatedly interjected herself into a man's assault trial, prompting the 4th District Court of Appeal to toss out the conviction and order a new trial with a new judge.

"The court's vision of the trial had become clear: it was the judge's trial. The parties were mere bystanders — props cluttering the judge's stage," a three-judge panel wrote in a unanimous unpublished opinion filed late Monday. *People v. Urias*, G035179.

Much of the ruling centered on Shaw's belittling treatment of the defendant and his lawyer, who was

not named. The panel also found that Shaw improperly instructed the jury and should have allowed the jury to hear evidence of Urias' good character.

"Here, the cumulative impact of the trial judge's caustic, condescending remarks to Urias and his counsel, together with her flawed legal rulings, leaves us no confidence in the verdict," Justice Raymond J. Ikola wrote.

Shaw, who sits at Harbor Court in Newport Beach, was on vacation until Monday and could not be reached for comment. She recently announced that she would retire this fall.

She was publicly admonished in June 2000 by the Commission on Judicial Performance for telling a drunken-driving defendant, "You know what they do to little white

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Lawyer and 'Citizen of the World'

Continued from page 1

I have been called Ms. Hezbollah by judges in court. Sometimes, it is an honest mistake, but you can tell when someone does it to be sarcastic. That hurts.

I am Lebanese, but I am really a citizen of the world. I don't present myself as a Lebanese Arab Muslim. I am a professional.

Immigrant Stories

My first languages are Arabic and French. I went to French Catholic schools in Lebanon, where we were not allowed to speak Arabic, even during recess. Then I went to American Protestant missionary schools.

I learned Arabic really when I went to the American school, because there was more emphasis on literature and language.

I came to the U.S. for the first time to see my brother who was in medical school in New York City. He begged me to stay. I said no because they had just turned on the lights on the corniche [the seashore drive in Beirut], and I said there's nothing like that.

I was quite encouraged by my family to study because they are all highly educated lawyers, judges, et cetera. There was always the need to do more, to do better.

In February 1983, I passed the bar in Lebanon. My uncle had one of the oldest established law firms in Lebanon.

I had to beg him to let me work at the firm. I worked with one of his associates, and when the client came back and told my uncle what a good job I had done, then he took me in. Until now, we work together on international cases.

I didn't come to the U.S. to make my millions or to take my piece of the pie, but for education. I was just finishing my apprenticeship in Beirut when I thought I could do an L.L.M. in the U.S. for one year. I stayed for the summer, but when I wanted to go back, the airport was closed in Beirut because of the civil war, so I was sort of stuck. It was still really bad; it was not safe even to go to Damascus. That was 20 years ago.

So my adviser suggested I stay. I was in Sacramento at McGeorge University. I decided not to limit myself to California, so I looked



'Working with two parties on two continents is what I dream of. I want to bring U.S. investment directly to Lebanon.'

Wafa Hoballah,
International lawyer

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I really feel violated, like a woman

myself to California, so I looked back east.

In Washington, D.C., at that time, there were only two Arab attorneys. It was unheard of for a young Lebanese kid to get a job at a midsized firm in Georgetown. But the managing partner didn't care; he saw me as young and energetic. He sent me to all of the international conferences. Some partners raised eyebrows at that.

But I worked with a senior partner who had contracts with companies in Europe and the Middle East, Saudi Arabia. We worked mostly in the area of secure technologies, things like communication systems that worked in the desert.

Slowly, I started working on Lebanese law, from D.C. contacts I had. The demand became bigger and bigger, and I started to become known as an expert in Lebanese law. I don't advertise, but firms that are really diligent about representing their clients [who have business in Lebanon], they find me.

You know, working with two parties on two continents is what I dream of. I want to bring U.S. investment directly to Lebanon, because for the last few years, it has all come through Dubai or Saudi Arabia.

There is a lot of ignorance about Lebanon. People don't know if the

civil war is over or not. It's still considered a terrorist place.

My cousins in Europe call me the American cousin. I have been a citizen for 11 years. People there think we Americans are a lot of crazy junkies, that we don't have our own culture, that we just wear jeans and watch TV. So we don't have a national food, but so what? We have a lot of other things.

Even though I am still here physically, I try to bridge the gap between the U.S. and Lebanon. I had really been working on opening myself to going back to stay after retirement. It is easier to retire there because of the structure of Lebanese families. There is more to do and more support. Now, I don't know if I have the energy to feel that way again.

I just returned from a trip to Beirut with the Los Angeles-Beirut Sister Cities Organization. We had a 17-person delegation, including Eric Garcetti and Dennis Zine. We met with the mayor of Beirut, the prime minister, the ambassador, the minister of the Interior to set up cultural, social and trade ties.

Exactly five days after we left, Israel started bombing, and they closed the airport again.

Some of the members of the delegation are still there. They are devastated; they can't believe their eyes.

I really feel violated, like a woman who has been raped with my eyes open.

Some lawyers, if they are very pro-Israeli, they don't know how to deal with me or how to approach me. My last name, Hoballah, means the love of god. It's not Hezbollah, the Party of God. It's a major difference.

I will just say I am against all violence.

I have had calls from people I haven't heard from for years, friends, clients, colleagues, people asking about my family.

My brother arrived in Beirut the day the airport was bombed. Like many others, he had to wait several days to be evacuated. My mother still lives there.

In some ways, it's easier to be there. When you are there, you don't worry as much as when you are here; at least you have some firsthand knowledge.

I haven't been able to get a phone line through today. I haven't been able to work. Yesterday, I was able to focus a little bit to tell my assistant what to do.

But this isn't the first crisis we have been through. The commitment of the sister cities' members won't be derailed by this military development. That is the position of all Lebanese, as well. They will rebuild Lebanon.