

Pretentious? Who, Moi?

This story comes by way of the Drover's Dog, who writes in the WA Law Society's journal *Brief*. It was published in their January 1997 issue, but is certainly worth repeating.

It involves some correspondence between two American lawyers, one having written to the other asking if he would do some work for her in California.

His response:

Dear....

I want to thank you for offering me the opportunity to collect the judgment on behalf of Ms X, but I must decline.

Without sounding pretentious, my current retainer for cases is a flat \$100,000 with an additional charge of \$1000 per hour. Since I specialise in international trade and geopolitical relations between the Middle East and Europe, my clientele is very unique and limited, and I am afraid I am unable to accept other work at this time ...

Very sincerely

Stephen XXXXX

His correspondent replied thus:

Dear Steve

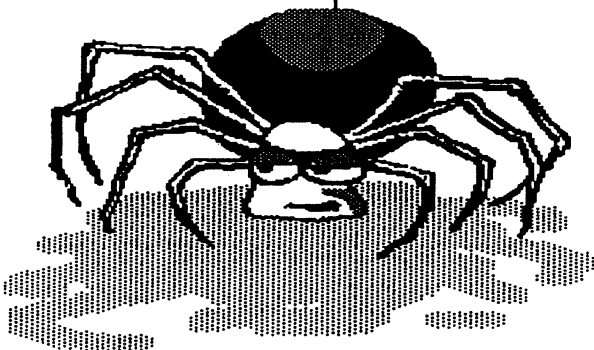
I am in receipt of your letter dated August 8, regarding collection of a judgment against Mr Y.

Steve, I've got news - you can't say you charge a \$100,000 retainer fee and an additional \$1000 an hour without sounding pretentious. Especially when you're writing to someone in Laramie, Wyoming where you're considered pretentious if you wear socks to Court or drive anything fancier than a Ford Bronco. Hell, Steve, all the lawyers in Laramie, put together, don't charge \$1000 an hour.

Anyway, we were sitting around the office discussing your letter and decided you had a good thing going. We doubt we could get away with charging \$1000 an hour in Laramie (where people are more inclined to barter with livestock than pay in cash), but we do believe we could join you in California, where evidently people can get away with just about anything. Therefore the four lawyers in our firm intend to join you in the practice of international trade and geopolitical relations between the Middle East and Europe.

Now Steve, you're probably thinking we don't know anything about the Middle East and Europe, but I think you'll be pleasantly surprised to find out this is not the case. Paul S is actually from the Middle East - he was

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raised outside of Chicago, Illinois and if those national newsmen insist in calling Illinois the Midwest, to us, if it's between New York and the Missouri River, it's the Middle East.

Additionally, although I have never personally been to Europe, my sister has just returned from a vacation there and told me lots about it, so I believe I would be of some help to you on that end of the negotiations. Hoke M has actually been there, although it was 15 years ago, so you might have to update him on recent geopolitical developments. Hoke has also applied to the Rotary Exchange Student Program for a 16-year-old Swedish girl and believes she will be very helpful in preparing him for trips abroad.

Another thing you should know, Steve, is that the firm has an extensive foreign language background which would be very useful to you. Hoke took Latin in high school, although he hasn't used it much. Vonnie N took high school German, while Paul has mastered Spanish by ordering food at numerous local Mexican restaurants. I myself, majored in French in college, and although I've forgotten the words for "international" and "geopolitical", but I can still hail a taxi or find a restroom, which might come in handy.

Steve, let us know when we should join you in California to do whatever it is you do. We've all been practising saying we charge \$1000 an hour with a straight face but, so far, haven't been able to do it. I suspect it'll be easier once we get to California, and, because I'm new to the area of international trade and geopolitical relations, I'm thinking of only charging \$500 - \$600 an hour. Will that be enough to meet our overheads?

Sincerely

Becky XXX

PS. Incidentally, we have advised our client of your hourly rate. She is willing to pay you \$1000 an hour to collect judgment, provided it doesn't take more than four seconds.

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Luncher

There's always a fine time to be had at the Law Week lunch at Parliament House and usually story or two emerges, most of these being unprintable. This one, however, really has to be told.

Apparently one enthusiastic luncher, (who shall, of course, remain anonymous) decided that it was time to end the afternoon and, having bidden fond farewells to the assembled masses, wandered out of the dining room, past the lift, past the loos, into an unknown corridor and became entirely bushwacked.

The practitioner, with Goldilocks-like practicality, decided to lie down and have a little rest until a sense of direction (and possibly decorum) returned.

Upon awakening at around 8.30pm, our practitioner found that the afternoon certainly was over, the sun had set, luncheon companions were safely esconced in various pubs around town and the nearest landmark was Maggie Hickey's office door.

Flight in confusion was the order of the evening.

The Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves

A little champagne-induced rumination at the recent opening of Hilary Chambers produced a hypothetical firm of women lawyers in Darwin that would revel in the name Little Short Cox.

It was not expected that lawyers of the male persuasion would be flocking to join them.