



Law & Government

Tommie Jo Marsilio

Sometimes I encounter a legal issue that gives me an idea for this column. This one was different. I have had three friends say to me, just this week, "I am going to court this week; wish me luck." I have learned over the years from clients that people really get nervous about going to court. It does not seem to matter their age, education, or even reason for going to court. It is something that most people dread.

I wish I could write a column to soothe every fear of our readers, but that would be dishonest. If you are charged with a crime, you should be nervous. But most people that I hear from are not charged with a crime at all. They either have a minor traffic infraction or are involved with a civil matter such as a divorce, custody issue, or other dispute.

I stand by my prior recommendation to always get a lawyer. Having said that, it might help if you know what to expect when you get to court. First of all, you can be sure that much waiting will be involved. "Going to court" for a non-criminal matter is nothing like what you see on television. If you are there for an hour, you might see a judge or magistrate for 10 minutes. Most of your time will be spent waiting for your turn, waiting to hear back from your attorney, or waiting for approval of something. Do not worry. This waiting likely means that good things are happening on your behalf, but it always takes time. By all means, ask your attorney if you do not understand a particular delay. After all, that is why you are paying an expert to help you negotiate this tedious system.

Many clients (and friends and family) say they are "afraid I will say something wrong." This is almost impossible. First of all, many preliminary civil court appearances do not require you to speak other than to your lawyer. When you do testify, you really are there to tell the truth, regardless of the kind of case. Despite what you see on television, there is rarely a battle of word games. If you are required to testify for your court appearance, you will likely find it to be much less stressful than you feared.

A common question is how people should dress for court. You should expect to see the lawyers and judge dress very professionally. (Although some lawyers cannot resist the urge to make us all look bad.) I generally recommend that clients "dress up." If you have a suit, wear it. If not, do not buy one just for court, but wear what you would wear to attend church or a similar service. It lets the court know you take the matter seriously.

Hope this clears up a few of the unknown elements of the dreaded court appearance. If you do find yourself involved in our legal system for some reason, try to remain calm. Be cooperative and honest and you will likely have a good experience.

This column does not seek to provide legal advice. Neither Tommie Jo Marsilio nor the Villager are providing legal advice to readers. This column is for education and entertainment only. The advice of an attorney or other professional should be sought regarding any individual situation or legal question.

Rotary Report

Iva Walker

Garrettsville-Hiram Rotary entertained a request from the Crestwood 4-Cs organization for support in pursuing a matching grant to equal any locally-raised funds. This is a challenge from the Feinstein Foundation and can range from \$250 (last year's amount) to \$40,000. Doubling the money is usually a winning bet. Rotarians went in for \$250.

Consultation with other Rotary groups in the area (esp. Mantua, Aurora) seemed to be called for concerning two other items of business, to wit:

An aspiration of the Hiram College Rotaract group involving an education project for children and victims of abuse in the Dominican Republic as well as setting up a micro-lending system to improve the local economy. This Caraminante/Boca Chica project would include five faculty members and thirteen students and the preliminary cost is estimated at about \$3,400.

Rotary International is seeking sponsors for Shelter Boxes containing emergency supplies to be sent to Japan. The Portage County Cluster is being asked to support one box at a cost of approximately \$1000. The thinking locally is that the clubs might be assessed on a per member basis to lessen the burden on the smaller clubs.

Programs for April were reviewed. A fine time was had by all. Next meeting @ 5:30 on Wednesday, March 30 in the Main Street Grille and Brewing Company. Join them.



Puppy Tails

Mialie T. Szymanski

*As the moon goes to bed, the sun comes up
And here we meet a sleepy pup,
Who was walking through G-ville one bright sunny day,
Then saw The Villager and decided to stay.*

Doodle Dog rolled over and lazily looked out the window at the blue sky decorated with fluffy white clouds that were going by just as lazily as he was watching them. The sun was bright and happy up above the earth and Doodle Dog was looking forward to just another ordinary day in the small town. Sometimes a day of un-adventure was just what a little dog needed. He stood up and shook every inch of his fur to wake himself up before heading over to his dish for some breakfast. His long, skinny tail caught him off balance when he tried to walk and his whiskers, as pure white as the clouds, clumsily dipped into his bowl and were soon dripping wet. As Doodle Dog put his rough, pink tongue in for another drink, pointed ears reflected back at him from the water. A long, skinny tail, whiskers, and pointy ears? His newly oval eyes widened nervously and Doodle Dog quickly turned around and ran outside to the sidewalk to his favorite storefront.

Before he could take a peek at his mirror image in the window glass, two children walking down the street stopped to say hello to the friendly-looking animal. "Here, kitty, kitty!" one coaxed, reaching out her hand. "Aw, nice kitty!" the other said, squealing with delight as what she viewed as a new friend scampered down the hill in an apparent attempt to start a game of tag. But Doodle Dog was in no position to play the day away – he had to figure out why he suddenly

looked more like a feline than a canine, and how to get back to normal and do it quickly!

Doodle Dog retraced his usual steps, going the familiar and safe routes in the hope of somehow reversing whatever strangeness he had fallen into, but as he passed the playground the little voices of his best playmates continued to send cat calls his way from the swings and the monkey bars, and when he finally plopped down in the wooded area where he often went for a few moments of quiet to be alone with his thoughts, he found himself unable to think due to some very loud purring that, as it turned out, was coming from his very own self. He also found it very hard to concentrate on anything else except a constant need to clean behind his ears. He licked the tip of his front paw and rubbed all over his face, still not used to the whiskers and smaller nose. There was no way the floppy-, er, pointy-eared newspaper pet would be okay with staying like this much longer: he had places to go, people to see, and chewy toys to sniff out, and he had suddenly lost all sense of smell-direction of where he had put his favorite bone! Oh no! Not only that, but he had developed a very strong distaste of being around water. When he had to travel the boardwalk past the town waterfall to get to the forest he ran as fast as he could for fear of falling in.

Now, though, he was safe under some brush among the trees, far away from the stream and far away from the townspeople who kept referring to him as "kitty." As he thought, he scratched his claws on the bark nearby and climbed up the tree to rest on a limb while he tried to come up with a plan. Maybe if he retraced his steps from the last day, walking backward of course, it might make him a dog again. Doodle Dog jumped out of the tree and tried that for a moment. Nope, it only made him dizzy. Maybe if he howled at the moon it would remind him of his doggie days. The sky was getting darker and it looked like a storm was rolling in. A faint crescent was just barely visible through the gray clouds, so Doodle Dog tried that. Nope, all that came out of his mouth was a high-pitched meow. Huh, that didn't work very well, did it? While he tried to think some more, the clouds that had been so brilliant white and then gray were now nearly black. The bright, happy sun was now the dark, mysterious moon and the blue sky, now completely out of sight, opened like a tarp that had been cut, dumping rain onto the small town, the tiny woodland, and the little Doodle Dog. Unable to escape the downpour from where he was perched, Doodle Dog gave in and ran home, figuring he had no choice but to deal with his predicament tomorrow. When he reached the office, Doodle Dog shook the drops from his fur and passed a glass-front bookcase on the way to his warm bed. A floppy-eared puppy with round eyes and no whiskers looked back at him. A soaking wet floppy-eared puppy, but Doodle Dog all the same.

What can we say...it must have been something in the water. April Fools!

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