

# BEHIND THE BENCH • ISSUE 2



If there were an award for “Social Butterfly” of the bench, Judge Gloria Sturman would certainly be the front-runner. Very approachable and down-to-earth, Judge Sturman was born and raised in southwestern Colorado. After graduating from high school, Sturman moved to Tempe, Arizona, where she obtained both her undergraduate degree in Business and Real Estate and law school degree from ASU.

Sturman came to Nevada in 1983 after the placement director for her law school encouraged her to go to Vegas and assist on the MGM Grand fire litigation. Convinced that she would only “have to” stay here for two to three years at most, Sturman set her sights on Vegas. Twenty-eight years later, Sturman is a Nevada District Court Judge who swears that three years can turn into 28 with a blink of an eye.

Sturman started her young career as an associate at the then law firm of Edwards Hunt, which later expanded to include well known attorney turned complex litigation Special

Master, Floyd Hale. Sturman stuck with Hale for the next twenty years, before deciding to run for District Court Judge. Sturman does not have any family in Nevada and admits that this was the hardest part about being a new resident to Nevada back in the 1980’s. However, Sturman quickly made friends that she now considers to be just like family.

When discussing running for District Court Judge, Sturman likens the campaign process with her fellow co-candidates to a cohesive “scrum of kids at a soccer match running from function to function trying to get [their] face[s] out there.” Although she credits her successful campaign to some extent to advertising, Sturman emphasizes that “there’s nothing like getting out there and meeting people one on one and letting them know who you are and that you would like their vote. “It’s like the old saying goes, every hand you shake is 5 votes. I think this strategy really paid off for those of us who were dedicated to doing it.”

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Patricia Lee is a partner with Hutchison & Steffen practicing primarily in business and commercial litigation, including, but not limited to, partnership/ shareholder disputes, contract enforcement/ defense, non-competition agreements, and commercial lease review and litigation. In addition, Patricia practices in the areas of trademark registration and litigation, collections, mechanic’s liens/foreclosures, medical claims billing, and family law. Patricia is dedicated to serving the needs of not only more sizeable client companies, but also providing legal guidance and services to entrepreneurs and small business owners through the Firm’s program entitled The Legal Solution for Entrepreneurs & Small Businesses.

Patricia enjoys working with a range of colleagues within her legal profession. Behind the Bench chronicles a series of interviews Patricia has had with judges within our various court systems. We hope you enjoy this issue.

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Some of the organizations that Sturman openly supports are the National Association of Women Business Owners, or "NAWBO," Women's Council of Realtors, and Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys, or "SNAWA." I mentioned that I see somewhat of a developed pattern leaning towards the "girl power" end of the spectrum. Sturman responded that she loves the quality of some of the women's groups because the members are very supportive of each other across professions.

I asked whether she thought the legal landscape of Nevada had changed since she started practicing in the early 1980's. I was in disbelief as Sturman explained that she was only the fourth woman President of the State Bar of Nevada and she presided over the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the State Bar as an incorporated entity. Those four women were consecutively elected within a period of about five years. Surely, then, there had been an onslaught of women holding this position since Sturman's administration as State Bar President? Response: "Since me there have been three more." Even with respect to the Clark County Bar Association, Sturman represented only the third female president by the time the Association had reached its 40-year mark. "So when I started," remembers Sturman, "the profession was pretty much dominated by a lot of old white men."



Unlike her freshman judicial colleague, Judge Allf, Sturman did not always want to be a judge and freely admits that the first time she ever considered it was the first time she presided over Traffic Court. Sturman states that she absolutely "loved it," and she realized that she could actually help solve problems on the spot. So, when the opportunity arose in 2009 to actually run for a seat on the District Court bench, Sturman was all in.

Judge Sturman hopes to emulate some of the Judges who have inspired her throughout her practice. Sturman actively tries to remember as many lawyers as she can and always addresses them by their last name whenever possible.

As far as conduct she hopes to stay away from, Sturman vows that she will be mindful of her non-verbal reaction when parties appear before her: "No rolling of the eyes, or looking completely tired, exhausted or disinterested, particularly if there's a jury in the room. Anything to ensure impartiality and that no one leaves feeling that they didn't get a fair hearing. Even if you leave my courtroom having lost, I want people leaving feeling that they can respect the result."

Overall, Sturman is having the "best time of [her] life" serving as one of our newest District Court Judges. Sturman admits that she is surprised by the diversity of cases that she has been able to preside over during her short tenure. When asked whether the emotional elements of certain cases influences her decision, Sturman is clear to state that, regardless of how she feels about the case emotionally, she must apply the law to the facts to reach a fair result.

When asked what advice she would give to anyone considering a run for judicial candidacy, Sturman recommends dedicating some of your time acting as an arbitrator, Judge pro tem (so long as you are not conflicted out), or in some other similar capacity so that you can really gauge whether or not you're the type of person that wants to sit around and listen to other people.



**A**lthough Sturman is still getting her bearings on the bench, she has quickly come to certain realizations and shares these words of advice and information to attorneys practicing before her:

**1** Give her your best legal case. Lead with it. If there is a case that is directly on point, don't be afraid to bring a couple of copies with you, especially if it's not a routine motion.

**2** Be very specific about what it is you're asking the Court to do. For instance, in a motion for summary judgment, do you really think the whole thing should go away? Or just some of the claims?

**3** Don't interrupt an attorney when he or she is in the middle of their argument. Whoever brought the motion will have the last word. Sturman will allow a fair amount of back and forth particularly if new issues are raised in rebuttal, but ultimately, the person who brought the motion, will get the last word.

**4** In terms of motions in limine on bench trials, don't try your case in advance. It does make sense to get some guidance from the Court in terms of which documents or witnesses will be excluded so that the lawyers can properly prepare; however, don't try your case in advance. AND, don't bring frivolous motions in limine, like on whether or not we're going to follow the Rules of Professional Conduct. Remember, the BMW case still mandates that you bring your objections during the trial regardless of any prior motions in limine. *See BMW of North America, Inc., et. al. v. Roth, et. al.*, 252 P.3d 649, 652-653 (Nev. 2011). In any event, she does not want a motion in limine on every little issue. Try to stipulate to some of the issues in advance so that she is not stuck hearing 42 different motions in limine on the pre-trial calendar (which did actually happen).

**5** The more Sturman sits on the bench, the more she is inclined to automatically grant unopposed motions by a certain date. In short, get your oppositions in on time, or get a written stipulation from opposing counsel and submit it to the Court so that Sturman knows not to grant the motion for failure to oppose.

**6** Sturman reserves her in-chambers calendar for things such as motions to associate counsel, motions to amend if they're not opposed, or other motions that are not going to typically be opposed. However, if you call and ask that something be moved off of the in-chambers calendar, she will always move it.

**7** Not everything requires an order shortening time. Before you ask for one, really think about whether or not it is actually necessary.

**8** Sturman's civil calendar is on Thursdays and Fridays. Incidentally, Sturman is conflicted out of presiding over any endoscopy matters due to her former practice. Sturman also volunteers her time as a settlement judge when her schedule permits. Although there is certainly a place for private mediators, particularly in instances where there are multiple parties and the settlement may take protracted negotiations over a prolonged period of time, Sturman is very proud that the Court can offer this alternative to parties.

**Take a peek behind the bench and see what Sturman is like when she's not being one of our newest-elected officials:**

**Favorite Food:** Sturman considers Mexican food to be amongst the finest cuisine and even says that she loves Taco Bell. "You can't make that kind of food at home for that price."

**Last Book Read:** Interestingly, Sturman previously sat on the Library Board and had visions of becoming a librarian. Reading is definitely one of her favorite pastimes and she freely admits that she has recently read the "Hunger Games," in a futile attempt to replace Harry Potter.

**Favorite Book Read:** To Kill a Mockingbird, The Grapes of Wrath.

**Last Movie Watched:** The Help.

**Favorite Movie:** To Kill a Mockingbird.

**Favorite TV Show:** Anything on USA. Without reservation, Sturman actually admits that she LOVES Burn Notice and Razolli & Isles. Sturman also regularly Tivo's Antiques Road Show (guilty), and anything on Masterpiece Theater, especially Agatha Christie and the updated version of Sherlock Holmes.

**Favorite Genre of Music:** "I love 'Girl Music!' So, anything girl and pop I love; Katy Perry, Etta James, etc."

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## GLORIA STURMAN,

Nevada District Court Judge, Department 26

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**Last Group/Person Seen in Concert:** Elton John and Bette Middler

**Last Vacation:** San Diego

**Best Vacation:** Australia about 20 years ago and more recently, Spain.

**What she's doing when she's away from the bench:** Trying to organize herself from the year she dedicated to campaigning. "I literally have closets of stuff I need to go through and organize."

Sturman also states that she'll go anywhere that calls itself a "museum," including the Heineken Museum. Although Sturman used to

dedicate a substantial amount of her time to all things political on the democratic side, her new role as Judge does not permit her to be politically active which has freed up her time more than she realized.

**Most Embarrassing Moment as a Lawyer:** Getting a new BlackBerry and not understanding how to make it stop ringing during oral arguments in front of Judge Villani.

All in all, the feedback on Sturman has been consistently positive. Both on and off the bench, Sturman remains completely approachable and is clearly taking her new role very seriously. It was nice getting to know the off-the-bench version of this Judge. She's definitely you're super-smart girlfriend with a quirky twist. We're lucky to have her on the bench!

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