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Do You Blog? If Not, You May Want To Do So

By JEFF BROWN

Weblogs, also known as "blogs" or "blawgs," are the most talked-about on-line marketing tool since those annoying pop-up ads promising to help you lose 10 pounds in 10 days. More than a half million blogs now reside on the Internet, according to a recent study by the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education. The number of blogs is expected to grow dramatically this year. Attorneys and law firms, in defiance of their Luddite heritage, are beginning to take advantage of this affordable and effective marketing medium — a true sign that there is something special about these neophyte e-creatures.

So, what are blogs? According to David Winer of Harvard Law School, "A weblog is a hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser." More simply, blogs are web pages consisting of blurb-like entries arranged in chronological order. Some call them on-line journals or diaries, although the creativity and complexity of many of today's blogs belie such limited characterization. Blog content varies depending on blog purpose, but most blogs include a number of links to websites and other blogs. These links generate a veritable gold mine of web traffic.

The blog began as a personal online journal, subject to the musings of the introspectively inclined. Blogs first gained notoriety during the Iraq War. Many bloggers "scoped" news stories before traditional media outlets. Blogs became the preferred media source of news junkies

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starved for the latest from the frontline.

Candidate blogs, a direct descendant of the more generic political blog, and other political blogs soon followed. Internet-savvy Howard Dean and his supporters used blogs like Blog for America and Dean Nation to accelerate the distribution of Dean's message and in-

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crease political participation, in general. Blogs, however, are now moving beyond their personal, news and political roots and taking new ground in the legal world.

Law blogs

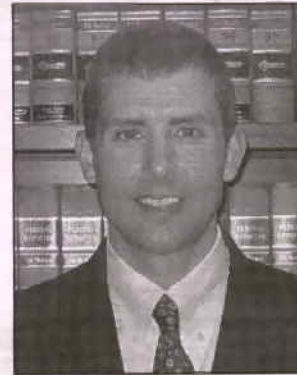
Now, in the name of "more economical" marketing and the free exchange of legal information, attorneys are blogging (the term is flexible as a verb or noun). In his recent article titled "Marketing Directly to Clients," law blogger Larry Bodine explains that blogs "let a lawyer demonstrate expertise in a particular topic. A well-done blog is very impressive to clients and is a great business-getter."

Commonly, attorneys blog generally about the practice of law, specific areas of the law, or the law in certain jurisdictions. Some attorneys blog from their legal vantage point: judge, law clerk, summer associate or partner. Three partners recently launched a blog devoted almost exclusively to ranting about the lack of reverence paid to them by their associates. They aptly titled their blog, *And What Thanks Do We Get?: Three Lawyers Teaching Young Lawyers to Steal Our Lunch* (<http://and-whatthanks.blogspot.com/>).

Many attorney bloggers cannot resist the urge to blog on matters outside the law, such as movies, current events, and politics. These non-legal tangents provide interesting diversions and tend to humanize the attorney, which makes him or her more approachable by potential clients. Ernest Svenson's *Ernie the Attorney* blog (www.ernietheattorney.net) is one of the most popular national attorney blogs and Steven Minor's *SW Virginia Law Blog* (www.swvalaw.blogspot.com) is the leading attorney blog in Virginia, with its regular case law updates and quality links.

Not to be outdone by their sub-parts, law firms, as entities, are now blogging. The legal bean counters that control the purses of most law firms like blogs. Blogs do not require software and hardware purchases, or the hiring of web designers and other high-priced IT professionals. A download from a blog publishing service is all that is needed. But, should a firm want help starting a blog, there are plenty of companies at the ready, like Lexblog (www.lexblog.com). A good example of a law firm blog is the recently launched *May It Please The Court* (www.mayitpleasethecourt.net).

For a general introduction to law blogging, readers may want to look at (http://www.eddixllc.com/blogs/archives/2004/07/blawgs_blogs_wh.asp). This site lists 50 popular law blogs and provides a quick summary of each.



JEFF BROWN

Law blogs have been well-received by lawyers and non-lawyers alike. They have facilitated the free and rapid exchange of information about the law and legal services. They also have fostered frank debate about important legal issues. Whether viewed as a marketing or research tool, or both, law blogs are sure to impact attorneys, firms and the practice of law in coming years.

OBITUARIES

Sam D. Eggleston Jr.

Retired Nelson County lawyer Sam D. Eggleston Jr., died June 27 in Charlottesville. He was 77.

A native of Campbell County, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1946 and served in the Philippines and Japan. He was discharged three years later with the rank of sergeant.

Mr. Eggleston attended Virginia Tech and Washington & Lee University; he received a B.A. from the latter school in 1951. He worked for Smith Douglas Fertilizer Co. for several years, then he attended the University of Virginia Law School. He earned his law degree in 1958.

He first practiced in Norfolk, with a law firm and as an assistant prosecutor, before moving in 1967 to Nelson County, where he started his own practice.

Mr. Eggleston served as a judge in the County Court of Nelson County and was commonwealth's attorney for the county from 1970 to 1974. After that, he maintained a private law practice in Lovingston until he retired in 1993.

After his retirement, Mr. Eggleston was active as a volunteer for the Nelson County Rescue Squad and with the Nelson County Historical Society.

Survivors include his wife, Marjorie W. Eggleston; a daughter, Suzanne E. Lovejoy of Connecticut; three sons, Sam D. Eggleston III and John William Eggleston, both of Lovingston, and Richard W. Eggleston of Vienna; seven grandchildren; two stepgrandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

James M. Sprouse

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) James Marshall Sprouse, a Democratic party activist who served as a judge on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, died July 3. He was 80.

President Carter appointed Judge Sprouse to the federal bench in 1979, three years after he had staged his second unsuccessful attempt to become West Virginia's governor. He served on the bench in Richmond until he took senior status in 1992.

Judge Sprouse resigned from the West Virginia Supreme Court in 1976 to challenge Jay Rockefeller in the Democratic senatorial primary. He lost that race.

He also challenged Republican Arch Moore in 1968 and lost by 12,785 votes in one of the closest elections in state history.

"He was sort of a Renaissance man. And such a wonderful person," his daughter Tracy Sprouse Ferguson told the Sunday Gazette-Mail.

"A few years ago we asked him what he wanted said about him after he was gone.

He just wanted people to know that he tried to make a difference," she said. "He was always for the underdog, always."

During his life Judge Sprouse was a champion amateur boxer, soldier, intelligence officer, Democratic party activist, politician and jurist.

The Mingo County native became interested in boxing at age 13 and won the state Golden Gloves featherweight championship three years later.

He joined the Army and served in the intelligence corps during World War II, earning a Bronze Star.

After graduating from Columbia University Law School and studying international law in France under a Fulbright Scholarship, he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency in Europe for five years.

Judge Sprouse returned to Charleston in 1957, where he opened a law practice and served as chief counsel to the state AFL-CIO for several years. He became active in Democratic politics and became state chairman in 1965. He resigned to challenge Moore in 1968.

William G. Davis

Franklin County lawyer William G. "Bill" Davis died at his home on Feb. 27 after a four-year battle with cancer. He was 61.

A 1964 graduate of Virginia Military Institute, he earned his law degree three years later from the University of Richmond law school. He served in the U.S. Army until he was honorably discharged with the rank of captain in 1969.

He then took a job as assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District, staying in that position until 1971. He resigned to run for Franklin County Commonwealth's Attorney, a race he won.

Mr. Davis entered the family law firm now known as Davis, Davis, Davis & Davis in 1974, where he practiced with his father, uncle, cousin, and later his wife and son. He continued to lead the firm until shortly before his death.

He was honored by his good friend, Donald Giles, in 2001 by the establishment of the Giles and Davis, Class of 1964, scholarship at VMI.

Mr. Davis also was honored by the Franklin County Bar Association in 2003 with its first Lifetime Achievement Award, along with certificates of recognition from the Franklin County Board of Supervisors, the Town of Rocky Mount, the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Survivors include his wife, Karen Webb Davis; his son and daughter-in-law, William P. "Will" Davis and Caroline Cooper Davis; a granddaughter, Isabelle Cooper Davis; a brother; and three sisters.

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