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Following in Her Footsteps

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As a young lawyer, you are lucky to find a respected veteran attorney to serve as your mentor. In my case, it was more a matter of destiny as my most trusted professional mentor is my mother, Marilea Lewis. A noted Dallas attorney and respected former state district judge, she is now also my colleague at the family law boutique of Orsinger, Nelson, Downing & Anderson, LLP.

From the start, it seems I have followed in her footsteps – from my decision to attend her alma mater Baylor University, to going on to law school and practicing family law. The love of law is a bit of a family tradition. Her father had wanted to be a lawyer, but circumstances kept him from pursuing that dream. So when my mother headed to Baylor as an undergraduate, he kept encouraging her to at least give law school a try. In that same spirit, as I was trying to decide on a career path, she suggested law, reasoning that even if I never practiced law, that background would be an excellent foundation for any career. Well, I fell in love with the law, much as my mother did. And so did my twin sister, Sheridan, now a criminal defense lawyer.



Looking back, it seems like the most natural of decisions. My sister and I spent an uncommon amount of time at the courthouse visiting Mom as she presided over district court in Dallas. We were exposed to some of the most brilliant legal minds in North Texas. Even though I didn't give it much thought at the time, I was getting a unique behind-the-scenes understanding of how a courtroom operates. I recall the congenial nature of the interactions between the judges, who many considered to be stern or unapproachable. Learning that judges are real people with real problems and that the cases they hear really do impact them was an invaluable lesson. In fact, I attended undergraduate school and law school with the children of several judges who shared that common bond, and we still share many common stories and experiences. It was a fascinating way to grow up, and that early knowledge benefits me, and my clients, in trial even today.

Not long ago I met with an attorney who said she remembered holding me during court breaks when I was a child. To be honest, it is a little embarrassing to hear those stories, but the embarrassment is always fleeting because inevitably the person wants to share memories and an appreciation of Mom's tenure as a judge. My mother has an exceptionally strong reputation in legal circles, and I am proud to be carrying on the Lewis name.

While it may seem unusual to see a mother and son family law legal team, having the opportunity to work alongside her the past several years has been a blessing. It turns out we complement each other's strengths and make a great team. She has a breadth of experience and understanding of the practice of law that cannot be underestimated, while I bring meticulousness to the intricacies and updates to the letter of the law, legislation and the impact of technology.

I am catching up to her though when it comes to the big picture of the practice of law. Inevitably every family dinner ends the same, with Mom, Sheridan and me, huddled together deep into the night talking points of law. Dad, the only non-lawyer in the house, will walk by and shake his head at us. Those conversations have taught me so much about the practice of law.



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