

News Roundup

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A North Carolina judge made the national news recently because of the sentence she imposed on a young woman who pled guilty to being drunk and disruptive and to resisting an officer. Halifax County Chief District Court Judge Brenda Branch gave 21-year-old Tonie Marie King a suspended sentence and ordered her to write a two-page essay entitled *How a Lady Should Behave in Public*. Judge Branch suggested principles like “you don’t go out drinking and fighting and yelling” and “you show people respect and you’ll earn respect.” The sentence drew widespread attention, as illustrated by [this Los Angeles Times](#) story. (It also attracted some criticism, like [this](#) blog post by law professor Jonathan Turley.) One interesting aspect of the story concerns Judge Branch’s background, with which I was not familiar. The *Times* reports that “[s]he worked 20 years as a paper mill mechanic, wearing a hard hat and steel-toed boots, before earning undergraduate and law degrees in night school.” Impressive.

In other news:

Follow-up on license plate readers. Those interested in yesterday’s post about license plate readers may enjoy [this](#) Ars Technica article about one citizen’s efforts to learn which law enforcement agencies had recorded his plate, when, where, and how often.

Zimmerman, federal charges, and double jeopardy. Those interested in the possibility of federal charges against George Zimmerman, which I discussed [here](#), may be interested in [this](#) post at the Volokh Conspiracy, noting that in the nation’s early days, there was no “separate sovereigns” exception to the rule against double jeopardy – meaning that a state prosecution would bar a subsequent federal prosecution for the same offense. Apparently, a certiorari petition is now pending before the Supreme Court asking that the exception be abolished and that the original state of the law be restored.

FBI/forensic hair analysis update. The FBI has begun reviewing cases, including capital cases, in which FBI forensic scientists may have exaggerated the significance of forensic hair analysis. [This Washington Post](#) article provides the details and suggests that some states may follow suit with their own reviews.

First thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers. Lawyers are about as popular as used car salesmen and members of Congress. New data from the Pew Research Center, discussed [here](#) at Above the Law, provides further evidence for this incontrovertible proposition. 34% of survey respondents said that lawyers contribute not very much or nothing at all to society.

How the other half studies for the bar. On the upside, aspiring lawyers have taken to studying for the bar in far-flung vacation destinations, according to [this](#) article in the *New York Times*. Sheesh, kids these days. Have they never heard the maxim “live like a lawyer while you’re in law school, and you’ll live like a law student when you’re a lawyer”?

Finally, a request. Appearing on the ABA’s Blawg 100 list of top legal blogs has become my white whale. Last year’s winners are [here](#), and I *know* this blog is better than many of them. Our posts are better and more frequent, our commenters are more thoughtful, our readers are better looking, and our blog is more widely used. So consider taking a minute or three to fill out an online form to support the inclusion of this blog in the Blawg 100. The form is called a

“Blawg 100 Amici,” and it is [here](#). There nomination period ends soon!