



Family Ties

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Josh M. Fredricks works to preserve the old-time values of his father's days as a lawyer and a judge.
JUDICIAL SPOTLIGHT
PAGE 5



Effects of Reform

Two years after workers' compensation reform, defense attorney George Woolverton and others in the legal system discuss how the changes have affected their work.
BUSINESS PAGE 7

LOS ANGELES

Daily Journal

© 2006 Daily Journal Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

SINCE 1898

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES AND THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES



Punitives Slashed

A Superior Court judge slashes a \$175 million punitive damages verdict against chemical manufacturers in a Central Valley underground water pollution case to less than \$13 million. For the complete story go to www.dailyjournal.com

WEDNESDAY,
AUGUST 2, 2006
VOL. 119 NO. 147
\$ 2.50

Lebanese-American Lawyer Struggles With Being a 'Citizen of the World'

Editor's Note:
The United States is a nation of immigrants.

More than one in four California residents came here from foreign lands, and 13 percent of the state's lawyers — 19,000 attorneys — are immigrants.
In this occasional series, we look at some of those attorneys and their pursuit of the American Dream.

By **Anne Marie Ruff**
Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — Wala Hoballah has a typical Lebanese joie de vivre. She greets international clients with a musical "Bonjour" or "marhaba," inviting them into her office filled with Islamic ceramics, Buddha images, West African figurines and travel picture books.

She was born in Dakar, Senegal, where her family did business. She was raised in Lebanon and educated in Leba-

non, Austria and the U.S. She received her master of laws degree from McGeorge School of Law.

She is a sole practitioner working in the areas of international business and corporate law between the U.S., Middle East and West Africa; and immigration, including asylum cases. She is admitted to practice in California, Washington, D.C., New York and Lebanon.

Hoballah travels frequently among the three continents where she has lived and has family. She is the president of the board of the International Visitors Council of Los Angeles, a charter board member of the Lebanese American Foundation and chair of the board of the African Community Resource Center. She is also a founding member of the Los Angeles Beirut Sister Cities Organization and was part of a recent delegation to Beirut.

She told her story to Daily Journal Staff Writer Anne Marie Ruff.

See Page 6 — LAWYER



ROBERT LEVINS / Daily Journal

"I didn't come to the U.S. to make my millions or to take my piece of the pie, but for education," Wala Hoballah said.

Tossing Conviction, Panel Blasts Judge for Inserting Herself in Trial

By **Laura Ernste**
Daily Journal Staff Writer

An Orange County judge scolded six years ago for her unorthodox style in the courtroom returned to the hot seat again this week.

Superior Court Judge Susanne S. Shaw repeatedly interjected herself into a man's assault trial, prompting the 4th District Court of Appeal to toss out the conviction and order a new trial with a new judge.

"The court's vision of the trial had become clear: It was the judge's trial. The parties were mere bystanders — props cluttering the judge's stage," a three-judge panel wrote in a unanimous unpublished opinion filed late Monday. *People v. Urtas* G035179.

Much of the ruling centered on Shaw's belittling treatment of the defendant and his lawyer, who was

not named. The panel also found that Shaw improperly instructed the jury and should have allowed the jury to hear evidence of Urtas' good character.

"Here, the cumulative impact of the trial judge's caustic, condescending remarks to Urtas and his counsel, together with her flawed legal rulings, leaves us no confidence in the verdict," Justice Raymond J. Ikola wrote.

Shaw, who sits at Harbor Court in Newport Beach, was on vacation until Monday and could not be reached for comment. She recently announced that she would retire this fall.

She was publicly admonished in June 2000 by the Commission on Judicial Performance for telling a drunken-driving defendant, "You know what they do to little white

See Page 6 — PANEL

Lawyer and 'Citizen of the World'

Continued from page 1

I have been called Ms. Hezbollah by judges in court. Sometimes, it is an honest mistake, but you can tell when someone does it to be sarcastic. That hurts.

I am Lebanese, but I am really a citizen of the world. I don't present myself as a Lebanese Arab Muslim. I am a professional.

Immigrant Stories

My first languages are Arabic and French. I went to French Catholic schools in Lebanon, where we were not allowed to speak Arabic, even during recess. Then I went to American Protestant missionary schools.

I learned Arabic really when I went to the American school, because there was more emphasis on literature and language.

I came to the U.S. for the first time to see my brother who was in medical school in New York City. He begged me to stay. I said no because they had just turned on the lights on the corniche [the seashore drive in Beirut], and I said there's nothing like that.

I was quite encouraged by my family to study because they are all highly educated lawyers, judges, et cetera. There was always the need to do more, to do better.

In February 1983, I passed the bar in Lebanon. My uncle had one of the oldest established law firms in Lebanon.

I had to beg him to let me work at the firm. I worked with one of his associates, and when the client came back and told my uncle what a good job I had done, then he took me in. Until now, we work together on international cases.

I didn't come to the U.S. to make my millions or to take my piece of the pie, but for education. I was just finishing my apprenticeship in Beirut when I thought I could do an L.L.M. in the U.S. for one year. I stayed for the summer, but when I wanted to go back, the airport was closed in Beirut because of the civil war, so I was sort of stuck. It was still really bad; it was not safe even to go to Damascus. That was 20 years ago.

So my adviser suggested I stay. I was in Sacramento at McGeorge University. I decided not to limit myself to California, so I looked



'Working with two parties on two continents is what I dream of. I want to bring U.S. investment directly to Lebanon.'

Wafa Hoballah,
International lawyer

civil war is over or not. Its still con-

I really feel violated, like a woman