

BOOK REVIEW

A Book, a Blog and a Fake Website!

Anonymous lawyer no longer anonymous

By Kerie P. Stone

Back in the beginning of time, okay not really the beginning of time but when very few people could define the word "blog," a friend of mine sent me some internet links that he thought an attorney would find interesting. One link lead to another and I found myself hooked on what I believed to be the diary of a hiring partner at a large, big city law firm. That diary can still be found at <http://anonymous-lawyer.blogspot.com/>. The author no longer provides daily updates and it turns out that he was never a hiring partner at a law firm. In fact, he did not go to law school until after he started the blog.

My life and my law practice temporarily took me away from the Anonymous Lawyer. In December 2004, I ignored a *New York Times* article entitled "Revealing the Soul of a Soulless Lawyer." This article is now well known among Blachman's "fans." The *New York Times* revealed his true identity. Sometime in 2008, I checked back in. I did not expect to learn that the Anonymous Lawyer is a young guy named Jeremy Blachman and that in 2006 he turned the blog into a book called *Anonymous Lawyer* about the fictitious hiring partner on whom he based his blog.

I located some online reviews and they were mixed. Nonetheless, I had high expectations. A search of my computer will show that a lot of websites are One Hit Wonders for me. I had followed the Anonymous Lawyer blog for a few years, so I figured that his book would entertain me. It did entertain me. It just wasn't as

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believable as the blog. In the book, Blachman presented only the most exaggerated aspects of an already extreme character.

The Anonymous Lawyer is an elitist snob and a cynic. In the book, he shamelessly provides examples of this. He refuses to allow his children to go to public schools. He refuses to eat at chain restaurants. He despises the secretaries at his law firm. He has law students begging to work for him and he wants to see his associates spending their weekends at the office just because he has the power to force them to do so.

Anonymous Lawyer is proud to boast that his office is seven square feet larger than that of his rival, who is known only as "The Jerk." I have to wonder who "The Jerk" really is when Anonymous Lawyer explains in the book:

"One time, emboldened by the satisfaction of having made the longest paper clip chain I'd ever constructed, I snuck in and measured. Mine's seven square feet bigger. That's fifty two extra paper clips in each direction. I've always taken that to be a sign. Seven square feet. I'm that much more valuable."

Blachman uses "The Jerk" as a way to create a plot in his novel. The novel centers around Anonymous Lawyer and "The Jerk" trying to outdo one another in the eyes of the Chairman of the firm, because they each want to be named as the next Chairman. The plot thickens when the Chairman has a heart attack and it appears that the firm will need a new Chairman a lot sooner than anyone expected. I won't

ruin the rest.

The Anonymous Lawyer of the blog also aspires to run the firm but we learn about his other interests as well. He does a lot more golfing in his blog than he does in his book. He is a lot funnier in his description of his interests;

"The recruiting staff just gave me a copy of the summer agenda for me to sign off on before they set it in stone. I nixed one activity on their list -- Paintball. I decided that opening ourselves up to tort liability is probably not the way to go. Paintball. Ridiculous. We're replacing it with golf. Of course we are. I love golf. Also, I asked them to add another Dodgers game. This is the part of the job I like. Forcing law students to do things I think are fun. Maybe I can send them all antiquing with the in-laws. (blog, May 10, 2004)."

I liked the Anonymous Lawyer better when I thought I was just reading someone's diary. I suspect that the author liked it better when he thought he was just writing someone's diary. The blog provided the extraneous details that might not make for good start-to-finish storytelling, but the details do make for rich blogging, if there is such a thing. In the book and in the blog, we get a break from the diary format when we get to read some of the Anonymous Lawyer's e-mails. Anonymous Lawyer keeps in touch with his niece via e-mail. In the book, we know the niece only as a college student who is about to go to law school. She is not sure whether she wants to become a public interest lawyer or a big firm lawyer. Anonymous Lawyer will not hear of her doing anything but working for him. Her character is not completely developed in either the book or the blog but in the blog, we get the little details, such as her mother being a drunk and her



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high school boyfriend being a drug dealer (May 26, 2004). When we indulge in something as time-wasting as reading someone else's diary, we want the real dirt and we want the details that may not matter in a person's life to become Chairman of the firm. The blog delivered those details when I followed it. The book fell short at times, especially for a former reader of the blog.

What was it that attracted me to Anonymous Lawyer's blog in the first place? I don't believe that I have much in common with a self admitted snob. I'm embarrassed to admit that I thought that I was getting a peek into a big firm life. Blachman fooled a lot of people into believing that he is the Anonymous Lawyer. He had to know something about law and office politics. In a way, the Anonymous Lawyer blog reflected every lawyer and every office worker. (He wrote about being mad at the person who always steals his stapler and being mad at the person who stole candy from other people's desks.)

After I finished the book, I visited the blog's website again. I noticed a link that I had not seen before: Anonymous Law Firm <http://anonymouslawfirm.com>. It is a spoof on many law firm websites. The site has a newsfeed, information about the fictitious firm, and a long but vague list of accomplishments. There is an alphabetical listing of the firm's attorneys, with links to their resumes. I could not help but click on the link for Lawyer, Anonymous. Among his hobbies, he lists "torturing those under him." There are several humorous and/or familiar sounding names on the list. I noticed right way that there is an associate whose name is Terry Schiavo. The brand

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of humor found in her resume is certainly distasteful. Thankfully, not all of Anonymous Lawyer's jokes are as offensive as the fictitious Ms. Schiavo's puns on the actual Schiavo case. I am going to "save" my reading of the rest of this site for those times when I need the cynical humor of someone like Blachman.

My internet investigation has revealed something that might prove to be just as addicting as the Anonymous Lawyer's blog. I have found Jeremy Blachman's up to date personal blog at <http://jeremyblachman.typepad.com/>. On December 21, 2008, he answered a reader's question about whether Anonymous Lawyer was fiction. I am glad to learn that I was not the last person to find out the answer and I am not the only person who ignored the *New York Times* article in 2004. I have bookmarked Blachman's blog. I plan to read it but I

wonder whether he will somehow fool me again! Perhaps I want him to.

I would recommend *Anonymous Lawyer* to anyone who is looking for a light, fun read and to anyone who is also willing to take a look at the online content in the Anonymous Lawyer blog, the firm website and at the "real" Jeremy Blachman's blog. I believe that the book alone falls short of what the blog does.

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