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Tribute to Judge Sanders

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TRIBUTE TO JUDGE SANDERS

Kathleen Skambis

I remember the attempted murder for hire case in which Mark Edelman, a local developer, was tried (and convicted) of plotting to have his wife killed. Unfortunately for Mr. Edelman, his co-conspirator was crazy and basically subbed out the job to an undercover FBI agent. However, before we knew the co-conspirator, Mr. Young (who had pled guilty), was crazy, the AUSA told us something about his alleged prior life as a high-level, covert military intelligence operative. He told us, as I recall, that Mr. Young was concerned that, as a result of his past connections, there might be people trying to kill him. As I recall, and I may be remembering it all wrong, the U.S. Attorney's Office and marshalls were taking extra security precautions, or at least talking about it. Judge made some comment, in jest, that his bench had a bullet-proof shield, so it was really me, sitting at the lower bench, who should be worried, and I pretty much freaked out. I started talking about being afraid and not wanting to leave my son (who was not even a year old) without a mother. As I recall, when we started trial I was sitting at the end of the high bench, behind whatever the hell shield was up there. Then Mr. Young started testifying, and it became fairly clear, fairly quickly that he was probably a lunatic who had made it all up. There probably were never any covert operations, and Mr. Young was living in la-la land, but had convinced himself and Mr. Edelman (and the AUSAs and marshalls) of his inglorious past. It didn't take long for me to be the butt of the chamber's jokes for a while and to get my sorry butt down to the lower bench. The trial itself was totally bizarre and the Edelman saga was the subject several months later of a *Texas Monthly* feature. When I started thinking about this story, I tried to refresh my memory with news stories.

I found the one in the Dallas Morning News which clarifies that the threat to Mr. Young that caused the concern was allegedly from Edelman who did not want him to testify. So, there was some thought that there might be an attempt on his life in the courtroom. The rest of the Edelman story is that the Judge sentenced Mr. Young to less prison time than he sentenced Mr. Edelman (although he did not accept the AUSA's recommendation for no further jail time), which really rankled Edelman's lawyer.

My favorite memories, however, are of lunches around the table in the kitchen. I loved going down to the bbq joint downstairs to get the hot link sandwiches on white bread. Even better was sharing fritos and thousand island dressing with Judge when he ate his tuna fish.

