

# Who Says There Aren't Any Jobs Left Out There After Law School?

By ANDREA GERLIN

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

As tight as the legal job market may be, it's still possible to walk out of law school and become a defense attorney in one of the criminal trials of the century.

Of course, it helps if you have the right connections.

Just ask the former Jane Blanksteen. The 41-year-old ex-journalist and video producer graduated from Columbia University School of Law in May, and took and passed the Colorado bar exam in July. Then, she married attorney Michael Tigar, 55. He's a University of Texas law professor who represents Terry Nichols, one of the defendants facing the death penalty for allegedly bombing the Oklahoma City federal building last year and killing 168 people.

So it raised some eyebrows in Denver last month when Mr. Nichols's lawyers asked for and got U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch's approval to add Mrs. Tigar to the government-paid defense team. Mrs. Tigar will be paid between \$60 and \$125 an hour, the same lowly government wage schedule as her husband and Mr. Nichols's three other attorneys.

Mrs. Tigar, who answered the phone at the defense team's Denver office, says she

did volunteer work on the case while in law school. It was in the course of this work that she met her future husband. "It's a great case," she said, referring all questions about her hiring to her husband.

For his part, Mr. Tigar said his wife's volunteer work, which included drafting memos on key issues in the case, was evaluated by other attorneys. As Mr. Nichols's lead attorney, he had to agree to her hiring but said that her selection over other candidates turned "solely on the quality of her work."

Mrs. Tigar's work is expected to include a lot of legal research, which junior lawyers are typically assigned. So far, she has written initial drafts of memos and worked on the motion to change the trial venue to Denver and on Mr. Nichols's civil suit challenging the death penalty. She also has assisted in briefs about prison conditions.

Prof. Tigar says Mr. Nichols approved of adding Mrs. Tigar to the defense team.

Professor Stephen Gillers of New York University, a legal-ethics expert, says he doesn't see anything legally amiss with Mrs. Tigar's appointment to the defense team headed by her husband, provided the client approves and the judge agrees she is qualified. "It's a private law job that the public happens to fund," he says.

Dear Ms. Gerlin:

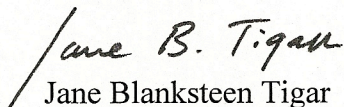
Your article, "Who Says There Aren't Any Jobs Left Out There After Law School?", December 12, 1996, Page B-1, contains the defamatory and sexist inference that but for the fortuity of my marriage, I would not have a great job upon graduating from Columbia University School of Law.

The fact is that more than twelve months before graduating from Columbia Law School, I had already secured an excellent, and some lawyers have argued, better job, as a clerk to the chief circuit judge of a United States Court of Appeals. Further, approximately eight months before graduation, I had been offered a job with a major New York law firm with a starting salary of over \$85,000 per year.

I am disappointed that you, a woman and a journalist, would make the sexist assumption that I earned my position on this fine legal team due to my subsequent marriage to Michael Tigar. A feminist and fair-minded approach would be to assume my excellence as a lawyer and wonder why I was willing to give up two excellent and more secure job prospects and take the risk of blurring my already distinct identity by working with my husband. The answer to that question is that my husband and I work extraordinarily well together and that I believe in and love the work we are doing.

Just as all the other lawyers on the Nichols team did, I had the good fortune to know Michael Tigar and work with him prior to my appointment. It is my honor and privilege to work with this superb team of brilliant lawyers, paralegals and investigators whose principal goal is to protect Mr. Nichols' constitutional right to a fair trial in a world so sadly prone to prejudice against those accused of heinous crimes.

Sincerely,

  
Jane Blanksteen Tigar