

Quick Draw: Portraits in Court

By Carole Kabrin

When the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan was convening a grand jury in connection with the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa, WWJ-TV in Detroit was looking for an artist—someone who could capture a likeness quickly enough to meet the deadline and get the story on the news. Can't see the defendant's face? Short on time? Didn't matter. The newscast aired at 5 p.m., and the art had to be drawn, colored, shot, and edited.

I had gotten it into my head that I wanted to be a courtroom artist, so I had been drawing at festivals, cafeterias, and at a bar called Toulous's Lounge at a Holiday Inn near City Airport. A courtroom artist must be able to draw and focus under extreme situations, so drawing in these environments was good practice.

With equal parts excitement and nervousness, I went to WWJ (now WDIV) to interview for the court artist job. They asked me to draw someone who worked in the newsroom to see if I could capture a likeness. I asked a fellow named Dennis to pose for me. He agreed, I drew him, and I got the job.

Back in 1975, TV stations were using both videotape and film. My drawings were shot on film, which had to be developed, so they had to be at the station by 3 p.m. to be shot, developed, and edited for the 5 p.m. broadcast. Today, I don't have to hurry back to the station. The art is shot with a digital video camera either at the station or on site. In the latter case, the story is edited in the truck outside the venue and sent to the station to air via a microwave relay. Even though so much is high tech now, my art is turned into digital form the old way—by taping it to the wall or propping it up in the truck so the videographer can shoot it.

In 1990, I achieved the dream of covering the United States Supreme Court when I became the courtroom artist for ABC News after spending a decade trying to get the job. Ironically, Dennis, whom I sketched during my interview at WWJ, had become producer for ABC's *Nightline* program. Talk about coming full circle! During the next 12 years, I traveled the country, drawing not only the Supreme Court but other high-profile proceedings: trials of Oklahoma City bombers Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, *Bush v Gore*, Whitewater hearings, Paula Jones' sexual harassment case against then President Bill Clinton, and many others.

Over the years, I've drawn many of you; we've grown up together, sat through trials together, and waited for verdicts together. Some of you have my drawings on your walls and on your websites. In this issue of the *Bar Journal*, I thought it would be fun to do something I've never done before—open my portfolio to share some courtroom memories with you. ■



1 Attorney Jim Thomas

2 Attorney Stephen Rabaut and Stephen Grant in front of Judge Diane Druzinski

3 Attorney Cornelius Pitts

7 Attorney David McGruder, U.S. District Court—Eastern District of Michigan

8 John DeLorean with defense attorney Howard Weitzman during DeLorean's 1985 Detroit trial

9 Dr. Jack Kevorkian and his attorneys, Michael Alan Schwartz and Geoffrey Fieger, during one of his trials in Pontiac, Michigan

4 Judge Morton Needleman listens to a witness on the stand during the Joint Operating Agreement hearing concerning the Detroit paper strike

5 Attorney Gerry Spence during closing arguments in Geoffrey Fieger's 2008 trial over alleged illegal campaign contributions

6 Assistant Prosecutor Kym Worthy (now Wayne County prosecutor) during the Budzyn and Nevers 1993 trial



Carole Kabrin is an Emmy Award-winning artist. For over three decades, she has concentrated in portraiture for attorneys, both for private commissions as well as traveling the country on assignment for local and network television news. Ms. Kabrin is a Michigan artist and teacher, with bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art from Wayne State University. To inquire about private art or courtroom art commissions for wall or website, visit <http://www.carolekabrin.com>.

