

Poetic Justice

How a Houston attorney translates U.S. Supreme Court rulings into Haiku.

KEITH JAASMA IS AN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LITIGATION ATTORNEY. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. The two don't seem an obvious match. However, in 2012 the *ABA Journal* ranked Jaasma's haiku blog as one of the top legal blogs in the United States under its For Fun categories.

Jaasma's blog postings are unique because he translates U.S. Supreme Court rulings into haiku, a poem of 17 syllables in three lines of five, seven, and five. His haiku career was sparked by two law review articles he wrote. He was thrilled to learn that his efforts had garnered 300 downloads, but upon further consideration, however, he decided the labor-intensive pieces warranted a higher number. He wondered, "What could have a bombastic effect with the least amount of work?"

Haiku was the answer.

Jaasma first checked to see if the domain supremecourthaiku.net was already taken. "I wasn't very shocked to find it was available." He acquired the domain and officially began the Supreme Court Haiku blog in December 2009. The first couple of case decisions he condensed were *Marbury v. Madison* and *Brown v. Board of Education*. After those initial two, he decided he wanted to write more poems.

The blog received a small amount of visitors the first year—mostly family and friends. They thought it was creative. "When I continued to keep the blog current, they thought it was cool how committed to it I was," Jaasma said. Since then, sporadic online press has resulted in increased traffic to the blog, which is listed for possible publication on texasbartoday.com, a curated blog site maintained by the State Bar of Texas. Fans can also follow Jaasma and his work at twitter.com/SupremeHaiku.

Each haiku consists of only three lines. "You dedicate one thought to each sentence, without carrying it over to the others," he explained. The first sentence holds the subject of the case, the second has the facts of the case, and the third is the holding. The poem cannot be longer than 17 syllables. "Syllables are usually five, seven, and five, respectively," he said. The process can take anywhere from five minutes to one hour, and statutes with longer syllables might extend the creative process a bit. "I'll mull it over by working on something else, or while I'm driving."

Jaasma admits that on occasion he has had to reach for the thesaurus to find synonyms for some words. But in general, he says the process is rather quick: "Once you have the key word, the rest of it flows." Two of his favorite haiku are *Snyder v. Phelps* and *Morse v. Frederick* (right). Jaasma finds the free speech cases the most interesting, and although there aren't any topics he won't write about, he shies away from focusing on death per se when it comes to habeas corpus rulings. Jaasma claims he won't be quitting his day job any time soon; he's simply appreciative that people are reading his blog—and enjoying haiku.

For more, visit supremecourthaiku.net.



Jaasma's earliest experience with haiku was in junior high school. "I was always fascinated by the fact that you can make practically anything into a poem."

Snyder v. Phelps
Church so full of hate
Pickets soldier's funeral
Protected discourse

Morse v. Frederick
"Bong Hits 4 Jesus"
Limited rights for students
Suspension upheld

Wide World of Wrestling

How one Brownsville attorney continues the family tradition.

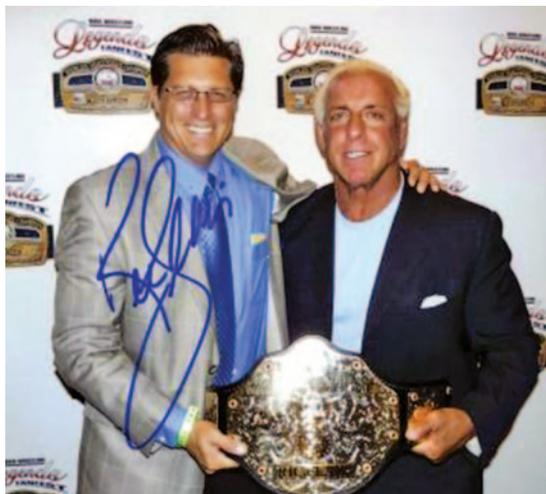
BROWNSVILLE ATTORNEY R. BRUCE THARPE WAS BORN INTO A WRESTLING FAMILY. He says it runs in his blood. His father was a wrestling ring announcer in Florida, in addition to serving on the Tampa Fire Department, and his earliest memories as a child are of going to wrestling matches with him. “The famous wrestlers of the day bounced me on their knee,” he said.

Now, Tharpe is president of the National Wrestling Alliance, a professional wrestling governing body that was created in 1948.

Initially, Tharpe wanted to be a professional wrestler, but his father had something else in mind. Tharpe had an aptitude for law, so with the encouragement of his family, he enrolled in law school. Tharpe is pleased with the decision. “I have a good profession and my body is intact,” he said. “A lot of my friends suffered from the wear and tear of a career in wrestling.”

Tharpe has worked as a ring announcer, a television commentator, and a referee, but he likes being a wrestler the best. His most memorable match was in Mexico. “They didn’t have good security around the ring, and there were people actually trying to pull me out by the boot,” he explained.

His law career has definitely impacted his wrestling. “One thing that I have prided myself on in terms of the success I’ve enjoyed over the past 25 years is that I’m an honest person,” he said. It is this honesty and integrity that he feels he brings to the wrestling profession. Many wrestlers believe that promoters don’t tell them the truth, and Tharpe said it is his priority to raise the standards.



Right: A masked Bruce Tharpe with young fans in Mexico (top) and with World Heavyweight Wrestling Champion “Nature Boy” Ric Flair (bottom).

TEXAS PEOPLE



Judge Ernest Aliseda
Loya Insurance Group,
McAllen

Appointed to the University of Texas System Board of Regents by Gov. Rick Perry.



Trey Cox
Lynn Tillotson Pinker &
Cox, L.L.P., Dallas

Named the exclusive Client Choice Award winner in the Litigation category for Texas.



Duncan E. Osborne
Osborne, Helman, Knebel &
Deleery, L.L.P., Austin

Named president of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.



Antonio O. Garza Jr.
White & Case, L.L.P., Austin
and Mexico City, Mexico

Received the St. Joseph Academy President’s Distinguished Community Service Award.