

Courthouse Is a Home Away From Home

For a Father, Son and Daughter Who Are Lawyers, A Chance to Share in Family Is Just Down the Hall

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Each day, chances are good that Bill, Amy and Jon Jeffress will be applying their legal talents just a few doors down the hall from each other in the same stately office building near the U.S. Capitol.

But the father, daughter and son are not racking up billable hours at a white-shoe family firm.

They are reporting for work at the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse, Washington's federal court.

On the sixth floor, father William H. Jeffress Jr., 61, one of Washington's most prominent defense attorneys, has been busy with pretrial hearings in a case that has rocked the White House. He represents I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby,

Vice President Cheney's former chief of staff, who is accused of lying to investigators probing the leak of a CIA operative's name.

On the second floor, daughter Amy, 41, has been checking on narcotics cases she oversees for the U.S. Attorney's Office — including a trial involving a ring that is accused of peddling cocaine and heroin.

And in a magistrate courtroom down the hall, Jonathan, 35, has been representing poor people as a public defender. Last month, he defended a woman accused of creating phony checks and, more recently, a convicted felon charged with carrying a 9mm handgun as he drove through the city.

The family's workdays — and once in a while, their lunch breaks — overlap in the court's marble hallways.

See JEFFRESS, B7, Col. 1

Of Their Careers

■ William H. Jeffress Jr., 61

Partner, Baker Botts law firm

High: "I was representing a British solicitor who was indicted — they ultimately offered him a deal to plead guilty to a misdemeanor. He said no way. The jury acquitted him. He's still a good friend."

Low: "When you lose a case you thought you should have won. . . . You lie awake at night thinking: 'What could I have done better?'"

■ Amy Jeffress, 41

Deputy chief of the organized crime and narcotics trafficking section, U.S. Attorney's Office

High: At the sentencing of a homicidal drug gang, "a mother whose son was killed by mistake — a 17-year-old going off to college who was killed in the middle of a drug beef — was the first to speak. She turned to the defendants and said: 'I want you all to know I forgive you. I don't want to keep hating you. I've given this to God.' Her words were incredibly powerful, and I remember them often."

Low: "I interviewed another mother of a homicide victim, who was shot when he was only 20. She said he had been getting in and out of trouble since the age of 13, and she had given up on him back then. Here I am trying to do justice by her son, and she had stopped caring. It left a pit in my stomach."

■ Jonathan Jeffress, 35

Assistant federal public defender

High: "In my first jury trial, right before the jury came in, my client told me he thought I had done him justice."

Low: "When you can't convince a client to do something — whether to plead or go to trial — especially if you've already negotiated something very favorable for them."



Bill Jeffress Jr., left, son Jon and daughter Amy practice different types of law at the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse. Bill is a defense attorney, Jon, a public defender, and Amy, a prosecutor.

Family Members Have 'Covered the Bases' of the Legal Profession

JEFFRESS, From B1

"I don't think you can go into the courthouse now and not run into at least one and usually two or three of them," said A.J. Kramer, the federal public defender in Washington and Jon's boss.

"It's really unusual for a family of lawyers to be in the same city, much less the same court," Kramer said. "You've really covered all the bases when you have one on prosecution, one on defense and another doing all kinds of private practice."

It makes for tender moments in a place that can be anything but.

One recent day, Amy, the federal prosecutor, spotted Jon, the public defender, while he was talking in a conference room with a client. The sister in Amy naturally walked over to kiss her brother on the cheek.

"Was that awkward for you?" she later asked him.

Jon smiled and shook his head. "I like seeing a lot of my dad and sister now," he said, then joked about his junior status in the family's legal lineup. "Plus, some of my clients appreciate that I know some people in high places."

In many ways, the U.S. District Court is a kind of family home.

Their personal stories are intertwined with the court's history. Each learned the power of the law here and can trace career trajectories to work they did in the building. Some of their most profound moments of victory and disappointment unfolded in the oak-paneled courtrooms.

All three are former law clerks who returned to practice here. Bill Jeffress, a partner in the firm of Baker Botts, clerked for Judge Gerhard A. Gesell, who presided over



Bill Jeffress is, left, influenced on son and daughter Amy, who followed him into the law, telling them that a lawyer must know the facts of a case "inside and out" and that the law is about "reasoning your way to the correct rule."

many landmark cases, from Watergate to Iran-contra. In 1971, Jeffress was working in Gesell's chambers when the judge famously ruled that The Washington Post could print the Pentagon Papers, a historical assessment of the Vietnam War that embarrassed the U.S. government.

When Amy was growing up, Gesell was her dad's mentor and "like my second grandfather," she recalled. Two decades later, when she graduated from Yale Law School—just like her father—Amy, too, went to clerk for Gesell.

After Gesell's death in 1993, Amy finished her year of clerking

with Judge Thomas F. Hogan, now chief judge of the court. Jon followed in Amy's footsteps, clerking for Hogan seven years later.

Jon spent several years as an associate for the Williams & Connolly law firm but decided after consulting with Hogan and Kramer that he would work for the Office of the Federal Public Defender. He said it was a natural fit because as a clerk, "I always found myself rooting for the defense."

Bill, who now typically charges more than \$600 an hour, has a reputation as a go-to lawyer for white-collar defendants. He represented President Richard M. Nixon in a

case blocking public access to Watergate tape recordings and has won acquittals for such clients as former Tyson Foods executive Archibald R. Schaffer III and former Louisiana governor Edwin W. Edwards (D).

Although their job choices are different, there definitely is a certain Jeffress way about them.

The three share the same Democratic Party leanings. Bill and his wife have long been active in the party. Amy worked in the Justice Department during the Clinton administration with her future husband. And Jon was an advance worker for Al Gore's 2000 presi-

dential campaign.

They are all just a little taller than 5 feet—not by much. They share a self-deprecating manner that the kids attribute to their dad. Amy's more likely to talk about her two sons than the fact that this fall she won the Attorney General's John Marshall Award for excellence in trial work and was on a list of candidates suggested to the White House for D.C. Superior Court judgeships.

In a short break together in the court cafeteria, Bill patted his kids on the back for work that makes the city better. He said he has no pretensions about his job.

"As a defense lawyer, you've got to be kidding yourself if you think you're making the world a better place," the father said.

Amy retorted: "Oh Dad, what you do makes the world better."

"Well," Bill said, "it's very important to at least one person."

The family is close, although not everyone is a lawyer. Mother Judy was a longtime social worker for Adoption Service Information Agency, but Amy joked that she's "pretty much a full-time grandmother and dog walker now." Brother Jeff went to business school so he "could make some real money," Jon deadpanned. But the youngest brother also has artistic skills. Jon remembered when they made a big splash in a Louisiana courtroom where their father was in a trial.

"My brother did this amazing sketch of the entire courtroom scene," Jon recalled. "The only problem was that it showed the judge sleeping during trial, with all of these ZZZZZs coming up and all. But my dad showed it to the judge

anyhow—and the judge thought it was hilarious."

They don't talk about their cases except in general ways, and they make a concerted effort not to be the lawyers' opposite each other.

One could say there's a fourth lawyer in the group: Amy's husband, Casey Cooper. He met Bill before he met Amy. He was an impressive associate at Bill's law firm, which was then Miller Cassidy Larruca & Lewin. Then Deputy Attorney General Jamie S. Gorelick, a former Miller Cassidy lawyer and friend of Bill's, hired Casey and Amy to work at the Justice Department.

The younger two lawyers got to know each other while working in offices across the hall at Main Justice. Now Casey works with Bill at Baker Botts, sometimes sharing cases.

"Dad never interfered with my love life," Amy insisted. Then she added: "I think Dad would have loved to have me or Jon, or Jeff, for that matter, work with him. So it's really nice for him to have Casey there."

The children have appreciated their father's counsel through life. Amy most remembers him saying a lawyer has to know the facts of a case "inside and out." Jon said his father helped him by explaining that the law was about "reasoning your way to the correct rule."

But Jon couldn't resist a parting joke: "Dad prepared for the hat in, like, two days while in the middle of working on the Pentagon Papers case for Judge Gesell, so I tried not to follow his example on that one!"

Staff researcher Meg Smith contributed to this report.