



Growing Up in the Navy

Amy Jetel puts the skills she learned while in uniform to good use

Amy Jetel, now a 34-year-old partner at the former Giordani Schurig Beckett & Tackett, has been a mainstay at the Austin firm since she clerked there following her first year at the University of Texas School of Law in 2000. She returned after her second year of law school and joined the firm full-time upon graduation in 2002.

But life hasn't always been so steady for Jetel, a Houston native. At 15, she moved to Melbourne, Australia, and lived with a host family as part of a high school student exchange program. Her parents had gotten divorced when she was 9 and Jetel was looking for a way to distance herself from the emotional situation.

"I was a typical angry, self-centered

teenager looking for a way to run away from home with permission," she recalls.

Jetel learned one of the defining lessons of her life midway through that year in Australia.

"I was doing things for my own pleasure," she says, "and thinking that no one was watching me, but it hit me that the people I met were making judgments about the United States through me. I was representing my country and suddenly it felt like a bigger responsibility than I had signed up for."

Life lesson No. 2 came back in the States when she graduated from high school and her dad surprised her by telling her he wouldn't cover the tuition for college. With few options, and with an

eye to affording college, she enlisted in the U.S. Navy. They assigned Jetel to a submarine tender—a ship that supplies and supports submarines—in Charleston, S.C., where her job was to repair and maintain the subs' periscopes.

She says she grew up in the Navy and learned to be meticulous about details, a quality that serves her well in her legal career.

She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin after her stint in the Navy. "At my undergraduate ceremony, my dad apologized for not helping me financially with school, but I told him it was the best thing he ever did for me," she says.

—Paul Nolan