

16 Lake Street, Apt. 2C  
White Plains, New York 10603  
January 31, 1990

Mr. Laurie Nikolski  
Gannett Newspapers  
1 Gannett Drive  
White Plains, New York 10604

Dear Ms. Nikolski:

I would like to thank you for having listened to me and for expressing your concern in a professional way. I further appreciate your recognition that a newspaper has an obligation to set forth the facts fairly and completely -- rather than hastily rushing into print without concern for its effect on the people you write about.

Unfortunately, following our telephone conversation, my mother suffered a physical collapse and required several days' hospitalization. Consequently, I was unable to get a letter off to you as quickly as I would have liked.

You invited me to detail the inaccuracies and distortions connected with Ms. Pines' reporting relative to my mother. Time, however, does not permit me to do more than highlight a few of the more egregious examples which have made us lose confidence in Ms. Pines' objectivity. Naturally, at the time of a future interview, my mother will expand upon that subject--with appropriate documentation.

In the very first conversation Ms. Pines had with my mother, prior to her initial story, my mother told her that she had never, in her 35 years of practice, missed a scheduled Court hearing, and certainly would never have deliberately failed to attend a "hearing" where she, herself, was the subject of a contempt proceeding. Ms. Pines was told at that time that there was never a hearing of any kind scheduled for July 10th--and that in any case, no personal appearance by my mother was required on that date and that the non-appearance on the part of her office was inadvertant. End of story.

This notwithstanding, Ms. Pines' first article, which appeared on July 24, 1989, had as its headline "Lawyer who missed hearing..." and repeated in the text that Ms. Sassower "failed to show up July 10 for a hearing". Thereafter that headline and statement were repeated in various stories by Ms. Pines -- including the caption to a photograph, appearing August 31, 1989, to which my mother specifically objected in a later conversation with Ms. Pines. However, Ms. Pines never acknowledged this error with an appropriate correction. Instead, the error was compounded by later repetition.

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Had Ms. Pines done an appropriate investigation, she would have confirmed that there was no hearing scheduled for July 10th, and that it was only the original return date of a first-time on motion which did not require a personal appearance by my mother.

In her initial story, Ms. Pines also quoted from my mother's July 6th letter received by Judge Fredman that she would be "unavailable" on the July 10th date. Ms. Pines either neglected to review the letter for herself or else chose to ignore the contents wherein my mother made very clear that the adjournment was being requested for additional reasons relating to the discriminatory treatment she was being subjected to by Judge Fredman -- and for which reason, as she notified the Court, she was in the process of retaining counsel to represent her firm. None of this information was reported by Ms. Pines.

This omission by Ms. Pines is particularly significant in light of the fact that my mother had expressly told her that she and the recently-appointed Judge Fredman, when he was a matrimonial practitioner, had been adversaries and competitors and that she feared he was using his judicial position to gain political advantage at her expense. Indeed, Harvey Landau, my mother's adversary in the case before Judge Fredman, was the Chairman of the Scarsdale Democratic Committee, which was actively involved in Judge Fredman's re-election campaign. My mother directly informed Ms. Pines of that fact, but, strangely, none of this information was included in any story by Ms. Pines either.

Considering that the past summer was precisely the time when Judge Fredman was mounting his campaign for election and sought to gain the benefit of all publicity, was it not Ms. Pines' responsibility to report the pertinent facts raised by my mother, including the question of the propriety of Judge Fredman's sitting on a case in which he had a political interest in aiding her adversary. Ms. Pines had knowledge of the potentially disqualifying relationship between Judge Fredman and Mr. Landau, which, contrary to ethical standards, was never disclosed by either of them on the record. This is a story of legitimate public interest and media concern.

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Parenthetically, I would observe that this kind of selective and partisan reporting is illustrative of the whole manner in which your newspaper presented the cross-endorsement "deal" that resulted in Judge Fredman's election to a full fourteen year term. But that's yet another story.

Very truly yours,



ELENA RUTH SASSOWER

P.S. You might also ask Ms. Pines what she did to investigate a letter she received from Ms. Margaret Hall, a former Democratic district leader in White Plains, as to her own experience with Judge Fredman when he was a practitioner. According to Ms. Hall, Judge Fredman missed an actual court hearing, resulting in a default judgment against her, which was never vacated. She was caused irrevocable injury as a result.

3/19/79

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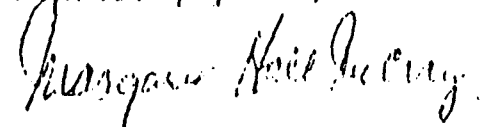
Dear Doris,

I was shocked and surprised to see your story in the Daily Argus last week and couldn't believe this was really happening to you. Sam Fredman was a longtime friend and fellow Democrat when I was a Democratic District Leader in White Plains 1961-64-65.

After the Election in 1964 my entire district went Democratic for the first time in about 30 years due to much hard work and Voter Registration with my late husband Gerard Hall. The conspiracy that followed this was unbelievable and I was told that my family was overcrowded and in violation of the Multiple dwelling laws. Mr. Fredman said not to worry about it he would represent me in court. The day of the eviction proceeding he failed to show up and the eviction was granted. He explained to me that he had forgotten the date and was sorry. Knowing how sincere he had always been I accepted it and moved out of my beloved District and into New York on 9/10/65.

I am sorry that he seemingly could not give you the understanding that I gave to him when his actions effected my entire family, my career and loss of leadership to my constituents. I am hoping this matter can be resolved in an amiable manner. Call me if you need further details.

Sincerely yours,

  
Margaret Hall McGraw

cc: Samuel Fredman