

NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

Meet Jennifer Taylor:

Early Independence Gives Attorney the Skill to Support Clients and Family

BY MARY BACON, ESQ.

While growing up in Southern California, Jennifer Taylor always wanted to be a child psychologist. However, her journey led her to becoming an attorney.

“I am so grateful I pursued the law instead,” Taylor said. “It gave me the persuasive and enduring voice I would need to advocate for my children. And motherhood has been the most exhilarating and fulfilling experience of my life.”

Taylor was born in Los Angeles to Joyrice Palmer and Bill Newton. Both of her parents worked, and she grew up as a self-described “latchkey kid.” Her mom was a civilian employee with the U.S. Air Force while her father was a manager for the U.S. Postal Service. So, every day when she got home from school, she and her older sister, Carla, would complete homework, and help get the family dinner started.

Taylor’s parents grew up in the 1940s during segregation and when opportunities for women were markedly different than they were for men. To combat the inequality, her parents were diligent about ensuring their daughters were focused on education. While education could not equalize opportunities across race and gender, it had the most potential to do so, they felt. A good education would guarantee their daughters could always provide for themselves independent of relationships. An education would also ensure their daughters had the best chance to be self-sufficient and confident. The plan included working overtime to pay for Catholic school,

and setting an expectation that college was not an “if”—the only questions were “when” and “where.”

As a child, Taylor was a social butterfly and loved making friends. If she was not out with friends, she had her nose in a book, soaking up a sci-fi or period novel, like Louisa May Alcott’s “Little Women.” Taylor enjoyed learning and enjoyed being creative. She loved to be involved in her school; she was a cheerleader and directed a variety show the freshman students put on for the seniors while in high school. Her creative side also picked up cooking, which she still enjoys, especially on weekends and holidays with her family and friends. Her specialties include – short rib, pot roast, and enchiladas.

Taylor’s academic success at the private Catholic high school she attended earned her acceptance to numerous prestigious universities. Ultimately, the University of California, Berkeley became her home for four years. She enjoyed not only the academic challenges Cal offered, but the extra-curricular student life of being a Cal Bear. She majored in psychology, with the intent of becoming a child psychologist, helping children with mental health. She later settled on the law, and after earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology, took the LSAT. Taylor was the first in her family to graduate from a major university, and she was also the first to pursue a graduate degree.

Wanting to remain on the west coast, Taylor accepted a seat at the University of San Diego’s Law School in 1990. Law school made college feel like a breeze. The days were



filled with non-stop reading, outlines, and studying. While law school proved to be challenging, she was determined to make it through seeing all the possibilities and opportunities a law degree would provide. She thrived in the logical and analytical thinking it trained her brain to use. Her favorite class was “interview and counseling.” As part of that class, she interviewed female inmates and assisted them in determining if federal laws had been broken. It was clear that for the inmates, the attorneys volunteering in the program were the end of the road for them, and Taylor took that responsibility seriously. She appreciated being able to help.

After graduation, Taylor relocated to Las Vegas, where her parents moved once they retired. She knew five people who lived in Nevada when she drove through the desert optimistic about what opportunities would be provided by her journey and a law degree under her belt. Luckily, one of those people was a law school friend who helped her secure her first job – a clerkship for Clark County District Court Judge A. William Maupin and later for Clark County District Court Judge Don Chairez. She utilized these opportunities to develop her writing and litigation skills, observe first-hand how the court system works, make connections with local Nevada attorneys, and observe the processes of problem solving and analytical thinking.

“Jennifer and I have known each other since we were hired by Bill Maupin,” former co-worker Cathy Nelson said. “Jennifer was such a saving grace. She helped keep our department in balance. She’s one of the most down-to-earth, yet mature, law clerks, I have ever met. It was easy to see early on that her future was bright.”

The opportunity to clerk was not only her first job out of law school, but also how Taylor met her husband. A mutual lawyer friend set her up on a blind date with an engineer, and after Mexican food and spending two hours speaking in the parking lot, the rest was history. They’ve been together for 31 years.

After her clerkships ended, Taylor worked as an associate attorney

at Pearson and Patton practicing civil litigation under the tutelage of Neils Pearson. As a junior lawyer, she practiced insurance defense, bad faith, and general business litigation.

“I will always appreciate the training and mentorship I received at Pearson and Patton,” Taylor said. “They gave me confidence to compete in the law at an early point in my career.”

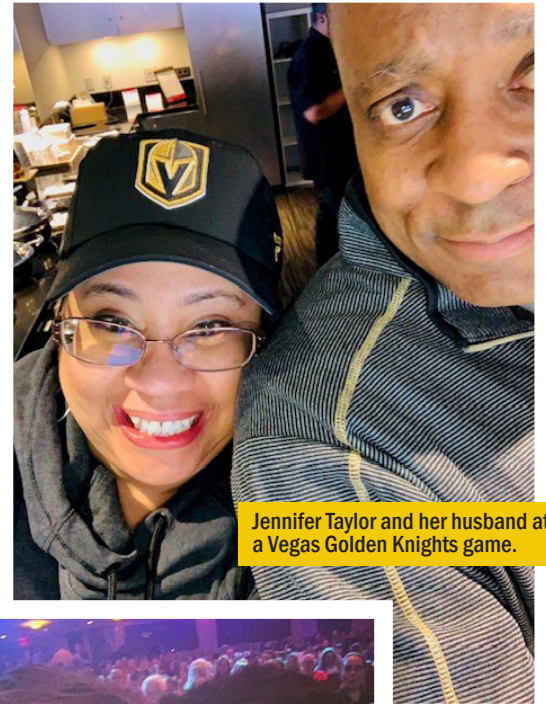
After her career was established, Taylor and her husband wanted to start a family. In 2003, they decided to adopt through Catholic Charities. The process was much different than they anticipated. They had to put together a book about themselves and wait (potentially years) for an expectant mother to “choose” them. However, less than three months later, everything started to fall into place. While on a work trip in San Francisco, Taylor received the surprise of a lifetime. Her social worker called and said they found everything she was looking for, except for one minor detail. When she asked what it was the social worker said the mother who had chosen her was expecting twins! She had 24 hours to decide if she wanted to become a mom to twins. Taylor’s mother was an identical twin, and now she would have the opportunity to raise twins. The Taylors said yes and rushed to the hospital to meet Nicole and Donovan. Two weeks later, she brought her babies home from the hospital on New Year’s Eve.

“Being a mother has always been my most fulfilling and rewarding job,” she said.

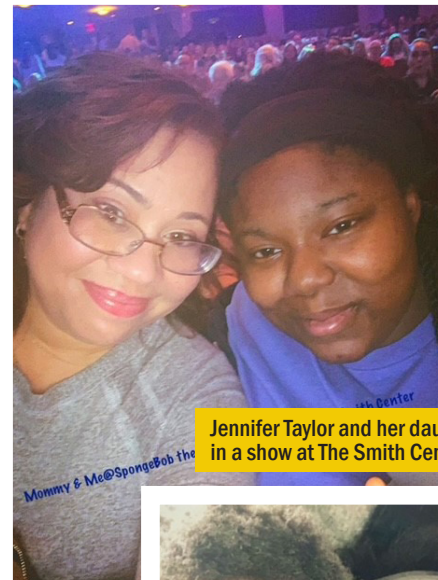
Taylor took a sabbatical year when her children were 12, in the middle of her career, to spend time more focused time with them. The time spent with her children and husband allowed her to balance her work/personal life more effectively, both of which she is heavily invested in.

Today, Taylor (known to her colleagues as “JT”) is a busy partner at Lewis Brisbois, focusing primarily on bad faith defense, insurance coverage, and general liability litigation.

In her spare time, Taylor enjoys spending time with her kids, listening to sci-fi and fantasy audiobooks, cooking for her family, and reading historical biographies. Her favorite books to read are from fiction fantasy author Larry Correia.



Jennifer Taylor and her husband attend a Vegas Golden Knights game.



Jennifer Taylor and her daughter, Nicole, take in a show at The Smith Center in Las Vegas.



Jennifer Taylor poses with her son, Donovan.