

ON THE STAND



Megan Bonanni

Pitt, McGehee, Palmer, Rivers & Golden PC, Royal Oak
Education: Wayne State University Law School
Specialty: Employment law

Ever engaged in a conversation with a French trucker? If so, you may want to thank Megan Bonanni for that.

After going to Kalamazoo College for a foreign-study program, she moved to France. There, she found an interesting side job in Strasbourg teaching at a business school.

"It was the most astonishing thing to have a room of 35 French truckers, some of whom were fluent in English, some of whom had never spoken English, and I had to teach them all," she said.

"They came to the course — which was eight hours long, once a month — with their three-course lunch every day, and a glass of wine. ... They were very refined, and they were passionate about what they did."

While Bonanni didn't exactly have a career choice back then, she said she never wanted to be an attorney — until she met human-rights attorneys in France.

"I was moved by the kind of work they were doing. And I knew that whatever I did in my professional life would involve helping people. I wanted to be a servant for people."

Recently, she was named partner at her firm, Pitt, McGehee,

Palmer, Rivers & Golden PC.

What's your favorite French phrase?

"Mon amour" ("My love").

And song?

Actually, all of Serge Gainsbourg's "Histoire de Melody Nelson" album. It's a very controversial but beautiful record. He's someone I'd love to have met.

If you could live 10 years of your life in any past decade, what would you pick?

Paris in the 1920s. It was a Bohemian art mecca. There was such an explosion of art and expression, from cinema to painting to salons with poetry.

What's your favorite way to end the workweek?

I love going to the Detroit Institute of Arts on Friday nights with my children.

What unusual collectibles do you own?

I have a collection of sugar cubes from France. They have pictures of famous paintings on each package.

Is there a word you sometimes use that isn't a real word?

"Exaggeratorial." It's not my invention, but I use it.

I hear you like to cook. What's the one cookbook you use the most?

Deborah Madison's "Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone." This book rocks. Everything's easy and flavorful, and the book is so big you have a lot to choose from. I like her soups and sauces.

If you couldn't be an attorney, what would you want to be?

I'd produce and make documentary films. I'm more educated on art than movies, but because my husband's a film editor, it would be a dream job to have an idea and work with him to make it happen in that creative process together.

Considering you specialize in employment matters, what was the worst job you ever had?

I was a terrible waitress. I spent way too much time talking to the clients and getting to know them. When I was being fired for the second time, the owner told me, "I think you'd make a great lawyer."

— DOUGLAS J. LEVY