

Adieu, Sweet Surety: The Goodbye Letter

BY CLAUDE DUCLOUX

Dear Amalgamated State and Farm
Goodhands Insurance Company:

This is the hardest letter I have ever written. My hands tremble—I almost don't know how to start.

We both know this has been coming for a long time. For years now, we've been drifting apart, you've been avoiding my gaze... and my emails.

I never want you to think that my love wasn't real. I will always remember our wonderful, incredible collaborations. You brought me joy, admiration and German automobiles. You will always have a place in my heart.

I will never forget the good times. Who can forget the sheer and mutual joy of buying you legislation and legislators? The brilliant slogans we developed, condemning the scourge of "runaway juries" and "frivolous lawsuits." The public "information" campaigns designed to misinform and deceive, like the breathtaking promise to reduce premiums if you got your way. The genius of creating additional consumer hurdles to recovery, like the Residential Construction Commission which prevented homeowners from suing their builders, or indecipherably complex standards for pre-trial expert medical reports. I can barely write this through my tears of pride. I smile, remembering our nights with the lobbyists, and the long, cleansing showers afterwards. Have you forgotten? I haven't, which makes this even more painful.

Sure, the signs were there. But I loved you, believed in you—no, believed in us so much that I accepted your excuses willingly. When you redlined neighborhoods and declined coverage months after accepting premiums, when the first claim came in, I convinced myself it was a necessary protection. The sheer courage of yanking medical coverage for an appendectomy four months into the coverage year because the insured hadn't disclosed his cedar allergy. I blinked, but

convinced myself it was just prudent business. The public would understand. Sure they would. No matter what, I would defend you to the last writ. Your victories were my victories. I started winning cases, getting my name in the press. The prejudice against consumer lawyers was palpable. How could I not blush with pride and enjoy the bravado?

During those many years, I know I gave you my best. You inspired me to work for 31 percent less than my standard billing rate. But you trusted me. When I came home after depositions, you always paid

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my bill—and I knew you appreciated my choices of experts and case strategies. But no longer. The trust and confidence you had in me has slowly eroded like the ice cubes in my Glenlivet. I was a fool. My euphoria resulting from finally beating adversaries with the intricacies of HB4 had inexorably dulled my senses.

I simply must say this: You're spoiled. The things we fought for now come easily to you. You think I should be working cheaper, at a pace and a cost dictated by you, not me. Now, instead of "Go git 'em!" I get inquiries confirming your increasing suspicion: "Why do you need to take that deposition? How

much will it cost? Why are you charging me for document review?"

Nothing I do escapes your scrutiny. "Don't file that motion without permission. Stay within the litigation budget. Your rate is too high. Give the file to someone cheaper, or reduce your rate." You have minions who peruse my bill

for you, looking for errors the size of pinholes.

You don't even let me bill monthly. It's as if you don't want to hear from me. And my quarterly bill is rejected unless these insane computer codes are all correct. When I travel to a small county for a hearing, you question my motives like an angry lover.

I hope you're happy now. My Porsche is gone. My wine list is... domestic. We've downsized to a Class B building. My car sits all day in an uncovered parking lot. Now, with tears dropping on my timesheets, I realize I've been had. You really don't want to help people. And now I see myself as

your accomplice. My confidence is broken, the bridge is burning, and I look back like a Dallas Cowboy fan remembering better years, hoping to reclaim my dignity and, dare I say, glory.

So, I am closing the file on you. Withdrawing from representation. Don't worry, I know you'll find some young, hot, law graduate desperate for your limited affections who will fall for your promise of undying faithfulness. You'll burn through that graduate like a habanero pepper in a nursing home.

Don't worry about me. I've got a few good years left. I've decided to seek the comfort of a client who will never turn its back on my best interests, or on anyone. An association who appreciates me for my persuasion and class, as well as my unfailing influence in Congress and law enforcement. That's right, I'm moving on to a nobler and more stable position. I will be the top consigliere for the Gambino family. Ciao, baby. **A**