



LAW TIPS

One of the pleasures of practicing law is helping people resolve legal questions they come face to face with in their lives. Some of these situations are pleasant – such as selling your house for a profit or buying your dream house – while others cause various levels of anxiety – such as when someone owes you money or when you and a friend decide to go into business together. We hope these law tips will entertain as well as enlighten you. **PLEASE REMEMBER** these are only tips and no legal decisions should be made without first obtaining advice specific to your particular situation.

Hedy Lamarr And National Security

The Department of Defense recently asked citizens to volunteer ideas on how to fight terrorism. Snickers have been heard from various sectors, including the New York Times, which commented that now "every Tom, Dick and Goofball" will become national security consultants. Apparently, the New York Times doesn't know its history. They don't remember Hedy Lamarr.

Who was Hedy Lamarr? She was a famous Hollywood movie star of the '30s, '40s and '50s, starring in many movies with leading men such as Clark Gable, Spencer Tracey, and Victor Mature. But Hedy was famous even before she became a Hollywood star by allowing herself to be filmed nude in a Czech movie called *Ecstasy*. Needless to say, the movie was much too ecstatic for the US movie market and was banned here. This, of course, insured its fame, and Hedy's future.

Hedy was a gorgeous, dark-haired woman, who came to Hollywood in 1937 to begin a long movie career. However, Hedy was not your typical starlet. She was a fervent anti-Nazi, having seen first-hand what was going on in Europe, and was committed herself to doing everything she could to defeat fascism. Among other things, for example, she used her celebrity status to help raise \$7 million in war bonds in a single appearance. But Hedy did far more than stand next to Bob Hope and let American males wish they had seen *Ecstasy*. Hedy had inside information on the German munitions industry. Before arriving in the US, Hedy had been married to an Austrian industrialist whose clients included the Germans. Hedy attended meetings and parties with her husband and, like most beautiful women, was considered invisible by the arrogant males who surrounded her. They talked as if she didn't exist, but Hedy was listening.

When she moved to the States, she went to a party at Janet Gaynor's house one night and became involved in a conversation with a composer named George Antheil who wrote music for player pianos. Hedy told Antheil about a conversation she had listened to in Germany in which German engineers discussed trying to design a radio system for guided torpedoes that could not be jammed by an enemy. Lamarr told Antheil that she thought that the radio signals guiding the torpedo could be made safe from jamming if the signals could "hop" from frequency to frequency in step with a receiver in the torpedo. Antheil suggested using a paper tape, like the paper roll that tells a player piano what notes to play. The two of them applied for a patent on this process, and were granted one in August 1942. Unfortunately, the Navy couldn't figure out how to make the system work. Twenty years later, however, when primitive computers came along, the system was finally incorporated into torpedoes used by the Navy, and then integrated into virtually every communication system used during the Cold War.

Even though the patent expired in the 1960's, it was not until the 1980's that the government allowed Hedy's idea to be used in commercial applications, and thus your cell phone, when it skips from antenna to antenna to keep you talking, owes its success to an idea a movie star had in 1941. So does GPS. And the Internet. Maybe the Department of Defense *is* on to something. Maybe someone there remembers Hedy Lamarr.

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