

fense may well argue that the investigators misinterpreted what Stewart told them that day.

In any event, Stewart and Armstrong now have many months in which to contemplate facing each other in court. Stewart is notorious in some circles for being tough on subordinates, but Armstrong has apparently thrived as her assistant. According to people who know her, Armstrong is fiftyish, lives on the Upper East Side, and has worked happily for Stewart since 1998. As one of her associates said last week, "Why should she lose her job for telling the truth?"

Stewart, for her part, did not so much attend as preside over the hearing. When she walked in, the courtroom grew hushed, in the way that it usually does when the Judge arrives. Stewart wore muted earth tones, which matched her polka-dot umbrella. As she settles into life as a defendant, she seems to be playing with her reputation as a rather fearsome control freak. She made a much reported quip to a courtroom artist, insisting that she be portrayed with "no pockmarks. Perfect skin." But the real Stewart may have come through in her interaction with her co-defendant. Bacanovic and his team hustled in late, and Stewart stared hard at him, clearly trying to get his attention. Bacanovic ignored her for the duration of the hearing. When the court session ended, Stewart kept it up, finally walking over and chatting with him for a minute or two. As Bacanovic learned—and as the government may also learn—Stewart tends to get what she wants.

—Jeffrey Toobin

## DEPT. OF PROCUREMENT THE MEAT DOCTOR



Most weekdays, Sol Forman ate both lunch and dinner at the legendary steakhouse Peter Luger, which was situated across the street from a metalworking factory he owned, in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. In 1950, the restaurant's owners put the place up for auction, and Forman—

afraid that his principal source of nutrition was about to disappear—submitted what turned out to be the only bid. Initially, looking after his factory prevented him from devoting as much time to the restaurant as he would have liked, so the task of procuring well-marbled protein fell to his wife, Marsha. She hired a retired government grader to tutor her, discovered that she had a talent for judging beef, and became a beloved figure in Manhattan's wholesale meat district, where she was invariably the only buyer wearing pearls and a fur hat.

Marsha Forman died five years ago; her husband—whose high-cholesterol diet may have hastened his demise—died three years later, at the age of ninety-eight. Today, the restaurant is run by the Formans' daughter Marilyn Forman Spiera, with help from her sister, Amy Forman Rubenstein, and her daughter Jody Spiera Storch. Marsha Forman taught her daughters and her granddaughter how to evaluate meat, and the three women now do all the restaurant's buying. Each week, they visit half a dozen suppliers, mostly in lower Manhattan and at Hunts Point, and select roughly twenty thousand pounds of prime beef, plus the odd quarter-ton of lamb.

On a recent morning, the shopping rotation fell to Storch, who is pretty, exuberant, and thirty-two years old. Shortly before ten o'clock, she parked her minivan in front of Walmir Meat, Inc., on Washington Street near West Fourteenth Street. She opened the car's sliding side door, revealing a child's safety seat—she and her husband, a hedge-fund manager, have a three-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son—and a white butcher's coat. She pulled the butcher's coat over her mom clothes, and put on a pair of white loose-knit meat-handling gloves.

"My grandmother took me to the market the first time when I was eight," she said. "The whole thing overwhelmed me, and I became a vegetarian, which was an abhorrent thing to be in my family. 'You can't be a vegetarian!' So that lasted about a month—and now here I am. My brother, my sister, and my dad are all physicians. They call me the M.D. of the family—the Meat Doctor."

Inside Walmir Meat, Storch greeted several employees by name, then made

her way toward the back, where a small number of especially promising quartered cattle carcasses, all of them stamped "prime" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, had been set aside for her consideration. The porterhouse, which Peter Luger features, originates in the short loin, a foot-and-a-half-long section that begins below the bottom of a steer's rib cage. When Storch found a short loin she liked—"This one is nice and fat, and fat is flavor"—she claimed it for the restaurant by whacking it with a long-handled, dye-coated brass stamp, which she inherited from her grandmother.

"Sometimes, to fool you, suppliers do what's called 'combing' beef," she said as she worked her way down the line. "They take a knife and scrape it over the surface, over and over, pulling the fat out so that the beef looks better than it is."

Like her mother, her aunt, and her sister, Storch went to Barnard College. She was admitted to law school after graduation, but she wasn't sure she really wanted to be a lawyer, and she deferred twice. While she was making up her mind, the family business seduced her. "My mother started at the restaurant when she was very young, and she was going to N.Y.U. law school at night, and she was pregnant with my sister. She worked right up until my sister was born, and she worked through all her pregnancies—which was very unusual at the time. And when each of us was born she took off just a week. I took two weeks when my son was born—all my friends were getting, like, three months with pay—and my mom said, 'O.K., one week I understand. But why do you need the second one?'"

Peter Luger goes through about six hundred short loins in an average week, and so far Storch had picked out perhaps twenty, each of which would serve between eight and a dozen diners. Now, as she worked her way back toward the front of the building, she said, "In a million years, I never would have guessed I'd be doing this, but I love it. And the part I thought I'd like the least, buying the meat, turned out to be the part I like the most. It's the one thing that, if you do it right, is the essence of the business." She looked closely at another loin. "This one is a little waste-y," she said, "but I like it anyway. I'm going to hit it."

—David Owen