



By Barry H. Grodsky

Along the Way

As I roll towards the end of my term as president, I have reflected a bit on what I have experienced over the past couple of decades, a time when I became actively involved in the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). There have been great Annual Meetings, board meetings, committee activities and programming. I have watched and participated in activities where the Bar has grown and prospered — all for the benefit of our members.

But with all of that, the best thing I have experienced can be summed up in one word: PEOPLE. It is the people I have encountered who have absolutely had the most significant impact on me personally, particularly during my term as president. There is no doubt that, but for LSBA activities, these relationships would never have existed.

These relationships have come in all shapes, sizes and forms, but all are part of what makes the Bar so special for me. Larry Shea and I gave a professionalism program at Loyola University. Afterwards, a second-year student thanked us for the program but specifically how the character and fitness training specifically helped her. Over the years, I have had dozens of law students at each of the state's law schools thank me for assisting with the programs. I remember instances at Bridging the Gap programs where many about to be admitted told me how much they appreciated the presentations.

I have had calls from a number of young lawyers over the years telling me how important the mentoring pro-

gram was for them. For me, I enjoyed speaking to everyone and getting their feedback. The members (and soon-to-be members) of our profession took the time to let me know that what the Bar has done, and was doing, was meaningful. Without Bar involvement, I never would have learned of this or had these interactions.

Some relationships are brief but no less meaningful. In 2014 and 2015, I traveled the state promoting the mentoring program. I'll never forget the warm welcomes I always received and how nice everyone was. I specifically recall programs in Shreveport, Lafayette, Thibodaux, Baton Rouge and New Orleans. I walked into each as a presenter and walked out with a room full of friends. From a Bar perspective, I still speak to and meet with some of the attorneys I have met in these programs. It is wonderful to visit with them at other programs the LSBA presents.

Recently, an attorney I did not know called to tell me of a personal problem which led to me getting her in touch with someone at the Bar to help her. The issue was resolved and I know she was very thankful. One phone call, one new relationship, one more attorney assisted by the LSBA.

Earlier this year, I was walking out of my parking lot heading to work and a man was right behind me. I did not know him but, being courteous, I did tell him hello. It seemed he knew me, though, and said, "I hope you are enjoying your year as President." I stopped and said that, indeed, I was. It turned out this gentleman was Hugh Straub, a su-

perstar volunteer at the Self-Help Desk at Orleans Parish Civil District Court and a recipient of the LSBA's Pro Bono Award. He told me how gratifying it is to assist at the self-help desk. Hugh is an unsung hero for the Bar and a chance encounter led me to meet him.

On the Board of Governors, lawyers from all over the state work to promote the LSBA, work on governance and financial issues and develop programs. But it is much more than that. It is the people on the Board who make LSBA activities so special. Those who started as Board members are soon friends. These are often lifelong relationships. And it is not just the Board. I have been blessed to work with LSBA presidents for nearly 20 years — men and women who I respect as much as anyone in this profession. Over the years, these presidents became former presidents but most remain active in the LSBA. More importantly, we have become and remain friends, friendships which transcend Bar activities. (I will discuss LSU football with former Presidents Mike Patterson, Guy deLaup and Richard Leefe as often as I discuss Bar matters with them). Plus, these are all leaders I can turn to for advice and guidance — true relationships.

There also have been relationships established with those who are associated with related activities, such as Chuck Plattsmier with the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, Mike Street with the Louisiana Bar Foundation and Buddy Stockwell with the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP). And, of course, starting with Loretta

Larsen, our outstanding executive director, all of our friends at the LSBA office are important relationships.

I tried to think of all of those I have encountered over the years, including volunteers at law school programs, judges, committee members and Annual Meeting attendees. While names and events may escape me, I recall the friendships.

I also realize it is not just in Louisiana where such relationships are built. As a former president of the Southern Conference of Bar Presidents, I think of all the friends I have made among Bar leaders from all over the South. The LSBA is working on specific programs with Mississippi to enhance our relationships there.

I recall a dinner I attended where a discussion took place with leaders from the Bars of Paris, Switzerland, Austria and Japan. It was a fascinating dinner which started with a number of attorneys who had never met and ended with a group of friends who exchanged information and ideas about their Bars.

Of course, not all interactions are perfect. I have had an attorney complain to me that there were too many photos of my child in the *Louisiana Bar Journal* and another attorney complaining about certain CLE programs. But that comes with the job and I hope my responses to them were helpful. These too are relationships nonetheless.

For me, the work of the LSBA is very important to our members and to the public and, personally, it has introduced me to literally hundreds of lawyers I would never have met but for the Bar. As I've stated before, the more you give to the Bar, the more you get out of it, and this is particularly true of those you meet. Experience what the LSBA has to offer; it's more than what meets the eye and you'll be forever grateful for those you meet along the way. Bar activities may last for just a while; friendships last forever.

Barry G. Giddens

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