



By Barry H. Grodsky

# “Try It. You’ll Like It!”

A few years ago, my wife, daughter and I went to a seafood restaurant for dinner. My daughter, Caroline, had never seen, much less eaten, a raw oyster and was fascinated when a dozen of them were delivered to me. As she kept staring, I asked if she wanted to try one. “Nope.” I asked again, same response. Finally, I asked, “Why not?” She said, “Because I don’t like them.” I replied, “How do you know? You’ve never had one.” I gave a lot of reasons why she should try an oyster and, reluctantly, Caroline finally ate one with a bit of cocktail sauce. Two bites, then she spit it out. “That’s fine,” I said, “at least you tried one.”

A few minutes later, she asked if she could try another one. This time the result was different. She liked it. She proceeded to eat the last six I had on my plate.

That dinner came to mind when I bumped into a well-known New Orleans attorney some time ago. He had been disillusioned by a prior experience with the Bar. I asked him to become a mentor in the Transition Into Practice Program. He said no. I asked why not. He said he would not like it. We went back and forth and then he said, “You’ve got five minutes to convince me.” Five minutes later, he decided to become a mentor. He went through the mentor training, completed the mentor program and went to the mentor reception. He admitted that, once he was convinced to try it, he liked it. Amazing!

As long as I have been in Bar leadership, I have preached this — try something, anything, for the Bar. You will be amazed. Perhaps I am the Bar’s biggest cheerleader. That’s fine. But I wouldn’t do this if I did not believe in our Bar. I am convinced now more than ever that many lawyers simply don’t know just how terrific our Bar is and what it has to offer.

At a recent meeting of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, an affiliate of the American Bar Association, the moderator asked the group — more than 100 people were in attendance — if anyone was satisfied with his/her Bar. I looked around and no one had raised a hand. I whispered to Loretta Larsen, our Executive Director, that I was really happy. She said, “Raise your hand!” I did. Only one other Bar president did the same.

I see significant problems in other states — unfriendly Legislatures controlling the Bars, poor relationships between the Bars and the state courts, Bars being sued, the inability to get volunteers, turmoil in certain courts. We have none of these problems. What we have is an energetic Bar with countless volunteers and Loretta and our friends at the Bar who do an unbelievable job. But there are far too many among our approximately 23,000 members — judges and lawyers alike — who are simply afraid of sticking their toes in the water. Perhaps fear of the unknown — like eating an oyster for the first time — is preventing too many of our members from joining in.

I understand. We’re all busy with jobs and families. Other interests take our time. There are only so many hours in a day. But, believe me, you’re missing out. Just like my daughter, try one. Join a committee or a section. Don’t just attend a CLE, but give one. Become a mentor. Run for a seat in the House of Delegates. Volunteer for a law school orientation program. Submit an article for the *Louisiana Bar Journal*. Attend the LSBA’s Midyear Meeting or Annual Meeting. Do one thing. That’s all I ask.

Becoming engaged in Bar activities can be outside the law, too. Let’s talk about your non-legal interests. The *Journal* has featured articles on Anthony M. (Tony) DiLeo’s paintings and Judge Michael A. Pitman’s

and Randy P. Roussel’s photography. What interests do you have outside the practice? Let’s publish it.

It’s so easy to get involved. Check out the LSBA’s website and find something, anything, which interests you and just do it. For our young lawyers, the Young Lawyers Division has great programs, many focused on access to justice. For more seasoned lawyers, get active in the Senior Lawyers Division. Each Division has much to offer, including a joint lunch and CLE program in Baton Rouge in February.

Those who get involved see the merits and gain from it. Often, once you are in, participation expands. But, almost without exception, those who complain the most about the Bar do the least for it. If you give to the Bar, the Bar will give back to you many times over.

I have spoken personally to many lawyers who have become active; some have become very involved and others have done one thing. But, frankly, that’s all I’m asking. Do one thing — anything — for the Bar. What’s stopping you? The simple answer is “you.” If I can convince just one member to perform one Bar function, then I’ve succeeded. But with my faith in the Bar, participating in its programs and activities, having witnessed the true camaraderie of our members at Bar functions and seeing how much you get back just by giving a little, I know that if you try it, you really will like it.

I also know that, as you give to the Bar, both the Bar and you will benefit. I can assure you of that. Give it a try and see what the Bar can offer. There’s no doubt that, when you bite into this oyster, you will find your pearl.

*Barry Grodsky*