

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Have You Done Your Mitzvah This Law Day?

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Law Day is the Super Bowl Sunday of our profession. Today is the day to honor and remember the greats among us. In other words, today we should recognize and remember our legal "Hall of Fame."

While the NFL had its Lombardis, Halases, and Ditkas, they in fact pale in comparison to the great coaches and mentors who have both practiced here and more importantly, taught the generations that followed them.

On this Law Day 2013, I can't help but think about the great mentors and coaches whom I have been privileged to learn from in more than 30 years of practicing law in Chicago. While it is always dangerous to create lists and name names, certain mentors I have benefitted from clearly need to be recognized.

Judicially, I have learned valuable lessons and how to comport myself before an appellate tribunal from Judge William Bauer of the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. Additionally, through direct contact and observation, I have received judicial mentoring from esteemed members of the court such as: Joel Flaum, 7th Circuit Court of Appeals; Charles Kocoras, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois; Harry Comerford, Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County; and William Maddux, Presiding Judge of the Law Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Each of these judicial greats has imparted lessons to many as to, not only the nuts and bolts of proper legal procedures, but more importantly, the proper way to conduct yourself as the lawyer addressing the court and the lawyer dealing with clients and counsel representing the opposing side.

In addition to judicial guidance, I, and many others, have been the beneficiaries of great tutelage from members of the bar. I have been lucky enough to work on cases with and in turn learn by osmosis from legal giants such as Philip Corboy, Leonard Ring, Robert Clifford, and of course, my own personal legal hero, my brother Tom, whom I have been privileged to work with for more



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than 25 years. Each of these individuals reached the pinnacle of the legal profession because of his dedication to preparation, exemplary work ethic, and the fact that they cared about those they represented.

There is another important trait that each of the great mentors mentioned above share. Each of the "Hall of Famers" never forgot from whence they came and recognized the absolute

privilege they enjoyed in being able to practice law. Because they were so privileged, these venerable members of the bench and bar never forgot to give back.

That common trait emanates from one very important source: a man whom I have always thought of as the "Mentors' Mentor" — the Honorable Abraham Lincoln Marovitz. To all of us were lucky enough to know Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, he was always called simply, "Judge Abe."

The story of Abe's life has been the subject of numerous articles, books, and stories told over decades. I will leave to your own research those articles and stories. You need only know that Judge Abe was the type of man who conversed with and advised individuals ranging from United States presidents, mayors of the City of Chicago, and Frank Sinatra in Booth One of the Pump Room, to someone who was down and out on a Chicago street corner.

When it came to the Chicago legal community, Abe Marovitz always made himself available to any lawyer, fellow judge, or law student who needed guidance within our profession. Each of the legal giants I referred to above, and many others, considered Abe Marovitz as their number one advisor.

As a very young attorney, I, too, was fortunate enough to come under the wing of Judge Marovitz. Whether it was sitting in Judge Abe's chambers in the Dirksen Federal Building, which was a museum both to his namesake as well as the Chicago social and legal scene, or having lunch at Tynan's Restaurant, there wasn't a time that I walked away not being enriched by Judge Abe's words. While his lessons as to how to research, deal with difficult opponents, or

argue in front of a jury were invaluable, on this Law Day, one lesson stands above all else that Judge Abe taught me and countless others. I pass that lesson on to you today in honor of Law Day.

Abraham Lincoln Marovitz made sure I understood while I was in law school that it was an absolute privilege to practice law. It was an honor to help others through the legal system. Our ability to practice law in this community is not an entitlement; it is not a right; it is a privilege.

Once Abe was convinced that message was instilled, he then said to me, "Laddy, if you are so privileged, remember that every single day, in return for the privilege, you must do a mitzvah." While the judge could have sent me out to do research on the Yiddish language, he saved me that effort by answering my quizzical look by explaining to me that a mitzvah is a good deed. He explained that mitzvahs could be small, big, or in between. But every day that I was lucky enough to possess a license to practice law, I must accomplish a mitzvah.

He said "Lad, when you wake up in the morning, think about what you can do for others and when you lay your head down on the pillow at night, make sure you did it."

If you look at the history of those who have learned from Judge Marovitz, they all have in common that they have done and continue to do great deeds on behalf of those in need. Whether it be the work of Judge Bauer on behalf of the Scottish Home for the Elderly or of my brother by creating the the Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth program, each of the mentors I have been privileged to know has exemplified Abe's lessons. But please know that it does not require a multimillion-dollar donation to fulfill Abe's message. Taking time out of your schedule to help a friend or stranger with a few kind words or advice will serve you and the profession well.

May 1 is a great day in our profession. I urge you to put aside the daily irritants that come with the practice of law and think about our profession and how privileged we are to be members of it. To that end, I am going to share with you some valuable words that Judge Abe imparted upon me when swearing me in as a member of the federal bar. For more than 30 years, these words have sat on my desk on a frame presented to me by His Honor with the personal inscription that comes at the end. The words will hopefully be an inspiration to

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you always to practice law at the highest level and to remember every day the privilege you enjoy and in turn inspire the mitzvah you must do in return for the privilege.

On the 9th day of December, 1965, at Chicago, Illinois, upon the occasion of the mass admission of 245 attorneys to practice before the UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, EASTERN DIVISION, on motion of ALBERT E. JENNER, JR. and CHARLES A. BANE before THE HONORABLE ABRAHAM LINCOLN MAROVITZ, PRESIDING JUDGE, JUDGE MAROVITZ quoted the following:

I AM THE LAWYER

I am the lawyer.

I displaced brute force with mercy, justice and equity.

I taught mankind to respect the rights of others to their property, to their personal liberty, to freedom of conscience, to free speech and free assembly.

I am the spokesman of righteous causes.

I plead for the poor, the persecuted, the widow and the orphan.

I maintain honor in the market place.

I am the champion of unpopular causes.

I am the foe of tyranny, oppression and bureaucracy.

I prepared the way for the Ten Commandments.

I pleaded for the freedom of the slave in Greece and for the captive in Rome.

I fought the Stamp Act.

I wrote the Declaration of Independence and the rights of man.

I defended the slave. I was an Abolitionist. I signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

I punish the wicked, protect the innocent, raise up the lowly, oppose brutality and injustice, in every land and clime.

I fought in every war for liberty.

I stand in the way of public clamor and the tyranny of the majority.

I plead for the rich man when prejudice prevents him from getting justice and I insist that the poor man be accorded all his rights and privileges.

I seek the equality of mankind, regardless of color, caste, sex or religion.

I hate fraud, deceit or trickery.

I am forbidden to serve two masters or to compromise with justice.

I am the conservative of the past, the liberal of the present and the radical of the future.

I believe in convention but I cut the gordian knot of formalism and red tape to do justice and equity.

I am the leader of mankind in every crisis.

I am the scapegoat of the world.

I hold the rights of mankind in the hollow of my hand, but am unable to obtain recognition of my own.

I am the pioneer. I am the last to renounce the past and to overturn the present.

I am the just judge and the righteous ruler.

I hear before I condemn. I seek the best in everything.

My dear young friend Michael Demetrio: It was my privilege and honor on motion of your beloved father Don to assume your oath for admission to practice in my Federal Court 3/26/87 Abraham Lincoln Marovitz

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