

# WHY I SELFISHLY ACCEPT PRO BONO CASES

BY JIM HALES, ESQ.

I learned long ago that accepting pro bono cases is in my best interest, if done in moderation. Personally benefiting from pro bono cases may seem counterintuitive and less than altruistic. While motivations are important, I speak here to the practical results of accepting pro bono cases. While my experiences may not correspond with everyone's, I offer my list of reasons I selfishly accept pro bono cases.

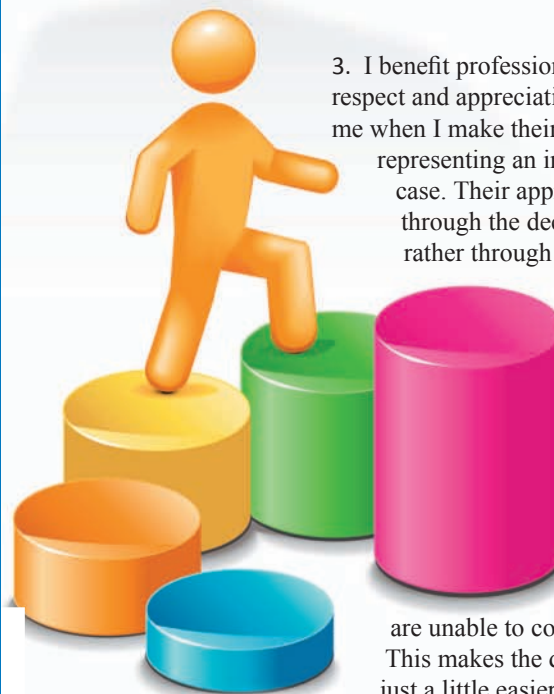
1. I like baked goods, especially when delivered by appreciative clients who have no other means, financially or perhaps socially, to express their appreciation.
2. I like to demonstrate to my children, and to others I mentor, that there is great satisfaction in rendering assistance to others. This point is subtly driven home (pun intended) when accompanied by baked goods received from clients.

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3. I benefit professionally from the unstated respect and appreciation that judges have for me when I make their job just a little easier by representing an indigent client in a difficult case. Their appreciation is never manifest through the decisions they render, but rather through the courtesy they extend to

me. I am not perfect. I make mistakes in court and in my pleadings. I find that judges are a little bit more patient with me when they see me as an attorney doing the best I can, including rendering assistance when possible to people who

are unable to compensate me monetarily. This makes the difficult job of litigating just a little easier.

4. Paid work has come to me as a result of helping individuals who could not otherwise afford it. Sometimes the causal connection is tenuous and convoluted, but I recognize it. While I never accept pro bono cases with the expectation of financial reward, there is truth to the phrase, “what goes around, comes around.”
5. For brief moments of time each year, my Atticus Finch delusions are satisfied. I know I am no Atticus Finch, and in fact, opposing counsel seems to take particular delight in pointing out to the court that I am no Atticus Finch. Yet, as I walk away from a court hearing where I have represented an indigent client, I have just a few highly satisfying Atticus Finch moments: I know that I have helped a person who needed it and that the community is the better for my efforts. ■



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