

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Best Natural Resource Around: Confessions of a Self-Help Junkie

BY ANN MORGAN, ESQ.,
PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA



I never met a self-help book, article, podcast, or TED Talk that didn't cause me to think: "Oh, I need to do this!" Want to declutter your closet? Why yes, yes, I do! Want to communicate more effectively? Why yes, yes, I do! Want to be more productive at work? Why yes, yes, I do! Want to get fit without exercising? YES!

The theme of this month's edition is natural resource law. All self-help books, articles, and podcasts are a type of resource. I, for one, generally get at least one good idea from almost every book or podcast I read or listen to, or every CLE I attend, particularly if I underline a good idea or make a note. Is it worth the time spent? Sometimes. Do I nevertheless enjoy doing it? Generally, yes.

It dawns on me, however, that the best resource to being a better, more effective, and happier attorney isn't a book, a podcast, or a Facebook survey. It is a different kind of natural resource, the kind that comes from being associated with other attorneys and judges: Working for and with them, talking to them, listening to them, opposing them, collaborating with them, appearing in front of them.

My first job in a law firm was with Guild, Hagen and Clark. The firm's name partners – Clark J. Guild Jr., David Hagen, and Drennan Anthony "Tony" Clark – were a wonderful combination of mentors. They were also very smart people and successful attorneys. Hagen went on to become a

U.S. District Court judge for the District of Nevada. Clark became the adjutant general of the Nevada National Guard. However, Guild, the senior partner of the firm, was the perfect natural resource. He surrounded himself with smart attorneys, like Judge Hagen and General Clark, and did his best to maximize the talents of all the attorneys in the firm.

Guild did this by modeling how to be a better, more effective and happier attorney. In a luxury we are ill-afforded these days, every work day started with all of the attorneys gathering in Guild's office, talking about what we did over the weekend, whose football bets were successful and, of course, what we were working on. He was interested in all of it. He read the Nevada Supreme Court's advance opinions and talked about them. If you wanted to participate in the discussion, you read the opinions as well.

He was generous with his connections and modeled how to make them. He was on a first-name basis with judges in every jurisdiction and level in Nevada. It was the same with legislators and regulators. He found ways to pass those relationships on to new attorneys in the bar. He went to lunch every day with a friend, client, or colleague and always invited some or all of us to join him. He held annual Super Bowl parties and invited a wide swath of the local community. In doing so, he provided opportunities for younger members of the bar to meet and get to know judges, politicians, and local businesspeople. He was an active member of the Washoe County Bar Association,

never missing a bar lunch, and always making introductions. He chaired the discipline committee for many years and encouraged all of us to join bar committees. He rarely missed a bar convention and encouraged all of the members of the firm to attend. He said it was one of the places he formed the long-term friendships that proved to be so valuable to him in his practice.

Clark believed you could improve your skills by watching and analyzing how others practiced. His litigation style was both aggressive and charming. He was always prepared. I followed the preparation (and charming!) model. I also took his advice about watching other attorneys. I incorporated techniques I found effective into my own style, even if the technique was one employed by opposing counsel. I listened to the way judges ruled on objections and learned how to make better objections. I discussed case theories and tested out arguments in the break room, driving to the courthouse, and over beers. I have been fortunate to work in several firms in my career, and I have continued this practice of observing and learning good and effective practices from my partners and colleagues in each of these firms.

Connecting with, observing, and discussing the practice with a colleague is the icing on the cake of solid preparation. But to connect, observe, and discuss, you have to associate. This June 23-24, 2022, your state bar association will hold its annual conference at the Fairmont Inn and Spa in Sonoma, California. In attendance will be your section leaders, affinity bar leaders, and judges from all parts of Nevada. It is the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the best natural resources our profession has to offer. If you, like me, are a self-help junkie, join us for the best self-help gathering of the year (plus you will get several CLE credits while receiving all of the above benefits). If you, unlike me, are not into the self-help craze, join us anyway for a glass of wine, sparkling water, or an olive oil tasting. It will help you be a better, more effective, and happier attorney, naturally!