

# Standing on the shoulders of those who came before us

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Thank you for the honor of serving as LAJ president. I look forward to the coming year and pledge my service to you.

There is one important step you can take today that will make a difference in a new lawyer's life. Become a mentor.

In my law practice, I have been extremely fortunate to have benefitted from the experience, guidance, insight, friendship, and inspiration of some of the best mentors anyone could ever hope for.

I started out as a clerk for Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Harry T. Lemmon. He expanded my vista of the law from something found mostly in books to a living, complex ecosystem of history, politics, religion, philosophy, civics, business, and economics.

When I began practicing law, I learned from Dennis Hennen, working on the I.M.C. Chemical Plant explosion in Sterlinton, and was also lucky enough to work with Jim (now Justice) Kitchens and Howard Twiggs in the forced-place insurance litigation and a class action in Texas against PMIC.

In the tobacco litigation, I got to watch not only my dad, but also Steve Murray, Wendell Gauthier, Walter Leger, Mike Gertler, Joe Bruno, Ken Carter, Jack Bailey, Sidney (now Judge) Cates, Bruce Dean, Deborah Sulzer, Allen Usry, Willie Singleton, Raul Bencomo, and others, whose diverse talents and styles created a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts.

While our PBM litigation venture was unsuccessful in almost every way, I greatly appreciate having gotten to work with accomplished lawyers from around the country, like Bill Narwold, Gary Kendall, and John Day.

More recently, I got to be involved in the Hernandez Chinese Drywall bellwether trial with Chris Seeger and Gerry Meunier, along with Skip Lambert and Dawn Barrios, all the while observing master conductors like my dad and Arnie Levin.

Finally, the BP Oil litigation has handed me the privilege of watching and learning from other great trial lawyers, like Bobo Cunningham, Paul Sterbcow, Duke Williams, Johnny (now Judge) deGravelles, Jeff Breit, and other leaders of LAJ and AAJ; from skillful negotiators like Joe Rice and Calvin Fayard; from preeminent class action experts Elizabeth Cabraser and Sam Issacharoff. And, of course, the chess master legal strategist and real lawyer's lawyer, Jim Roy.

And that doesn't even include the millions of lessons, love, support, friendship, and work ethic I have received over the years from Maury, Morton, Steve, Lenny, Jim, Brian, Soren, Jed, Freddy, Joe, Matt, and Dad. And Karen!

At LAJ, I practically grew up with Leah Guerry, the best known and most respected trial lawyer



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executive in the nation. We have, most fortunately, been blessed to have Connie Koury as our new executive director. She leads with tireless energy, unwavering commitment, and a keen understanding of both the political landscape and the practical aspects of running an organization.

And now I will do my best to try to follow Dan Foley as LAJ president. Dan, who has spent nearly every waking hour tending to the association, and who has tried to teach me everything there is to know about being the consummate politician (in

the good ways).

We all are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us.

We owe them our thanks, our tribute, and our respect. The best way that we can repay our debt to them is to forge a brighter path for the next generation. We honor our fathers and mothers in teaching our sons and daughters. And we do well by doing good.

When I think of trial lawyers, I think of Tennyson's "Ulysses":

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are,  
we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, yet strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

By sticking together, we can help avoid the bad times and make the good times better.

With respect to LAJ, please mentor younger attorneys by encouraging them to become a member of our association. Sponsor their membership if needed. Welcome our new members, who bring energy and diversity. Reach out to minority and women attorneys who would value the benefits of being an LAJ member. Invite our younger members to a Membership Luncheon or CLE.

When younger attorneys need help with difficult cases, instead of working on referral, make them your co-counsel.

Please also join the new LAJ Mentors list server. Young lawyers who join that listserve will be amazed at the wealth of resources available through the combined wisdom of you and other LAJ members.

Our chosen profession is not easy. Thanks for your trust and your support. And please honor your mentors by seeking to pass the torch to someone else.