

How I spent my summer vacations (and still remember the lessons learned)

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When I was growing up, our summer vacation largely consisted of traveling with dad to the Association of Trial Lawyers of America (now AAJ) conventions. My mom and my sisters and I would spend most of our time sightseeing. But every once in a while, we would sneak into the CLE programs to see my dad or other great speakers, like Gerry Spence or Morris Dees, or even, one time, Lou Holtz, when he was head coach at Notre Dame. I remember that sometimes a speech might be so stirring that kitchen staff from the hotel would gather and listen.

In the winter, we might go with our parents to the LAJ conference in Aspen and listen to the talks in the afternoons when everyone was done skiing. I remember I had a cassette tape of the "Bigtrain" speech, which I learned by heart in sixth grade and shared with all of my friends.

Since becoming a lawyer, I have always relished CLE programs. I have learned great practical tips on everything from case evaluation, to client interaction, to e-discovery and preservation, to informal discovery and investigation, to 30(b)(6) depositions, to the preparation of experts, to focus groups, to mediation and negotiation, to appellate work, to lien resolution and everything else that you might want to know about a trial.

I have been exposed to some of the more theoretical and esoteric approaches to the arts of advocacy, as well as the medical, scientific, engineering, economic, and accounting concepts that often form the basis of the underlying damages or liability. I have enjoyed learning about related disciplines, like neuroscience, linguistics, behavioral economics, psychology, and anthropology. There is much to learn about storytelling, film, and rhetorical devices. Others share information about advertising and marketing your law practice or the use of social media.

Most of all, I just like being among other lawyers. To share the same struggles and



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frustrations. To commiserate. To prop each other up. To explore the ethical and professional issues we all wrestle with. To become reinvigorated about fighting for those who need our help, speaking truth to power, and hopefully doing our small part to make a difference.

Because of Leah's decades of hard work and the relationships that she has made through the National College of Advocacy board and the

National Association of Trial Lawyer Executives, coupled with the general desire of people to come to a place like New Orleans if given the opportunity, LAJ is able to consistently attract the best speakers from around the country for our CLE programs.

We are also happy, at the same time, to be able to showcase some of the best and brightest lawyers from right here in the state of Louisiana. From products liability, to medical malpractice, to maritime law, to auto torts and practical tips to improve your law practice; our lawyers, our speakers, and our programs are second to none.

Recently, we have also branched out to provide wider benefits to younger lawyers and more general practitioners.

We hope that you will take advantage of the many CLE programs that LAJ has to offer. From the speeches themselves, to the networking opportunities, to the insights and information provided by our sponsors and exhibitors, we know that you will leave the program richer than when you came.

Visit LAJ's website, <http://www.lafj.org>, to view a list of upcoming CLE conferences as well as speakers and topics.