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Perspectives

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SECTION

Ed Flitton and I were taking a brisk walk down Michigan Avenue on our way to an LPM budget planning dinner at the Chicago Firehouse Restaurant this past March, maintaining a pace that was a good block ahead of LPM Chair-Elect Andrea Hartley and Section Director Pamela McDevitt. It was a microcosm of what Ed was all about.

He had selected the restaurant (telling us that the movie *Backdraft* was filmed there). He had reserved the private “Mayor’s Room” for dining (he just thought it would be cool). We had good wine and better conversation. Dinner was preceded by lots of time put into planning next year’s Section budget, and another marathon session was going to follow the next day. It was just the right mix of business and pleasure.

En route to dinner, our private conversation was what amounted to a pep talk. It was not the first one he had given me, and it was supplemented by many supportive e-mails about the job I was doing.

I always had great admiration and respect for what Ed had to say. Some of that respect came from what he accomplished as a lawyer and the growth he oversaw in his years as managing partner of Holland & Hart. Some of it was based on the tremendous dedication he gave to LPM, volunteering so much time and so many hours post-retirement to one of the more difficult (some would say herculean) tasks—ABA budgeting. A great deal of the respect stemmed from his ability not only to have so many friends with so many differing opinions, but to provide objective advice and leadership that no doubt was crafted and refined through his managing partner and mediation skills. The LPM officers—basically a generation behind—always admired him, but wondered where he got the energy to contribute so much at a time when many professionals would be winding down. Ed was on everybody’s side, but in an honest, reflective manner that is a tough thing to pull off.

The core message Ed gave me on that walk down Michigan Avenue? We should not expect to be thanked or recognized for the hard work we put into our various volunteer endeavors.

In this case, Ed was wrong, as I would shortly bear witness to when, just two days later, he passed away. The outpouring of recognition for who he was and what he accomplished has been tremendous, in moments filled with smiles and tears, sadness, and a celebration of a great life. There is no question he was recognized for so much of what he had done. All of a sudden, sitting in that “Mayor’s Room” seemed so fitting.

Ed wrote frequently for *Law Practice*, and it’s a magazine he personally loved as an editorial board member and a regular columnist. Outside of our leadership losing a friend and mentor, the Section has lost a pioneer in the field of law practice management. We have lost someone who walked the walk and could talk the talk. There are not a lot of managing partners who were willing to make the contributions to ABA LPM that Ed saw such value and importance in. But I am positive that his influence will pay dividends for many years to come. LP

Micah Buchdahl (micah@htmlawyers.com), Chair of the ABA Law Practice Management Section, is an attorney and President of HTMLawyers, dedicated to guiding law firms through business development strategies and implementation.

