

President's Column:

By Margaret Oertling Cupples



Dear CABA Members, This holiday season, our fearless and longtime newsletter editor invited me and other newsletter authors to reflect on where we are in our careers, aspirations for the future, and

other subjects that fit the theme of this winter solstice season when the year turns from the darkest, shortest days back toward the light.

This year marks three decades since I graduated from law school. On some level, I feel like that was about a month ago, and I was happy to relive some of those memories at my 30th law school reunion this past April under the dogwoods in Lexington, Virginia. But at the same time, I'm seeing the people who were my mentors (like Wayne Drinkwater, John Henegan, and Luther Munford) retire from the practice of law, and in the past couple of weeks we've sadly even witnessed the passing of some of the legends of the Mississippi bar, John Corlew and Jimmy Robertson. That truly feels like the end of an era and reminds me that I'm now part of the "older generation" — at least from the perspective of our new associates.

But with the end of one era comes the beginning of the next, and there's no better way to experience that than to be around some first-year law students. Their wide-eyed

excitement about their future careers can't help but inspire even the most Grinchy among us. This holiday season, we've been lucky to have in our office at Bradley a couple of 1Ls from Ole Miss. They are participants in an internship we do in partnership with the Bessie Young Council, a support organization that mentors and supports students with advanced life experiences who "embody the pioneering spirit of Bessie Young, the first female graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law." Those students — this year, Kelly Li and Jason Roberson — remind us all about the reasons we wanted to be lawyers in the first place, and talking to them about those reasons and our experiences give us a great opportunity to reflect on why we still think this is the career that matters. Elsewhere in the newsletter, we're sharing their personal statements that they wrote; take a minute to read those and think about the reasons that you wanted to be a lawyer, and how, like those law students, you can make our community a better place as we head into this new year.

CABA's committees are working hard on great events in January and throughout 2024. Keep an eye out for information about the terrific program our Women's Initiative committee has put together on January 30, and when you break out the 2024 calendar, mark it now for our annual golf tournament on March 18, 2024 and our Evening Honoring the Judiciary on May 1, 2024. Happy holidays and thanks to everyone who is making those events happen! ➔

Inside

- 2 A Tribute to Jimmy Robertson
- 3 Strong Personal Relationships Are a Lifeline for Young Lawyers
- 4 What Being a Good Lawyer Means
- 5 Aspiring for Justice for People Who Can't Speak for Themselves
- 6 CABA Christmas Party Photos
- 8 Working To Open Doors For All
- 9 I Can Let Go

Upcoming Events

February 20

CABA Membership Meeting
Noon • The Capital Club

The views expressed in the articles published are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of CABA, its officers, directors, or staff.

Have a
Happy New Year!
From our CABA family to yours!



The Judge: *Boss, Friend, Mentor*

By Will Manuel



Jimmy Robertson took me to my first trial. He had recently left teaching at Fordham Law School and joined Wise Carter, where I was a freshly-minted new associate. Jimmy, or as I called him then, “Judge,” believed in teaching the practice of litigation the way he had learned it—by doing. To further my practical legal education, he began taking a small number of plaintiff cases (most had already been rejected by other lawyers) and set out for us to try them. Our first battle was a BB gun “failure of the family to supervise” personal injury case in Rankin County. Jimmy let me do the opening and take a few witnesses—only a mere month after I had passed the bar (a rarity for young associates in defense firms today, unfortunately). My primary memory of that case was that Jimmy exceeded his time in the first part of his closing, despite numerous warnings from Judge John Toney, and we were denied a rebuttal. The jury returned a defense verdict, but I had my first jury trial under my belt, thanks to my new boss and mentor.

Jimmy was known around the office as “the human Westlaw.” His office was filled to the ceiling with various books and papers. If you gave him a legal question, he would instantly

respond with a case cite, and usually even the page within the opinion that contained the wise answer. He was also a prolific writer of memos “gently” encouraging the firm to possibly come into modern times with regard to voicemail and/or computers. He was my assigned mentor partner and showed his great sense of humor when he gave the following evaluation at my first associate performance review: “I don’t know much about his legal ability, but he’s always here early enough to make the coffee.” When we travelled together, he always made me drive. The reward was typically about an hour and a half of funny, fascinating legal stories about his time practicing in Greenville or his time on the Supreme Court. Then he would sleep. Anyone who ever was around him, especially at the CABA Newsletter Committee meetings, knew he was an all-star storyteller. He loved the Boston Red Sox and used to celebrate Ted Williams’s birthday every year. One afternoon in July, he came into the Wise Carter library and regaled all of us associates with his memorization of the famous passage from Faulkner’s “Intruder in the Dust” about Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg. He was the most interesting man in the world long before the stupid beer commercial.

I count myself as one of the luckiest lawyers on the planet for the time I got to spend learning from Jimmy and just absorbing life lessons from being around him. He got me involved in some of the most fascinating cases of my career. We represented several

media outlets and a few billboard lawyers in a suit against the Mississippi Bar over its advertising restrictions. He and David Clark also got me involved in the famous Loewen case which is now fictionalized in the movie “The Burial.” Jimmy saw every case as an opportunity to teach me how to be a decent lawyer. The great benefit I had was that my mentor was a lawyer who was respected as someone courageous enough to take on unpopular causes and represent people who may not have had a chance. I, and the Bar, will miss him dearly. 🍷



SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow Us on Facebook & Twitter!



Statistics show that 90% of organizations now maintain social media profiles, and CABA is among that majority. You can find the Capital Area Bar Association’s page on Facebook and find us on Twitter (@CABALaw). Social media is a simple way to improve communications within our organization, but we need our members to help to build an effective social media presence. If you are currently on Facebook or Twitter, please engage. Whether you like us, follow us, or comment on posts, you are helping build CABA’s social media profile.

Relationships Are a Lifeline for Young Lawyers

By Brianna Bailey



For many of us, those first steps into the legal practice were exciting, fueled by years of preparation and the thrill of new beginnings. Yet, the vastness of the legal landscape can quickly become overwhelming, especially for young lawyers navigating its uncharted waters. The learning curve is steep, the pressure relentless, and the fear of failure a constant companion.

Building strong personal relationships is a lifeline. These relationships, forged in courtrooms, coffee shops, and beyond, have become the anchors that keep me afloat. Mentorship is a necessity. Sharing a cup of coffee with a mentor isn't just a break;

it's a chance to absorb wisdom, gain perspective, and feel the comfort of knowing you're not alone.

The benefits extend beyond the professional sphere. These connections enrich our lives, reminding us that the legal field doesn't define us. Participating in community events alongside colleagues allows us to give back and discover shared passions outside the practice of law.

To seasoned members of the Capital Area Bar Association, remember the challenges of your own beginnings. Extend a hand, offer guidance, and share your wisdom. Your mentorship will shape the future of this profession.

To fellow young lawyers, embrace the power of connection. Seek mentors, build friendships, and remember that we are not alone in this journey. Let's continue to support each other, learn from each other, and navigate these currents together. ➡

CABA Membership Meeting *October 17*

Chip Glaze presented an ethics hour on "The Ethics of Self-Care in Legal Practice."



To view more photos of this CABA Membership Meeting please visit caba.ms

Mid-Career Reflections on Advice Received and What Being a Good Lawyer Means

By D. Nathan Smith, LL.M.



I have received some good, bad, and “it depends” advice over the years.

I was very fortunate to start my career as a law clerk for (now) Chief Judge Donna Barnes on the

Mississippi Court of Appeals. Judge Barnes taught me the importance of considering *all* of the facts presented without jumping to conclusions. I still remember late nights and weekend work as we would sometimes swing like a pendulum between appellant and appellee before arriving on a decision. I learned firsthand the seriousness of the work, since our decisions could result in the incarceration of individuals, or loss of multimillion dollar civil jury verdicts.

When I began private practice, some of the first advice I was given was “you have to be greedy to get ahead.” Yes, that is a quote, not a paraphrase. Yikes. It may be true, I don’t know, but I have spent my career being wary of greed. I’m also wary of hoarding work for myself instead of delegating it to others and helping them to be successful. I do know that to be successful, you must “own” your work. I’ve heard this ad nauseam, and I bet you have too. But it is true: you must make yourself responsible for the work you have, and there is a lot to be responsible for in law. Communicate with your clients, meet your deadlines, do quality work. You are responsible for these things.

Another quote passed down to me was “the key to a good night’s sleep is a clean conscience.” Perhaps, but there have been plenty of nights when I had a clean conscience and couldn’t fall asleep. Also, I’ve seen plenty of lawyers who have a false clean conscience.

Regardless, I think the kernel of truth here is to trust your gut. If something feels wrong, really dig into the work you’re doing and figure out where the feeling is coming from. Sometimes you sort it out and it’s no biggie. But if you exhaust every avenue and it still feels bad, don’t do it. Pump the brakes. Even if it costs you fees, your salary, your job.

Last but not least, I was told one time “it doesn’t matter how long I have practiced, I get humbled every day.” To this I would like to respond, “same here.” Always be vigilant, never be complacent. And when you are humbled—which you will be—treat it as a learning experience. Defending ego in the face of contrary evidence looks bad on a lawyer, and it is evident to all parties involved. Your job is to find solutions to your clients’ problems, not give off the appearance of a perfect lawyer. ➡

CABA Members: *Click Here to*
PAY DUES ONLINE!



Aspiring for Justice for People Who Can't Speak for Themselves

By Kelly Li

Study harder, work harder, do more — these were the expectations of my Tiger parents as I navigated grade school with English as my second language. I can vividly remember my peers laughing and playing hopscotch during second grade recess while I was sequestered inside struggling through multiplication worksheets. This gap defined my education early on, and younger me blamed it on my parents, my race, and how the intersection of the two put me behind at such a young age in life.

To this day, I still hear my parents' voices in the back of my head scolding me to study harder. For them, school was placed on the back burner as they worked on family farms in China to put food on the table, harvesting crops under the hot sun. Education was never an option for them; only now does it make sense why mine was so important.

As I matured, I began to see disadvantages my family faced. With no formal education

and major language barriers, I watched my family fall victim to racial discrimination. On a typical Friday night helping my parents at our family restaurant, I watched undercover Alcoholic Beverage Control agents frame my parents for selling a Bud Light to a minor. I stood silently as they handcuffed my father, pushing his head against a table, telling him he would be chastised if he tried to speak to ask what was happening. Although security cameras clearly captured the officer handing the bottle to a minor himself, they insisted my parents were responsible for the transaction. My parents weren't fluent enough to speak up for themselves and didn't have the legal knowledge to fight back. I think back on how confused, afraid, and helpless we were. Even with proof that should have exonerated him, it wasn't enough.

Afterwards, my life became a series of Google searches about Mississippi law and precedent in an attempt to understand the charges and look for ways to help my father in court. That year, my passion for law, especially

impacting minorities, grew exponentially, and I knew without a doubt I aspired to be a voice for others who can't speak up for themselves.

When you look at the scales of justice, theoretically, the mechanism represents a mathematical equation of equilibrium that seeks to restore balance and justice to society. The scale does not account for racial biases and disparities that pervade our legal system and hinder us from truly attaining equality. When I think back at the parallels in emotion I felt in elementary school and on the day my dad was taken away, a fire lights up inside me. Knowing and living this reality is a daily reminder of why the fight for justice for people of color is important and what I plan to commit my time to doing after law school. My father needed someone who understood our struggles, but I didn't have the legal knowledge then. Soon, I will be able to help someone else's loved one. 📌

Kelly Li is a 1L at University of Mississippi School of Law.

Swearing In Ceremony September 28th

CABA and JYL were represented at the Swearing In Ceremony for newly-admitted lawyers at Thalia Mara Hall.



2023 Christmas Party



CABA held its annual holiday party on December 5, 2023 at Char Restaurant.



Christmas Party

Event photos continued...



WORKING TO OPEN DOORS FOR ALL

By Jason Roberson

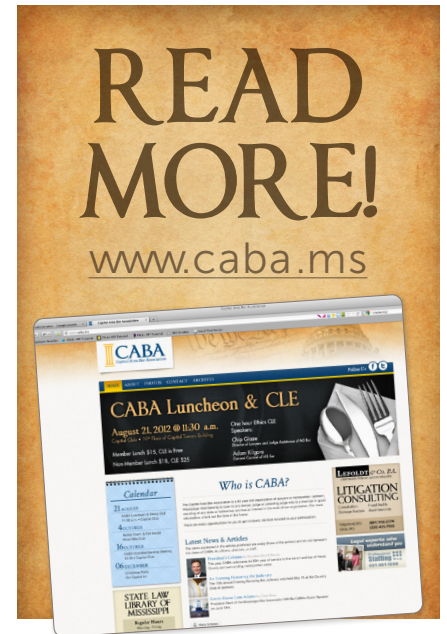
As a young child, there was a little road adjacent to my family's single wide trailer where my grandparents owned and operated a group home for young teenage men, both black and white. Many of these teenagers' parents were incarcerated or addicted to drugs. Growing up, I found myself spending most of my days slowly becoming a part of their extended family. Experiencing their triumphs and adversities was the springboard for my desire to advocate for those who lacked access to resources.

Though I am still young, my life's work has revolved around helping open doors for others that may not have been as easily accessible or finding opportunities that may have been seen as impossible. The summer prior to my senior year at Morehouse College, I was fortunate

enough to intern for Apple as a Program Manager. In that role, I helped redefine Apple's approach to recruiting students at various minority serving institutions and established an internal database of diverse student organizations.

Without diversity, we lose different perspectives, drive isolation, and place people in boxes, diminishing the American ideal that we can succeed no matter our background. Highlighting diversity, on the other hand, shows us that we are all multifaceted individuals who are more alike than we think. As an aspiring attorney, I will continue my mission to bring equity into every room I enter, be a voice for the voiceless, and to keep fighting to make our world a more just place. ➡

Jason Roberson is a 1L at University of Mississippi School of Law.



LET US KNOW!

We value your thoughts and want to make sure you don't forget to leave them in our **"Comments"** section under each article on our website.



Start the discussion...



I CAN'T LET GO: A Retired Lawyer Reflects on Walking Away

By Terry Rushing

I retired sixteen months ago, and I find that the study of the law and I, while not divorcing ourselves from one another completely, have definitely set up separate maintenance. It's a shock. Although I always wanted to be a lawyer, it didn't seem possible for the first member of my immediate family to graduate from high school. Needless to say, there were no other lawyers in the family to ask for advice. And while I can proudly state that most of the family was free-world, I was far more familiar with trailer parks than putting greens. If actually getting admitted to law school was a pleasant surprise, getting a job after graduation was as much as I thought I could ever wish for. I would never have dreamed that, thirty-seven years later, I could walk away without looking back.

That's not to say that I've forgotten everything I ever knew about the law. My husband likes to watch Perry Mason at night—apparently, courtroom drama makes him sleepy. (Don't laugh; I've seen judges and jurors with the same problem.) If Perry and his nemesis, Hamilton Burger, get into a particularly heated debate, I've been known to bolt upright from apparent slumber, point a finger at Hamilton, and yell, "That's not a real objection!" Scares Hubby almost to death, and, no, Hamilton, that's not my motivation.

So, what's the problem? Disappointment, I think, with both *the* profession and *my* profession. Atticus Finch modelled lawyering for me, and I aspired to have his life, as I imagined it: a house in a decent neighborhood (Well, okay, Boo Radley lived down the street, but that turned out to be a good thing, and what small southern town doesn't have a resident eccentric?), a new car every five or six years, and money to put the kids through college (if they chose state schools, anyway). Poor old Atticus didn't appear to have a private plane, a condo in Gulf Shores (or Oxford), or a Range Rover, and yet he seemed oddly content. He was probably never going to be President of the Alabama Bar or make TV commercials — too unassuming for that; nevertheless, he was a successful lawyer. That's the life I was looking for; however, by current material expectations, I failed miserably.

To compound the problem, I spent the biggest part of my career as a law clerk. As in law *clerk*. Sure, you can say staff attorney, but

what people hear is law clerk. Young lawyers often told me how much they desired to be a career law clerk, and I always told them that they would have to check their self-esteem at the door. Don't get me wrong, judges love their own law clerks, but they view the rest as failed lawyers. The Administrative Office gutted the federal career law clerk program several years ago, over virtually no objection from the judges. It was not a problem until *their* law clerks were let go because their time was up. And the name — law clerk. My daughter once asked me whether law clerks did a lot of filing. One of the lowest points in my tenure was when a young lady on our custodial staff told me that she was thinking about going back to school "so I can have a job like yours, where I just sit at a desk and look at paper all day."

A considerable upside to all of this is the tight group of friends I made along the way, most of whom are lawyers. Several of them were law clerks and understand. Another plus is the stories. I'm firmly convinced that lawyers have the best war stories in the world, particularly if you're able to laugh at yourself. In real life, I'd like to hear Hamilton laugh at some of his objections, as well as his failure to object when Perry started testifying.

Finally, the public's perception of lawyers and the legal system has me disheartened. Not lawyer jokes; I'm sure they have existed since the beginning of lawyering. ("What do you call a chariot full of lawyers falling into a river?" "A good start.") No, it's more the public belief that all lawyers are corrupt, and the system is rigged. Y'all, "justice" means administering the law in a manner that is fair and impartial; not, "I win because of who I am." "Witch hunt" means an actual hunt for witches; "political prosecution" is not the same thing.

We will all miss the articles contributed by Judge Jimmy Robertson. But, while I sometimes wish that I had enough energy and curiosity to write the kind of scholarly articles that he turned out, I'm not smart enough. Moreover, I'm glad to be finally able to play with my granddaughter, torment the new husband, watch as much football as I can stand, and learn about cooking (*see* "torment the new husband"). I serve at the whim and caprice only of my family (meaning the number of times Ali wants to watch *Frozen*), and she won't fire me unless I lose the remote. So, don't look for me in the law library. Unless, of course, there's a TV in there that's tuned to ESPN. 🏈



OFFICERS

Margaret Oertling Cupples
President

Keishunna R. Webster
Vice President

Missye Salmon Scott
Secretary—Treasurer

Kaytie M. Pickett
Past President

DIRECTORS

Claire Barker— Post 1	Jacob A. Bradley President, Jackson Young Lawyers
John T. Rouse— Post 2	Stevie F. Rushing President-Elect, Jackson Young Lawyers
Graham Carner— Post 3	
Lili Evans Bass— Post 4	

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jane Collins Harkins

NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL BOARD

A. Kate Margolis—**Editor**

Chad Hammons	Terryl Rushing
Joel W. Howell	John Hawkins
Brianna Bailey	Linda A. Thompson
Stevie Rushing	Nathan Smith

*Please direct all newsletter-related correspondence to:
CABA Newsletter Editor, 151 E. Griffith Street, Jackson, MS 39201.*

Letters to the editor must be signed, but the writer's name will be withheld upon request. Phone inquiries should be made to the Executive Director at 601.969.6097.

Visit our website at www.caba.ms

Newsletter and website design by Crema Design Studio, Ridgeland, MS
www.cremadesignstudio.com