

A Review of Judge Holderman's Lecture at the CBA

10 Tips for Young Lawyers

By Adam J. Sheppard

There is nothing like a good tip now and then, especially from a highly respected jurist. Chief Judge James Holderman of the U.S. District Court offered 10 good tips for YLS members to consider when before a court or at the office.

To illustrate his tips, the Judge told anecdotes. For tip number five—"Ask for Help if You Need It"—he recounted a time when he was a young lawyer in private practice and had to travel to a small out-of-state town on a case. Judge Holderman did not know a soul in the town. To familiarize himself with the local rules and customs of the courthouse, the judge went to the courthouse, spoke to the clerk, and asked her to refer him to a local lawyer who might be willing to advise him. Judge Holderman called the local lawyer and the lawyer was happy to offer his insight.

To illustrate the tip of "Build Relationships," the chief judge spoke of the days when he was an Assistant United States Attorney in Chicago and traveled to other out-of-state U.S. Attorney's Offices lecturing on political crimes. He explained that some of those out-of-state attorneys to whom he lectured later came to refer him cases when he was in private practice.

Another talking point that really stuck pertained to the tip of "Know your Case." This tip concerned knowing the legal standard for every motion and knowing the elements of every claim and defense. Judge Holderman advised the audience that when drafting a motion or brief, ask yourself, "If I were the Judge, what would I want to know?"

The judge paid special attention to tip number ten, "Be True to Yourself." He explained that this tip is not only essential to the practice of law, but to life in general. Under the headline of "Be True to Yourself," Judge Holderman spoke of the following principles:

"Ten Tips For Young Lawyers" featured a PowerPoint presentation that succinctly broke down ten practice and career tips for young lawyers. The ten tips were divided into two categories: "In Court" and "Out of Court."

In Court

- ▶ Be Civil, Prompt, and Professional
- ▶ Know Your Case
- ▶ Choose Your Battles
- ▶ Know the Rules and Follow Them
- ▶ Ask for Help if You Need It

Out of Court

- ▶ Build Relationships
- ▶ Get Involved
- ▶ Identify What you Want
- ▶ Take Charge of Your Career
- ▶ Be True to Yourself

- Self-Sincerity is essential
- Double Check your goals
- Match your values, interests and priorities
- Represent yourself to the best of your ability in all that you do
- Always maintain your integrity. *"No case, no client, no fee, no result is worth abandoning your personal integrity."*

Following his presentation of "10 Tips For Young Lawyers," Judge Holderman opened up the floor to a question and answer session. Many audience members were interested in the Seventh Circuit Bar Association's American Jury Project Commission which Judge Holderman co-chairs. The project tested new practices during jury trials such as allowing jurors to ask questions during the trial—e.g., after a witness testified—or tendering the jury verdict forms at the beginning of the trial. The project has been well-praised and several of the new procedures tested during those jury trials have gained widespread approval amongst federal judges and lawyers.

The judge also stated that in his opinion the biggest change in the practice was technology. Judge Holderman noted the Electronic Discovery Pilot Program in the Northern District of Illinois and the popu-

larity of PowerPoint presentations and other electronic presentations in court.

When asked what the most important part of motion practice was, the judge told the audience, "Get to the Point." He advised practitioners to make their best point right away and to consider completely scrapping less persuasive arguments. ■

Adam J. Sheppard is a member of the CBA Editorial Board and an associate in the Law Office of Barry D. Sheppard & Associates, P.C., a criminal defense firm.

The CBA
is your
local spot
for MCLE

Register for a Seminar Today

312/554-2056

www.chicagobar.org