

What I've Learned...

...being the President of the LSBA

By Edward J. Walters, Jr., 2025–26 LSBA President

“If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room.”

—Confucius

During my tenure as President, I certainly learned over and over that not only am I NOT the smartest person in the room, but I also learned that the smartest person in the room is not necessarily a lawyer . . . although it can be.

Smart has many qualities, parts, subparts, nuances, subtleties, hints, refinements and shades. There's "book smart" and there's "people smart." Many lawyers are good at being "book smart." Book smart is real good. I always wished I had the "book smart" qualities the smartest person in the room had.

But sometimes the "smartest person in the room" is "book smart" but not "people smart."

People smart is golden.

It is a rare commodity.

I learned that during my travels with the LSBA.

Having seen a bit of it from the inside, I can tell you that the LSBA has some of the smartest people around. People smart.

I learned that the people (staff sounds cold) our Executive Director, Loretta Larsen, has put together are some of the nicest most well-meaning "do the right thing for the right reason" people I have ever met.

They do their jobs, incredibly well, of course, BUT they are the nicest people I have ever met. And I haven't met all of them . . . although I tried.

Why am I telling you this?

Well, truly the highpoint of my legal career is having served as your President. Not because it is a cool position of honor, which it is, of course, but because of the fine wonderful SMART people at the Bar Office Loretta has recruited and I have met along the way . . . and have made my friends for life.

One of them, who many of you know, is . . . was . . . Annette Buras. She was the person in charge of all CLE, from alpha to omega. She was, I think, the nicest person I have ever met.

She always had a smile on her face, and she was cheerful (even chirpy) and nice to everyone. . . and I have seen a situation where she should not have been so nice, but she was, of course. It was her nature.

She was always the smartest person in the room.

You get it.

Unfortunately, she had a terrible cancer and hid it from



Annette Buras. Photo by Hon. W. Ross Foote (Ret.).

everyone for a very, very long time. Hardly anybody knew. She was that kind of person.

Smiling.

Making everyone else happy.

She always made you feel like you are the most important person in the room.

Everybody loved her.

People skills you wish you had.

These are the kind of people who Loretta surrounds herself with and who serve YOU at YOUR Bar Association.

So get involved with YOUR bar association. You won't regret it. Not only will it make you a better lawyer, you will make a difference in our world and you will meet some of the nicest people. It might make you the smartest person in the room.

Through my being President, I learned who is the smartest person in the room.

Adios, Annette. We will always love you.

Smartest person in the room.