

# Ruminations on “Pushing Eighty”

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

So I made it.

“Pushing 80.”

My grandfather, a New Orleans fireman, would always say if someone was almost 19, “He’s pushing 20.”

Well, as you are reading this, I’m almost 79, so, according to Martin Leahy, my grandfather (who everyone called ‘Pappy’), I am “pushing 80.”

Who woulda thought?

Like George Burns is reputed to have said, “Had I known I woulda lived so long, I woulda taken better care of myself.”

So what does this have to do with our traditional President’s Page?

Well, I have refused to have the “traditional” President’s Page (what great stuff the Bar is doing [it is], etc., and how you should get more involved, [you should]), but I wanted to make this article relevant to US and what WE do on a daily basis and what stresses WE subject ourselves to as lawyers and how we can survive.

I checked. I am the oldest person to be sworn in as the Louisiana State Bar Association President. When you are reading this, I will have been in the active practice of law for over 50 years.

I musta learned SOMETHING in all of those years.

Here’s the most important lesson I’ve learned.



(That’s me on the left)

Write it down.

This is a RELATIONSHIP business. Plain and simple.

This is a RELATIONSHIP business.

I know some REALLLLY, REALLLLY smart lawyers who are incredibly, incredibly UNSUCCESSFUL.

I know some lawyers who are “as dumb as a post” who are some of the most SUCCESSFUL lawyers in the nation.

Why?

I know the secret.

(Here’s the secret)

Ours is a RELATIONSHIP business. All businesses depend on relationships, but OUR profession depends on RELATIONSHIPS more than any other profession.

Relationships with whom, you may ask?

Well, relationships with EVERYONE: your clients, your referring lawyers, your partners and associates, your opposing lawyers, your witnesses, your judges, your staff, and VERY importantly, the staff at the courthouse.

They can make you or break you.

Everyone knows to suck up to the judges and laugh at their lame jokes, but many of us treat the judge’s staff like they are nobodies and are not worthy of even telling them

# “He Not Busy Being Born Is Busy Dying”

—Bob Dylan

“It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)”

from his 1965 album *Bringing It All Back Home*

hello or asking them their name. Do you know the name of the minute clerk or the court reporter you were in court with last time you were there?

Don’t lie.

You don’t.

Who are they? WHAT IS THEIR NAME? Where are they from? Do they have a family or kids? What do they do on weekends? What is their passion? I promise you, they have one. You just don’t know it. You should.

“You look nice today.” Personal stuff. Relationship stuff. Stuff that means something. Stuff that COUNTS. You do remember when someone told you, “You look nice today,” don’t you?” They do, too.

My mother was a court reporter for 25 years before she retired. She worked for Judge Tom Malik in Edgard, Louisiana. Long story, as you can well imagine.

Back then, there was really no place to have lunch in Edgard, so he and my mother, his court reporter, had lunch in the judge’s chambers every day.

And they talked.

Every day . . . for 25 years.

So he must have respected her judgment or she wouldn’t have been there.

If a lawyer laughs at Judge Malik’s jokes but treats his court reporter like she doesn’t exist, or doesn’t even merit his knowing her name, who do you think she and Judge Malik gossiped about during their daily lunches?

Lawyers and judges are the biggest gossips in the world, but you knew that.

If she told him at lunch that attorney Joe Smith treated her badly, for the rest of his career, Joe Smith could suck up all he wanted, and laugh at all of his lame jokes, but when his

court reporter of 25 years told him that Joe Smith was a jerk to her, there’s NOTHING Joe Smith could do for the rest of his career to erase that from the judge’s mind.

Hmmm. . .

This is a relationship business.

What relationships are important to you and to your clients?

How are you handling the very-important little people?

They can make you or break you.

Trust me.

I have had “little people” from the courthouse call and tell me something “just got filed” in one of my cases. Nice “heads-up.”

Even in today’s world of “file everything electronically,” we all know that every once in a while (and more often than we want to admit), sometimes there’s a glitch in the electronics and we need to SPEAK TO SOMEONE . . . a PERSON . . . NOW . . . to get human help to get things filed correctly and timely. Those are the people we really need to treat with dignity and respect.

Do we?

They can make you or break you.

These are things you learn through many, many years in the courtroom and in the courthouse . . . and I have a few more years than you.

Work on it.

I hope to have a few more years and be “Pushing 81.”