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CAALA sails forward with a realistic approach to the pandemic storm

CAALA VEGAS WILL TAKE PLACE OVER LABOR DAY AT THE BELLAGIO HOTEL AND CASINO

As we sail through the first quarter of 2021, we are still striving to weather the Pandemic storm. The “forecast” is better though, and we see some sunlight through the clouds.

Although the storm is still raging for many of us, especially those who have not yet been vaccinated, for the first time in months it feels like we are in control. This is not the way we felt for the better part of last year.

William A. Ward was a writer and motivational speaker who died in 1994. He wrote hundreds of articles and poems for various publications. Ward wrote the following about three sailors navigating through a storm:

“The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.”

The quote is simple and sounds like it came from *Readers Digest*, but I like it anyway. It describes how CAALA is approaching 2021, especially regarding the programs, events and activities that define our association.

There are times when CAALA embodies all three of those sailors. But for the most part, CAALA’s leaders and staff are realists, keeping a careful eye on changes in the storm and adjusting accordingly.

All of you know that CAALA’s annual convention is our signature event. The question I have been asked most lately is “What is happening with CAALA Vegas? Will we be able to hold it this year?” The pessimist would answer that “the Pandemic is still too serious to allow us to hold an in-person convention.” The optimist would answer “Everything will be fine by Labor Day.”

Instead of those responses, we are taking the realistic approach. We *will* hold an in-person convention, with *adjustments*. There will be a CAALA Vegas, but we will incorporate changes that will protect the health and safety of speakers, staff, attendees, and guests.

New venue, safer environment

First, we are moving to a new venue. CAALA Vegas 2021 will be at the Bellagio Hotel and Casino, giving you an all-new convention experience.

Education sessions may take place in a variety of rooms that allow us to control the attendance and make for a safer environment. The major social events will take place indoors and outdoors in beautiful spaces unique to the Bellagio. The outdoor spaces allow for more social distancing and we will follow all safety protocols as prescribed by the CDC and Nevada’s health and government officials at the time of the convention. We will also make changes in the exhibit hall to make it safer and healthier for exhibitors and attendees. CAALA President Genie Harrison is introducing some exciting changes that will allow for hands-on expression on all levels from attendees.

We will definitely present the in-person CAALA Vegas you missed so much; we are just navigating the storm by adjusting the sails. Registration for CAALA Vegas 2021 will be open shortly. Visit the CAALA web site at www.caala.org for more information.

Zoom education programs are here to stay

The same is true for CAALA’s year-round meetings and education programs. One unintended consequence of not holding in-person meetings or programs is that we learned that CAALA members *like* attending those sessions via Zoom videoconferences. They are happy to attend from the comfort of their home or office without long commutes to downtown L.A. Board and Committee meetings are much more productive than in the past and attendance has increased.

Participation in education programs increased dramatically when we pivoted

from in-person to online. We will not only continue to present online webinars, but we will also increase the number and expand the content. Education is one of the foundational benefits of membership for CAALA members and we will “adjust the sails” by presenting them in online formats.

CAALA will also adjust the ways that we communicate with members about important changes in the L.A. courts. Court leadership will report “in person” at CAALA Zoom meetings and CAALA will provide valuable resources and information to help members navigate the changes in the courts, such as virtual law and motion, more bench trials, and more emphasis on virtual settlement programs. We will help CAALA members approach those changes not as pessimists or optimists, but as realists adjusting the sails when necessary.

I must admit that I had never heard of William A. Ward until I began writing this column, but I know him now. His words describe all of us as we navigate the Pandemic storm.

The Pandemic has also changed the way that members engage in CAALA. We have seen a real increase in the levels of commitment and participation by members and leaders. There is much more interest in becoming involved.

In addition to his words about sailors in the storm, Ward wrote some words that apply to those leaders and members as well as to others reading this column. I am pretty sure he was not talking about CAALA, but he could have been, especially as we continue to weather the Pandemic storm.

“Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice. Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work.”

This is sound advice for all of us, whether we are a sailor, a trial lawyer, or an executive director.