



CAALA President

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## It's personal

### THE POWER OF SHARING AN INTENSELY PERSONAL STORY

I hope everyone who attended CAALA Vegas enjoyed it as much as I did. The opportunity to connect with old friends and make new ones, and to learn from the very best trial lawyers is unrivaled. Given the health issues I've had this summer, I was particularly grateful to be able to attend CAALA Vegas.

In my August column, I chronicled my health scare and the incredibly strong sense of gratitude I developed after dealing with those issues. I am happy to report that I finally did have my appendectomy. It was uneventful this time – just the way I like it. A do-over for both me and my medical team who took every precaution to ensure my safety.

Given the timing of my surgery, I even got the chance to spend a few days with my parents, including on my actual birthday, something that hasn't happened since I turned 17. They so enjoyed parenting me! I am well on my way to recovering and looking forward to resuming full activity in the near future.

In response to my usual President's column, someone will occasionally reach out to me to bring up an issue or thank me for the work CAALA does. By contrast, in response to my August column where I decided to share my health story, I received dozens of reach-outs from plaintiff lawyers, defense lawyers, judges and others via emails, telephone calls, hand-written notes, requests to take me to dinner as soon as I am able, and big hugs from those who recently saw me in person for the first time in over three months. I never could have imagined the magnitude or the heartfelt nature of the responses. That so many took time out of their busy schedule to not only read what I wrote, but to personally contact me has been profoundly moving. Lawyers are too often a punchline. Based on this experience,

I could not imagine a more caring community.

I responded to every person who contacted me to personally thank them for doing so. Their uplifting messages so helped me navigate my recovery. As the messages began to settle in, I realized that the sharing of my intensely personal story touched the community in a way that none of my previous columns had. In the legal profession, we can often be guarded about how we present facts and what facts to present, even more so when the information is of a personal nature. My August column was the exact opposite of traditional legal writing – a raw, unvarnished personal story of what I went through and its effect on my family. That resonated so much more than anything I could have written as a seasoned professional.

#### Others share personal stories

The messages I received had such an impact on me that I wanted to confidentially share some of what was communicated to me. So many were moved by what I wrote and just glad that I was alive. Others shared with me how much my column resonated with them. One attorney told me that he was young and healthy and suddenly received a cancer diagnosis. He began chemotherapy at the same time his first child was born. The cancer is now in remission, fortunately. Another attorney shared how his brother died immediately following a routine dental procedure, how much he missed him, and that my column about my experiences and being grateful really touched a nerve.

A judge reached out to let me know how inspiring, uplifting and heartwarming my story was, and that it was a reminder of the importance of family and a support network. Another judge took time out of his day to really

talk with me about what I went through and continued to follow up to see how I was doing.

After checking in on how I was doing, an attorney told me that he shared my column with his wife and she started crying after reading it. Another attorney put my sense of gratitude after emerging from my health scare into a beautiful religious perspective. Someone I worked closely with for years and who is now retired said he had no words to describe his thoughts after reading about my ordeal, other than to simply say how grateful he was that I made it through.

Plaintiff and defense attorneys, and judges alike who I saw at CAALA Vegas had overwhelming good wishes for me. Of course, I was so pleased to respond to each of these individuals and to thank them for sharing their own stories, well wishes and supporting me.

I have not always shared stories of a personal nature. Yet, those are exactly the kinds of stories that resonate with our collective experiences and truly connect our sense of community. Real, personal stories add vibrancy to the human experience. They help us feel connected to the world around us and less alone. What I have come to realize based on my own experience is that personal stories are the most compelling, and I am now much less reticent to share them. I am convinced that this will make me not only a better attorney in advocating for my clients, but also a better person. I look forward to hearing your story.

I am honored (and grateful) to advance our causes on your behalf and to be your 2022 President. As always, I invite you to contact me at any time ([dsilverstein@californialaborlawattorney.com](mailto:dsilverstein@californialaborlawattorney.com)) with questions or ideas on how CAALA can better serve you.

