



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Mentorship Takes Different Forms

Mentoring is not necessarily a forced relationship where an older mentor sits on their figurative perch and directs a younger mentee about what they must or must not do. Mentoring takes different forms; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Oxford dictionary defines a mentor as an experienced person who advises and helps someone with less experience. I'd like to share with you a few people who made a difference in my life.

While some may not consider her a mentor in the traditional sense, one individual who had a meaningful and lasting impact on me is Suzanne Ashe, a former professor at Cerritos College. In high school, I largely thought of myself as a C student. I recall one of my high school teachers telling me that she was pleased that I received a C grade on a test, but I knew I had not given my best effort. So, I did not attempt to achieve anything beyond a C grade. Professor Suzanne Ashe, on the other hand, had higher expectations for me. She pulled me aside after one of her classes and said she saw great potential in me and expected that I would earn an A grade in her class. She guided and encouraged me that semester and I wanted to live up to her expectations. As a result, I put in the time and effort to earn an A grade in her class and getting good grades became a part of how I saw myself. I never asked Professor Ashe to serve as my mentor and she never assumed any formal role as such, but her expectations and guidance had a lasting impact on my educational development. I was fortunate to have her attend my swearing in as OCBA President and was able to thank her and remind her of the impact she had on me.



Another mentor of mine was Jim Perzik. Jim was the former General Counsel of the Los Angeles Lakers and passed away in November 2020. I met Jim through a formal mentoring program at USC Law School where the law school connected incoming law school students with practicing attorneys for a lunch meeting. Of course, Jim went above and beyond his one lunch meeting commitment and we continued to meet for lunch over the years. Jim had an extremely busy schedule but took the time to meet with me regularly for lunch. I admired his humility and commitment to helping others when he was not required to. Jim had a way of giving advice that resulted in my arriving at decisions on my own. He was a kind human being and set a standard for me to emulate. As a result of the trust developed over the years, Jim would later hire me to serve as counsel for the Lakers, the team I grew up watching and one of my two favorite sports teams—the other being USC Trojans Football.

I have also been, and continue to be, mentored by current and former OCBA leaders who have taken the time to assist me along my OCBA journey. There are too many OCBA leaders who have provided me with guidance to name here, indicative of how our community is so close-knit and special. If you are interested in exploring leadership opportunities within the OCBA, the OCBA has a Leadership Development Committee to provide guidance and training. You can contact me or the co-chairs, Nikki Miliband and Dean Zipser. Regardless of your years in practice, the OCBA also offers a mentorship program that matches participating lawyers with an experienced OCBA attorney member. Applications can be submitted on the OCBA website at <https://www.ocbar.org/For-Members/Mentoring>. To foster less formal connections, I also encourage you to peruse the OCBA's calendar of events at <https://www.ocbar.org/Calendar/All-Events> and pick a few to attend. The OCBA Charitable Fund Kenneth Lae Charity Golf Scramble scheduled for April 20, 2023 and Raise Your Glass event scheduled for August 17, 2023 are great low-pressure ways to meet others in the Orange County legal community.

Mentorship can have a lasting and positive impact for both mentor and mentee. It is likely that someone has made a positive difference in your career or your life. I'd encourage you to look for an opportunity to pass on those gifts.

The OCBA offers opportunities to participate in formal and informal mentorship opportunities and to explore leadership positions within the OCBA. Please reach out to me at michael@ocbar.org if you have questions. 

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