



John T. Berry

# In the Eye of the Beholder

The old adage, “some see a glass half full, while others see a glass half empty” seems to me to be as applicable today as the first time it was uttered. Recent events have convinced me that attitudes about life have a huge impact on which glass we see, and in those differing attitudes, the likelihood we will continue to see the positives or negatives in our surroundings. Self-fulfilling prophesies are all around us. If we expect to find good, we usually do. If we expect to find bad, it is a given that we can and will find it! Finding the proper balance is the real test.

So why the reflective moment? It started with the Otis Smith Milestone celebration on June 21, 2006. What an awesome event. Despite a torrential thunderstorm, a large crowd paid tribute to a Michigan lawyer who rose to the highest levels of our profession despite facing so many acts of discrimination—so many reasons to see the glass not just half empty, but maybe almost totally empty. Justice Smith, our Supreme Court’s first justice of color, had many reasons to become embittered by life; reasons to look for and readily find constant reminders of unfairness and negativity; reasons to justify a life spent

in angry rebellion rather than in constructive difference-making.

It is all in the eye of the beholder. Despite the negative, Otis Smith searched for the positive. Despite the unfairness heaped upon him, he sought the fair approach with others.

I wish I had known Otis Smith. He was a caring and kind person, but one who you hoped you did not have to come up against in court. His keen intelligence, hard work, and dedication, combined with an exemplary character, inspired many people, most notably milestone speaker Dennis Archer, who movingly paid tribute to Justice Smith as a mentor.

One consolation for not having the opportunity to know Otis Smith was meeting his brother, Hamilton, whose remarks at the milestone celebration were the highlight of the day. I will remember his speech for the rest of my days. It resonated with love and respect for his brother. It was filled with both humor and stories of great suffering. It told of two young men treated poorly because of the color of their skin, but it also told of their triumphant success. It told of overcoming obstacles and leading the way for others. It told of making a difference not just for themselves, but for all of us as Americans.

After the formal program, I had a few moments to talk with Hamilton Smith. He shared with me his love for our country. He

said the obvious: we still have a long way to go, but we have come far. I responded that we have come this far because of people like Otis Smith—because of *lawyers* like Otis Smith.

All in the eye of the beholder. We can focus on the negative or look for ways to make things better. Once again, I am reminded that the light always overcomes the dark.

What a privilege you have given me to serve as your executive director. The opportunity to represent you on days like the Otis Smith Milestone makes it all worth it!

I conclude my article with an admittedly redundant piece of information, but as they say in marketing and advertising, good news needs to be repeated over and over again until enough folks get a chance to hear it and reflect on it. Remember these letters: PMRC, which stand for Practice Management Resource Center. Here’s the kind of help that is now available to you, literally at your fingertips ([www.michbar.org/pmrc/content.cfm](http://www.michbar.org/pmrc/content.cfm)): calendaring and docket control, client relations and communications, financial management, marketing, insurance, disaster preparedness/recovery, career transitioning, management and employee relations, and records maintenance.

The PMRC is a result of a lot of input from you indicating that you wanted direct help in your practices. It was promised, and

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it has been delivered. It is a dynamic member service, and it needs your input to keep it growing and responsive to your needs. Yes, value is in the eye of the beholder. If the PMRC helps others but not you, it will not mean much to you. So please tell us when it has helped. Tell us when it has not. Help us make it better!

Our PMRC staff has been very busy. We have held educational seminars in Marquette and Lansing. Many folks have used our lab to test various software programs. (To read about one member's positive experience with

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the PMRC, turn to "The PMRC Experience" in this month's *Bar Journal*.) The PMRC is housed in Lansing, but it is mobile! Let us know if your practice would benefit. We would love to visit with you.

To make a reservation to test-drive software, call 1-800-341-9715 or make an online request at <http://www.michbar.org/pmrc/content.cfm>. You can also access our PMRC Legal Software Directory from this web page. The directory has links to vendors and software.

Many of our members have already "test-driven" some part of the service, and we look forward to helping you, too. Your eyes and ears will help us to decide what works best for the majority of our members. To reach a PMRC advisor, call our Helpline at 1-800-341-9715.

In the eye of *this* beholder, it is great to be a Michigan lawyer. I hope your summer is a relaxing one! ♦