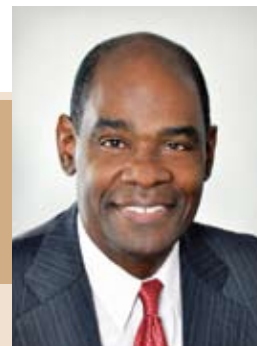


Where Did I Leave My Rhythm and Balance?



W. Anthony Jenkins

Although I conferred with several past presidents of the State Bar beforehand about the demands of the position, the first few weeks “on the job” have given me a greater appreciation of what the position actually entails.

For example, at the outset I spent three days in Grand Rapids attending the SBM Annual Meeting where, among other activities, I chaired a meeting of the Public Policy Committee, attended a Board of Commissioners meeting and chaired a second one, gave an inaugural speech at a luncheon, co-hosted both the SBM Awards Banquet and the 50-Year Golden Celebration, administered the oath of office to the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary officers, and moderated a panel discussion on pro bono opportunities hosted by the new Master Lawyers Section.

The Annual Meeting ended on a Friday afternoon. The activities were at once exhilarating and tiring, and that weekend and the next week proved to be equally demanding and invigorating. In addition to multiple client meetings and conference calls, I traveled out of town on behalf of the American Bar Association to interview a federal judge who is being considered for possible nomination to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, conducted telephone interviews from my Detroit office with nearly 60 judges and lawyers regarding that judge's qualifications, and devoted two days to the orientation sessions held in Lansing for incoming chairs of SBM sections and committees.

Most of the following week was devoted to the traditional tour of the Upper Peninsula, where I traversed the great, bucolic expanse of the U.P. accompanied by Victoria Radke, chair of the Representative Assembly; Jim Earhart, District A commissioner; and Candace Crowley, SBM director of external affairs. The tour, which was wonder-

ful, started with a flight from Pontiac to Sault Ste. Marie and lunch with the 50th Circuit Bar, followed by dinner in Escanaba with the Delta Bar Association. The next day we stopped in Menominee and met with the Menominee County Bar Association, then on to Iron Mountain and a meeting with the Dickinson-Iron County Bar Association, followed by dinner in Ironwood with the Gogebic Ontonagon County Bar Association. The final day, we traveled to Hancock for lunch with the Copper County Bar Association, then over to Marquette for a reception with the Marquette County Bar Association and dinner with former SBM President Ron Keefe and his wife, Marilyn.

While on the U.P. tour, we also visited with news reporters from the *Sault Ste. Marie Evening News*, *Ironwood Daily Globe*, *Daily Mining Gazette*, and TV6 in Marquette; viewed the locks at Sault Ste. Marie; stopped at a gift shop in Norway, where Jim purchased floating copper as gifts for our delegation; stopped at Porcupine Mountain State Park to view Manabezho and Manido Falls and Lake of the Clouds; toured the Iron County courthouse in Crystal Falls; and, of course, toured the Marquette County courthouse in Marquette where the classic *Anatomy of a Murder* was filmed. The tour ended on a Thursday with a flight back to Pontiac.

I spent the rest of that Thursday in my office conducting more telephone interviews of judges and lawyers relating to my ABA

project, then ended the day in Waterford at the Oakland County Bar Association Pro Bono Mentor Match Program. The next two days were spent in my office conducting yet more telephone interviews of judges and lawyers for my ABA duties.

The following week's activities included attending the Annual Justice Initiatives Kick-off at the SBM offices in Lansing; being interviewed by *Corp!* magazine and the *Detroit Legal News*; and attending the Legal Aid and Defender Association Pro Bono Awards ceremony in Lathrup Village, the Oakland County Bar Association's Diversity in the Legal Profession dinner and program in Birmingham, and the SBM Young Lawyers Section “Platinum in the Legal Profession” in Detroit. Oh yeah, and I completed my interviews of judges and lawyers and submitted my report to the ABA Federal Judiciary Committee on October 22.

At month's end, I attended the Great Rivers Bar Leaders Conference in Miami, Florida. By then, I was beginning to feel more tired than exhilarated! And so I went to that place where I go when I need to restore my rhythm and balance:

Flight to Paper

How lovely to escape the morass and mundane. Flight to paper. Here, I am free to recreate, to give song, to offer praise and to poet. Transcend, my friend. You come too.

Life is fragile, short, and a gift. Treat it so.
Don't forget the rhythm and balance.

I realized the importance of rhythm and balance years ago as a student playing basketball. Without rhythm and balance, bad things can happen to an athlete (poor performance, injury) and to a team, coach, or spectators (frustration, disappointment). For me, “Flight to Paper” is one counterweight to the combined responsibilities of the SBM presidency, the daily grind of practice at a major law firm, volunteer work for the ABA, and the potential parade of personal daily challenges that we, as lawyers, can exact upon ourselves and others if we fail to maintain our rhythm and balance.

The folks in the U.P. seem to know this. U.P. lawyers comprise less than 2 percent of the Michigan lawyer population, and while they actively look for business opportunities, they do so in a neighborly way. That is to say that, despite the expanse of the U.P., word travels quickly if a lawyer lacks civility in a professional setting, and lack of civility does not win professional friendships. Several lawyers and judges told me so during my U.P. tour, so I take it as an important, unspoken code among the approximately 460 lawyers scattered across nearly one-third of Michigan's land mass. U.P. lawyers also seem to understand and appreciate the importance of balancing hard work with quality of life—hunting, hiking, fishing, skiing, camping, and sailing are all available outside their doors depending on the season. It's a balance that I can appreciate.

In any event, I remind you: don't forget to give or receive a hug, send a card to or make a date with your spouse or significant other, putt some golf balls, read a cheap novel, or do whatever “floats your boat” that is not law-related. And if you can't think of anything, shame on you—but give me a call; I would be glad to make suggestions.

By month's end, I plan to restore the rhythm and balance in my life. That means sitting in my den listening to classic Motown music, whipping up a dish of paella, uncorking a good Cabernet and inviting friends for dinner, going through my standard workout routine at the Detroit Athletic Club, and finishing Whoopi Goldberg's new book *Is It Just Me?*

Life is fragile, short, and a gift. Treat it so. Don't forget the rhythm and balance. ■