

11. No Man's an Island: The Importance of Mentoring

**“No Man’s An Island:
The Importance of Mentoring”
WELCOME TO THE REVOLUTION**

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As David Ball and I wrote in *Reptile: 2009 Manual for the Plaintiff’s Revolution*, we cited the “no man is an island” passage from the immortal John Dunn. We use that phrase in the “reptile” to illustrate the power and influence of others, more specifically that the jury is not an island and what they do affects their community.

I use this maximum now to illustrate that great lawyers were not hatched in a vacuum, but rather, behind each great lawyer lies an equally great mentor.

When I was a puppy lawyer I knew that I had to associate a more experienced lawyer than myself for the several big cases I got. I was fortunate enough to be retained. However, I realized with all due respect to my Georgia trial lawyer brethren that there were no really “great” trial lawyers that I wanted to be mentored by.

At the time Melvin Belli, based in San Francisco, was nearing the end of his prime and I reached out and associated Mr. Belli on one of my cases. Yes, I gave up a portion of the fee but I also received the best mentoring a young lawyer could get. In retrospect the fees obtained from Mr. Belli and, to some degree my effort on the case, far exceeded what I could do on my own.

In the end I tried to verdict five cases with Mr. Belli my one case and four of his (with no fee to me of those four cases). That experience took me from a puppy lawyer to a Westminster champion.

As my skills grew, my role was reversed, I became the mentor. I welcomed the opportunity to be associated by younger lawyers who not only wanted the fee from the

association but valued my mentoring skills. Over the last 20-plus years, I can point to countless now great lawyers that I had a hand molding.

I was surprised that along the way many established lawyers who were big names in their own right would associate me for the very purpose of being mentored. I took and still take immense pride from those associations.

A trial lawyer can listen to all the DVDs, CDs and attend all the seminars in the world but there's no substitute in the hands-on mentoring.

While the vast majority of our cases are the typical referral, where the referring attorney does no work but still retains the referral fee, I have seen a rise in the last few years of the lawyers who want to be involved in the mentoring process.

It is my hope that when I'm in the courtroom in the sky along with Mr. Belli that people speak as fondly and admiringly of my mentoring as I did his mentoring of me. You see, John Dunn was right: No man is an island.