

The Last WORD

By Edward J. Walters, Jr.

IPSE DIXIT: ONE PIECE OF ADVICE

So, I am sitting on a sofa in a hotel hallway, waiting for the *Louisiana Bar Journal* Editorial Board meeting to begin. Doing what most of us do while waiting, I am looking on my phone and I see a very interesting article, "Advice a Man Should Give to His Son." The first piece of advice was, "Never shake a man's hand while sitting down." I have never thought about it, but it sounded like good advice.

Just then, up walks Buzz Durio who offers his hand to shake. I am sitting down. I jump up to shake his hand and Buzz says, "No, don't get up!" I respond, "But I have to. I just read this article that said . . ." Then — true story — I sit down and Minor Pipes walks up. Same thing happens. "No, don't get up." I explain yet again. I'll never shake anyone's hand while I am sitting down ever again. This shows how one little piece of good advice can affect your actions forever.

The article had 25 pieces of good advice between father and son (such as, return a borrowed car with a full tank of gas), but most would apply to any relationships, including lawyers. I thought it would be interesting to get that ONE great piece of advice from some great lawyers. I asked several lawyers and here is what they said:

- ▶ Never put off until tomorrow what you can avoid altogether.
- ▶ To the outside world (and even many times within your own firm), it is NEVER the fault of your secretary — it is your fault.
- ▶ Never ask anyone to do something you won't do or haven't done yourself.
- ▶ In order to solve a problem, you must first identify the problem.
- ▶ Never put anything in writing you don't want to read in your opponent's brief.
- ▶ Whatever you are meant to do, do



it now. The conditions are always impossible.

- ▶ Stop talking when you are winning.
- ▶ A continuance is as good as a win.
- ▶ Be courteous and polite with a judge's staff. If you don't, the judge will know.
- ▶ There's never enough time to do it right, but always enough time to do it over.
- ▶ After writing an angry email, read it carefully. Then delete it.
- ▶ You give a little man a little power and he'll show you how little a man he really is.
- ▶ If you think you can't, you're right.
- ▶ Perhaps figuring out what matters most matters most.
- ▶ Just because you CAN do it doesn't mean you SHOULD do it.
- ▶ Never turn down a breath mint.
- ▶ Surround yourself with people smarter than you.
- ▶ Choose your mistakes carefully.
- ▶ Give credit. Take the blame.
- ▶ Remember WHO you are not WHAT you are.
- ▶ If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.
- ▶ Never write what you can speak. Never speak what you can nod. Never nod what you can wink. And never put anything in an email.

▶ The harder you work, the luckier you get.

▶ A case that is prepared to try will surely settle. A case that is prepared to settle will surely go to trial.

▶ Always look out for autocorrect hazards before sending emails (*i.e.*, intending to respond to a female CEO of an oilfield service company with "Let me take a look at it," that is emailed, once autocorrected, as "Let men take a look at it.")

▶ Ethics is what we must do. Professionalism is what we should do. Character is what we do when no one is looking.

Author's Note: Some if these items were edited (or deleted) for content to enhance the writer's lack of personality or to avoid lawsuits.

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