
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: I Owe it to the Grateful Dead

We continue our series of personal, impactful stories that have shaped how we practice law.

By Richard M. Mitchell, Esq., CPCU

I had a plan. I also had my last taste of freedom and almost no money. I took my final semester in England and decided to do a little traveling with a good friend before heading back home. We were going to make a couple of stops, then end up seeing the Grateful Dead on our last day of travel.

The plan was really good. We both knew it would be many years before we had this kind of time again. We were young, but already knocking a couple of items off our bucket lists. There was also a discrepancy in the funds we had available. My friend had a few more dollars to spend, while I had mostly debt. When we bought our train tickets, he purchased a first class seat. I elected to travel in the cheap seats. Alright, maybe I did not so much elect that option, which necessarily involves a choice. People brought all kinds of things on that part of the train. I seem to even recall someone traveling with chickens. Either way, my friend and I both fell asleep when that train left the station, just on different parts of it.

Several hours later, I woke up as the train pulled into our destination – Prague. It was then I realized that two parts of the train did not necessarily go to the same place. The first class part had detached during our travel and my friend ended up someplace completely different, while I got where I intended to go. That seemed poetically just. Not to worry, I knew there was another train coming the next day and I would meet up with him then. I was really glad at that point that I bought the cheap seats. (Yes, hard as it is to believe, there was a time when people did not carry cell phones, much less any other electronic devices. I don't know how, but we survived.)

My friend did not show that next day. Still not to worry. I knew where we were going to meet. It was all part of the plan. I went to the train station intending to

travel to our predetermined destination. Suddenly it struck me that, while I had seen The Dead before, I had never seen Austria. On a whim, I got on a totally different train. When I arrived I settled into a small hostel for a meal of what was claimed to be some kind of meat. Sitting next to me was a lovely redheaded girl from Great Britain. She was about the only other person there who spoke English and we struck up a conversation, which lasted all night. I knew by the next day I was going to marry that girl.

If I hadn't gotten on that other train, I never would have met her. I never would have raised my two children who have now grown into adulthood. I never would have experienced all the things that I have done with them.

That day affected much of my outlook on life and business. It is necessary to have a well formulated plan. Sometimes, however, fate intervenes and the plan no longer seems quite as effective. At that point, it is necessary to improvise and to be able to respond to changing circumstances. I think Jerry would agree.

In our second article this month, [Spokeo, 21 Months Later](#), Jesse L. Roth discusses inconsistencies in consumer litigation decisions in the wake of Spokeo.