
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way by Harvey Heller

When I try to tell people who we are, I find myself telling stories. The stories I tell are always about actual things that happened to me while growing up. Since I am still growing up, I keep gathering stories. Recently, I have begun to wonder why this is so. Perhaps it is easier for me to define a situation or commence a discussion by starting out with a story from my past that I think is relevant to what is at hand. Perhaps it's just my ego, but I think not. In the stories I relate, I am not the center of attention; rather, it is someone else.

The first in my series of life lessons is about Norm.

The late Norman Dickman taught me more lasting life lessons in the brief two-year period that I worked for him than anyone else. Norman was a salesman; he sold home improvement. That job required him to solicit homeowners, one at a time, in very affluent neighborhoods around Detroit. His ability to engage a homeowner in conversation and schedule an in-home visit (between 6pm and 9pm, weeknights, April through October) was remarkable. Great voice, great conversationalist, immaculate and a class act.

He was also a remarkable teacher. He let me go on calls with him the first week and the next week, I was on my own with leads he had given me. I started writing actual business on my third call. That's because of Norm. Norm sold a high-end product to high income people who were naturally skeptical of a door-to-door salesman. As I look back on that time, as a husband, father and homeowner in my own right (a Norm line), I now understand that skepticism, as well as why we were so successful. In fact, so successful that when I was admitted to law school, I thought twice about whether I should leave a successful business with virtually no competition.

So what was it that made Norm so unique?

It was simple actually; he understood what his customer's basic needs were along with their fears. Per Norm, the single greatest fear of any customer was the fear of being “%\$!#@*”! Harsh language (if I could print it!) I know, but it is one of

the few times I ever heard Norm use profanity.

So *what's my lesson?* The lesson is equally simple and twofold: everyone that we deal with, whether it is a client or business source, has needs that must first and foremost be the focus of our attention. When we reach an understanding of those needs, we can then address whether their needs can be fulfilled by our firm delivering outstanding high quality legal insights and services. If we can do that, then the fear of being “%\$!#@*!”, which Norm referred to, melts away. This, of course, applies when also dealing with an adversary, judge and/or a jury.

Norm passed away before I was mature enough to realize the valuable lessons he had taught me. My only thank you to him is to continually try to be like Norm to someone else in my life; such as my team in our Defense and Insurance Coverage Practice Group. Kate Klaus is one of the shining members of our team and her most recent success is featured [here](#) as well. It's important news to know.

With the foregoing in mind, if any of this resonates and we might be able to address your needs and alleviate your fears, let's talk.