



I Blew It

PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD about my foot-in-mouth disease by now. Whether you have or not, I'll share my painful lesson. I'm doing it so I can apologize appropriately and so, perhaps, we all can learn from my mistakes.

For its weekly profile several months ago, the *Arizona Business Gazette* sent me a list of questions to answer, such as "What would you do if you were President of the United States for a day?" "What is the most influential book you've ever read?" and "What was your most interesting case?" I answered the questions in a rush, faxed them back to the paper and never gave it another thought. And that's where the problem began: not giving it much thought. You see, it's my answer to the very last question that's still haunting me today.

In describing "my most interesting case," I bragged about my successful representation of a man who confessed to killing a

convenience store clerk, and I gloated that it took the jury only 12 minutes to find him not guilty. I equated my criminal defense work to "putting on a show." In only one paragraph, I trampled the already tarnished reputation of all lawyers.

When a prominent *Arizona Republic* columnist called asking me to explain myself, I dug myself into a deeper hole,

and some 500,000 people read about the whole fiasco in his Sunday newspaper column.

As you might imagine, I've received hate mail and nasty comments—all of them deserved. My comments to the newspaper implied that I was more interested in my performance and in winning the case than I was in seeing that justice was served. My words lacked sensitivity to the family members of the victim and, for that matter, to family members of *all* victims. I did not mean to make light of murder.

Let me say clearly that I sincerely regret making those comments. It was an unfortunate lapse in judgment, and I am truly sorry that my words have hurt so many. And I apologize to all of you, my colleagues, for giving our profession another black eye.

I should have known better. On the road to becoming State Bar President, I went through training to learn how to put my best foot forward when talking to the media. The training was excellent, but (as is usual for me) I learn best the hard way.

I hope my story reminds you of the danger of arrogance, getting caught up in winning, and being out of touch with people outside our profession. I have learned my lessons and am choosing to be more thoughtful and sensitive, attributes that make me a better attorney and State Bar President.

Although there is nothing I can do to take back my comments, I have made a commitment to provide increased pro bono legal work as a way to contribute positively to the people in my community.

Perhaps, in some small way, this effort can begin to earn back the respect that our profession truly deserves. 🐻

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