

Tuesday, July 31. 2007

### **Remaining calm on the battlefield.**

Â Â Practicing life andÂ law as a harmonious whole. Â Many times I have written about the importance and power of staying calm, whether in the courtroom or anywhere else. That is easier to do when we are physicallyÂ removed from contentious situations (for instance, when floating down a riverÂ on an inner tube)Â than when we are in the heat of battle. Â A lot of anger expressed between and among people results from a feeling of being disconnected. We probably would act less angry if we believed that we harm ourselves as much by yelling at others as much as we harm the people we yell at. Â In the courtroom, we know that yelling at the opposition not only will weaken our ability to win and persuade, but may also bring down the judge's wrath and hammer on us. Â One place toÂ prepare to be calm in the courtroom is not just the courtroom itself, but when driving. So many people take out their aggressions, anger and frustration while driving, where there is no referee except for the possibly passing cop or passengers who will shame their driver. Other drivers often seem all the more disconnected from us, with their faces often hidden by the backs of their head and their windshields and rear windows, and sometimes with their presence seeming impermanent, seeing that one or the other car ultimately will turn in a different direction or will pass the other car ultimately by a long distance.Â I remember many years ago getting very angry at another driver who almost ran a stop signÂ into my car, which was on the main road. I slammed on my horn, stuck my hand through my window, and flipped him a very emphatic bird in the spring evening. His reaction was to be fully physically startled to the point that I got concerned that he might get into an accident, nevertheless, with someone else. After flipping him the bird,Â I realized that he looked like he might be a very likeable and gentle person, who did not intend at all to hassle other drivers. I ultimately regretted my reaction, but this was long after; I never will be able to find this man.Â One thing that helps me stay calmer with everyone -- although I still fail the test sometimes -- is that a person I anger today may tomorrow be on my jury panel without my realizing it, and lie their way onto my jury by claiming not to have interacted with me before. That would be no good for my client. Â This past weekend morning on the road with my son, I tried to view each inch of the road, and of all the ground, as sacred, the ground being part of nature, and the road having been built and maintained by the sweat and toil of so many (rather than only having been built by well-heeled corporations contracted by government agencies permitting environmental degradation).Â I resolved also to try harder to view and treat everyone as sacred, even those whom IÂ previously had viewed as major hemmorrhoids. I also know the benefits of teaching my son calm through example. All of this has given me stronger feelings of calm, which has remained undaunted even after I encountered at least two particularly overly-aggressive drivers later in the weekend. Â Â While still an agnostic, I continue deriving inspiration for calmness from various religious practitioners and traditions, including Buddhism. My friend, mentor and Buddhist peacenik nun Jun Yasuda talked to me ten years ago about being more calm by giving up our desires, which would include our expectations of other people. Similarly, it is important to accept our impermanence in integrating harmoniously with everyone and everything around us, as exemplified by this Buddhist approach: Â "In Buddhist funeral services we always say, in true reality there is no coming no going no increase no decrease no birth and no death. This is a deep expression of our gratitude for existence as it is, our knowing that life in order to be life is always full of death, and death, in order to be death, is always full of life. Because of this understanding we don't see impermanence as a threat or a tragedy. We don't see aging and dying as necessary evils we brace ourselves to endure, but rather as fruitions we try to enter with calmness and appreciation."Â No coming, no going. No increase, no decrease. No anger, just calmness. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Persuasion at 00:05

Seeking peace, balance, and serenity regardless of conditions is a full-time job . . .  
Anonymous on Aug 5 2007, 13:13

Thanks, shaman, for your feedback - I hope you have continued peace, balance and serenity, yourself, since arriving to pick up your son from the wilderness program. Jon  
Anonymous on Aug 5 2007, 20:31