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the  
**President's page**

RCBA President  
Juan Hoyos



**Aspiring Lawyers Need Inspiring Leaders**

Twenty years ago, I was about to start my first year at William Mitchell. I was armed with a degree in Political Science and no professional job experience. I knew very few lawyers and knew even less about actually being one. A college friend would often speak about his father John Brandt, an established St. Paul lawyer. Upon hearing of my interest in becoming a lawyer, Mr. Brandt took time out of his busy schedule to meet with me.

Our meeting began at his firm's impressive downtown St. Paul offices. He showed me around and described how he became a lawyer. He spoke of how his firm had grown from just a couple lawyers into a major law firm, handling all types of legal work. Our meeting continued with lunch at the old St. Paul Athletic Club.

As we walked down the skyway, I was struck by how many people warmly greeted John, stopping to chat and calling him by his first name. Once at the club, I quickly realized this was a hub for business in St. Paul. I was impressed by its dark wood, not to mention its well-heeled clientele. I felt out of place in my ill-fitting coat and an old tie that I rarely wore.

But to John, it didn't seem to matter what I wore or what I looked like. He just kept introducing me to people, proudly announcing that I was about to start law school. I was going to join the profession. And that was the only fact that mattered to John.

I never saw John much after that day. I pursued a legal career in the public sector and John continues to maintain a very successful business law practice. However, that first meeting with John will always stand out in my mind. It was just a lunch, but for me it was the first time I grasped the depth and breadth of the profession. John's kindness and his success made a lasting impression.

Just days ago, John approached me after the end of the RCBA's annual meeting luncheon. I immediately thought of our meeting twenty years ago and how I felt that day about the prospect of becoming a lawyer.

My lunch with John will always mark a significant turning point in my life. It was the first time I realized I wasn't just starting a new chapter of my education career, but I was also becoming part of something special.

Today, our special profession is rapidly changing, and the bottom line matters, in both public and private sector practice. Additionally, local law schools' matriculation rates are at new highs, with about 1,000 new graduates entering our ranks annually.

Unfortunately, the job market now sits at a historical low. Our law firms are cutting back and laying off lawyers by the dozens. Government offices and the courts are also cutting back at levels not seen in a generation. To make matters worse, many of these graduates face debts of \$60,000 to \$100,000. Despite these harrowing statistics, applications at law schools continue to increase, up 29 percent at the U of M law school alone.

While I may paint a dismal picture, it is important to remember that as members of the bar, we have a responsibility to follow John Brandt's example, no matter what the landscape. Colleagues, I encourage each of you to do your part through mentorship.

Take time, even if it's just one meeting, to inform aspiring lawyers about the value of our profession. I hope you will join me in reaching out during this bar year. Sharing your own personal experience and offering encouragement is something everyone can do. While I may still wear an old tie on occasion, I am the better thanks to all the great mentors who have challenged me over the years!