

# Conversations

93RD CHANCELLOR HON. A. MICHAEL SNYDER (RET.)



**I** talk to myself. Don't get worried, I don't talk out loud, and no, I am not hearing voices. Each night, once I get in bed, I take a few moments to have what amounts to a one-sided conversation. I don't expect to get an answer because the one that I am talking to doesn't talk back. He, or She, doesn't talk to mere mortals. If I don't have this conversation in bed at night, I do so in the morning as I am driving to work. I almost never ask for anything in these conversations. Instead, I say "thank you" for the wonderful things that I have in my life: a wife who loves me and whom I love, a son and daughter-in-law that I love, grandchildren who make my heart sing, close family who are supportive and who love me as I love them, and amazing friends. I am thankful for a career that challenges me and delights me every day, and I thank Him/Her for having the ability to do some good things for others. If I do ask for anything, it is that those I love will be healthy, happy, and satisfied with their lives.

I am hopeful that many of you are fortunate enough to be able to be in a position to have conversations that are similar to mine. We are members of a profession that has the potential to effectuate change, and to make the lives of those around us better.

However, there are so many whose conversations have a very different tone and content. There are the pleas of an abused woman who only wishes that she

will be safe; that her pain can stop. There are the words of children without parents who only ask for someone to love them and shelter them. There are the choruses of the hungry, who wish for a warm nourishing meal. And there are the voices of the homeless, who ask for a safe place to sleep, or a place to call home. Each of these people need to ask for something in their conversations; they are not as fortunate as we are.

Why am I writing in this voice? I am doing so because I am still reeling from the news of the death of the great Kobe Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter, along with seven others. I realized that in a heartbeat, our perspectives on our world can change. Each of us sees things from a particular window, but that window may be shattered by catastrophe. I think of the terrible dilemma that Kobe must have faced during the seconds before the crash occurred: How does a loving parent protect their child while facing the certainty of imminent death? Other than holding one's child, telling them to close their eyes, and saying that they are loved, there is little that can be done, except, perhaps a prayer that their child will be saved from harm.

There are, of course, many things that we cannot change. Horrible things happen that are beyond our control; each one of us knows that. However, as lawyers and judges, we are possessed of a skill set that gives us the ability to effectuate change for good. We can provide representation to the abused to protect them from harm. We can work to get children in loving family situations. We can use our skills to represent those whose lives are in chaos in so many ways. We can advocate for positive change in our society. We can work to provide protections for those who seek to immigrate to our country and who look to provide a better life for their families. And most importantly of all, we can work to assure equal access to justice to all those who seek it.

So, perhaps, I do have a possible conversation that asks for something. I

ask that each of us will look around us and find some way that we can truly use our skills to solve the problems of those who have so much less than us. We are lawyers; we solve problems. Let's use those skills to fight abuse, homelessness, hunger, and some of the other issues of modern life. Let's look at the world around us from the perspective of those who exist outside of our comfortable lives and try to bring them in to something better. ■

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