Dear Colleague,

Every time I conduct a mediation training, I’m struck by the realization that much of what I’ve learned about being a mediator has come to me not from courses and books but from trial and error as a practicing mediator.

And, what I have learned has come as much from my mistakes as they have from my successes, from events that could not be scripted in advance and from the embarrassing things that happen in real time.

To illustrate this point, I am reminded of the mediation of a complicated business case, with multiple causes of action and parties. There were 15 people present; several lengthy presentations were made; there was much to learn and remember, a lot of facts and figures.

We were well into the general session, and my legal pad was filling up with page after page of copious notes---- when------my pen ran out of ink. What happened thereafter was the source one of the most important lessons I’ve learned during my mediation career. I’ll send you the rest of the story if you’d like.

To the point---I’m embarking on a project to collect, edit, and publish “lessons learned” stories like this one from mediators around the country, that may serve as an inspiration or encouragement to new mediators or as an advanced training resource for experienced ones.

I’m not looking for the obvious success story; you know, the one in which we employed some mediator jujitsu tactic one day and “we settled” the most difficult and protracted dispute of all time.

No, I’m looking for stories about how you learned something about yourself or the mediation process, something that might not be called a success story; something that may have been learned in an embarrassing way, that might even have resulted from a “mistake” you made---but, something that has stuck with you as a valuable lesson and has made you a better mediator ever since.

If you’d like to hear the end of my story, if you’d like to learn more about this project, or if you know you have a story(s) you’d like to share, please write me a short note expressing your interest or desire to know more.

Then, I’ll send you the full story of “The Day My Pen Ran Out of Ink”, and we’ll continue the conversation. I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best, Andy

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