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At the May 2010 meeting of the Tax Section in Washington, DC, I had the opportunity to make a few comments at a dinner honoring our first time attendees. This is a relatively new event that Section leadership initiated for each of our three yearly meetings in order to help our members who are attending a Tax Section Meeting for the first time to feel welcome. The complimentary dinners, which generally commence with an icebreaker cocktail reception followed by dinner, introduce the attendees to a number of their colleagues from around the country, acquaint them with how our meetings operate, and help them get the most out of the meeting. These dinners are organized and run by the Section's Young Lawyers' Forum which does a superb job. It is especially noteworthy that we had 150 first-time attendees at our Washington meeting.

In preparing my remarks, I reflected back to the first Tax Section Meeting that I attended and what really appealed to me about the meeting. There are many quality tax CLE programs available at any given time throughout the country, but I have never found anything comparable to the experience of attending a Tax Section Meeting. I was surprised by the depth of the CLE presentations at my first meeting as well as by the openness of Section members to me as a newcomer. Almost all of our 56 committees, whose collective jurisdictions cover the entire gamut of the substantive and procedural areas of tax practice as well as pro bono activities and teaching tax, plan and present a program at each meeting. Most of these programs run for two to three hours. They typically cover major tax developments and in-depth looks at various areas of the tax practice within their substantive jurisdiction. The Administrative Practice Committee and the Court Procedure and Practice Committee also address new developments in both tax administrative practice and the litigation of tax controversies. Each of these committee presentations typically involves a series of panels drawn from leading as well

as up-and-coming practitioners from all over the country, and frequently include IRS and Treasury representatives. There is also an opportunity for give-and-take not only among the panelists but also with those who are in attendance at each committee presentation.

Each Tax Section Meeting also features a plenary session which includes a limited amount of Section business together with a CLE program on a major tax topic of current interest or a presentation by a top tax official. For example, the plenary session for the 2010 fall meeting of the Section in Toronto featured a presentation by IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman. Saturday afternoon typically features special presentations on selected topics which run from basic tax planning and practice for new tax attorneys to both intermediate and advanced programs.

The learning doesn't stop with the CLE programs. Many of the committees also hold dinner, lunch and/or shop-talk breakfast events which offer an opportunity for practitioners in their respective tax specialty areas to swap ideas and simply enjoy one another's company in an informal setting. The majority of my colleagues

from around the country with whom I regularly confer on tax topics within my area of tax practice I first met in these settings.

We are all faced with increasingly tighter CLE budgets in this economy. This means that it is more important than ever to get the greatest return on each dollar expended for tax CLE. If you have never been to a Tax Section Meeting, why not give it a try? We make it easy for you by waiving the registration fee for first-time attendees and we go out of our way to make you feel at home at the complimentary First-Time Attendee Dinner. One word of caution—once you have experienced a Tax Section Meeting, it can, and probably will, become addictive. We hope you will also want to become involved as an active member of one or more of the Section's 56 committees.

My concluding comments to those who were gathered for the First-Time Attendee Dinner, as well as to those of you reading this column, are that the expenditures of my time and my CLE dollars on Tax Section Meetings and activities have been the most rewarding of my professional career. I sincerely hope that they will be for you as well. ■

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