Golf tourney returns to Twin Hills

WE’RE BACK! The 2021 OCBA Golf Tournament, sponsored by InstaScript Court Reporting, is returning to one of its favorite venues: Twin Hills Golf and Country Club. The 4-person scramble tournament is scheduled for Monday, September 13, 2021, with an afternoon tee time of 1:00 p.m. Get your 4-person team together and register early with the OCBA since tournaments at Twin Hills fill up quickly. Tournament Chairman, Gary Chilton, said “It’s always exciting to go back to Twin Hills. It’s a private, championship caliber golf course and one of the most beautiful courses in the City. Whenever we hold the tournament at Twin Hills, we have a great turnout. And, it’s rumored to have the best Club Specials in town!”

Founded in 1923, Twin Hills was designed by legendary golf course architect Perry Maxwell, who also designed...
From the President

Hon. Don Andrews
President, OCBA

As a Judge assigned to a civil docket, I read an inordinate amount of legal writings. Prior to becoming a Judge, I considered myself an avid recreational reader. Today, not so much. However, recently a friend recommended that I read a non-fiction book that had an Oklahoma connection. He loaned me his copy of *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. I had heard all of the talk about the upcoming film related to this book. I was thoroughly intrigued even though I knew it dealt with a troublesome subject matter: our country’s treatment of Native Americans. The author, David Grann, did a fantastic job of research and investigative writing. The book flowed like a documentary.

It was fascinating to learn about how Tom White of the Bureau of Investigation, the forerunner of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), systematically uncovered an elaborate criminal operation from a large section of society, including a court system that promoted unethical probates and guardianship proceedings fraught with corruption and abuse towards tribal members of the Osage Nation.

It is a tremendous history lesson on a dark seething era of greed and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted. It is a tremendous history lesson on a dark seething era of greed and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted and malice against the Osage people, who had been uprooted.

The book investigates a series of murders that plagued the Osage people in Osage County during the 1920s. The Osage people were granted in court the right to profit from oil found on their land, which made them the target of greedy ranch owners. The murders attracted the attention of the newly-formed FBI and were known as “The Reign of Terror.”

Once again, an important history lesson is missing from our classrooms. Much like the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, which was discussed two months ago, I had never heard of this shameful episode in our history. Many of you have likely practiced in the courthouse where one of the main characters was convicted. Now, there is a book that provides an insightful account of the mistreatment of and lack of justice for members of the Osage Nation. Excitingly, there will soon be a star-studded motion picture based upon this book with the same title.

TIME TO FACE
FORGOTTEN HISTORY (PART TWO)

Production of the film, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, Lily Gladstone, Jesse Plemons, and Brendan Fraser, began in February of 2021 under the direction of Martin Scorsese. Filming has been primarily located in Osage and Washington counties. The film’s production has taken over entire streets in Pawhuska, and transformed them into Fairfax, Oklahoma during the 1920s.

De Niro stars as William Hale, a powerful rancher who becomes the lead suspect in the FBI’s investigation into the Osage murders. DiCaprio plays Ernest Burkhart, William’s morally conflicted nephew. Ernest is married to an Osage woman named Mollie, played by Lily Gladstone. Jesse Plemons is cast as lead FBI agent Tom White, and Frasier will play the role of lawyer W.S. Hamilton. Importantly, Scorsese has been adamant about casting indigenous actors as members of the Osage Nation in his film. I am certain that will be more evident once we see the film.

Scorsese spent the year leading up to filming *Killers of the Flower Moon* visiting *The Osage Nation* in Oklahoma to better learn about their culture and to work with their leaders to accurately depict the Osage people in the film. DiCaprio joined Scorsese in February 2021 for a meeting with Osage Nation dignitaries in which they made a presentation of the overall intention of the film, particularly highlighting the themes of trust and betrayal, how ultimately the story of Mollie Kyle and Ernest Burkhart is a microcosm of the wider betrayal of the Osage people. I admire Scorsese and DiCaprio for striving to present an accurate depiction of these historical events.

Scorsese, grateful to the Oklahoma Film and Music Office and The Osage Nation, especially Osage consultants and cultural advisors, has stressed the importance of bringing this story to life on the screen and immortalizing a time in American history that should not be forgotten. Scorsese will no doubt do his part to preserve this atrocious chapter in our history. Even though this important film production will resurrect some painful memories from the past, it is necessary for us to know what happened, albeit with a wide gambit of emotions once the film debuts.

It is said that history often repeats itself. History is more likely to repeat itself if it is covered up as if it never happened. The only mechanism we have to avoid repeating history is to ensure that it is remembered for generations to come. Thankfully, Gann’s book and Scorsese’s film will memorialize this shameful episode in our history with dignity and thoughtfulness for the victims and their ancestors. Now that I have read the book, I cannot wait to see the film!
By Roscoe X. Pound

Hi, Normies:

From the grimy deeps of the North Atlantic. Attentive readers will note that over the past couple years it’s getting harder and harder to get him on the boat and gone. Sure, he’s always got too many frogs in the fire, some of which are imperiously vocal – involving death or some similarly life changing results. Of course the heavier the burden the more you need to take a break when you can get one, am I right? Well it’s all come out in the wash so to speak that Mr. P has been helping out my ‘boy’ Chips’ mom on account of her getting shaken down by a crooked health inspector. Said health inspector ended up dangling from a hook in our parts yard, not that anybody I know did it. Say, speaking about knowing stuff and hooks, does anyone out there know what Captain Hook’s name was before he lost his hand? I guess I’m what call a critical reader because I’m always finding these blaring plot holes that nobody else seems to notice. Anyway, when I learned the guy’s mother’s maternal unit 1 if disturbed when she said ‘looks like he was hoisted on his own Petard,’ he goes “Actually, a petard is an explosive,” and so I said, “this weekend we’re so working on manners for when somebody says something nice to you.”

Oh, I almost forgot. For you newbies to the Oklahoma County Bar Scene, I’m Areyna Darquesse, a/k/a Rae, Mistress of All Things Dark and Wonderful. Tonight I’m broadcasting (actually typing) from the border between my land and the breeding ground of my “rivals”. And thank God I always wondered: What’s the best way to approach brass knuckles? TM, OKC

Dear TM:

Mr. Emmett, objected to the activities of Hollywood Silver Fox Farm. He tried to disrupt their business of breeding silver foxes for the fur industry. Silver foxes are skittish creatures, often macing away if disturbed when pregnant. Emmett got to his son to fire a gun repeatedly on the border between his land and the breeding pens, to upset the foxes and damage the business. Emmett defended his actions by saying the foxes were unusually sensitive and he had the right to use his land in a reasonable manner. But the court ruled that no one has “the absolute right to create noises upon his own land, because any right which the law gives him is qualified by the condition that it must not be exercised to the nuisance of his neighbors.” And thank God for that.

Dear Roscoe: I guess this isn’t really a legal question, but I am a lawyer. I’ve always wondered: What’s the best way to use brass knuckles? TM, OKC

Dear TM:

Luckily your question was received by moi. P. would have ignored a question like this. Let’s start first with the obvious. In New Jersey, Oklahoma, and most other States, knocking out the adversary is illegal. So there’s that to consider. While they make a good equalizer in a fight, the law mostly considers them offensive rather than defensive, and if you’ve got them and the other guy/gal’s unarmed, good luck making self-defense fly. If you must use them (after all it’s better to be judged by twelve than carried by six), using brass knuckles in a fight or self-defense situation adds more heat to the blow. This intensifies the damage and can make relatively weak or poorly armed punch (remember use your whole body behind the punch, not just the arm. Oh, and turn it as you strike). Downside, legalities aside, the problem with using weapons in a fist fight, you give the opponent an excuse to use a weapon as well. Like world nations in an arms race, the other guy comes back with a bigger weapon. If the attacker is armed to begin with, fighting with brass knuckle becomes obsolete if the fighter does not have the element of surprise or use the weapon rarely. Better yet, as Mr. P often says, the best thing to use in a fight is your head.

So I’m sitting there at the bar, when this guy comes up to use. He wears a black three piece and sports a goatee. His compact body appeared more muscle than fat, he’d grown a pimp nail on the left hand. As the Contesse placed a napkin in front of him with one hand while pouring out a dirty margarita with the other, “Welcome. Would you like to see our wine list?”

“I do not drink wine…” He replied.

“Vampire bar is six blocks down that way and then one to the left. It’s called Hemoglobin.”

“Yeah,” said Viv, “emphasis on the ‘emo.’”

“You mistake me ladies,” he smiled. “I was going to say that I do not drink wine, but I’d kill for a Stolys martini.”

“Just a sec,” the Contesse said. Within seconds she placed a full grass in front of him. He took a sip.

“Very impressive Contesse,” he said.

“You should have become a jeweler. Maybe even a surgeon.”

Then he looked at me and smiled: “And you Ms. Darquesse. What is it you’re drinking?”

“French velvet,” I said. “Like a Flying Frenchman but with absinthe instead of vodka. Hey, how come you know our names d’arque?”

“I enjoy life most when I am aware of my surroundings and the people who dwell there. I also know the brainy boy you go out with, his mother, your mother in that quaint little house in North Bergen, and of course, Mr. Roscoe Pound.”

This guy could be mayor of Creep City. One of the benefits of my southpawness was the ability to subtly dip my hand into the rings on my own set of knucks, my body shielding my movements. If he made any hostile moves I’d end up on his dentist’s Christmas list for life.

“I think it’s interesting the way your Mr. Pound relaxes by fishing with sharks who pose no threat to him, when he spends the rest of the time swimming with sharks where he has no business doing so.”

“Just who are you anyway?” I asked.

“An old friend of Roscoe’s, though we have only met each other briefly. Don’t worry, ladies. I have no plans to visit North bergen in the near future. Neither do I intend to visit Four Seasons Pre-School nor Ryan’s Coffee House.” These last were the pre-school the Contesse sent her kids and the place where Viv worked. “Roscoe’s Bail Bonds, Bait Shop and Auto Parts, however, well, we’ll just have to see. Do give him my regards if you should see him before I do.”

He paid for his drink, leaving a $20.00 tip as well then walked away. We each out an arm on the bar. Goofyflesh all around.
Handshakes & Hugs

By: Michael Brewer
OCBA Past President

Your OCBA recently held its Annual Awards Luncheon where we honored many fifty- and sixty-year veterans of the bar and multiple others for their contributions to your OCBA. This was the first large gathering of the OCBA in over a year and a half. Event attendance was 320+ strong for food, long-overdue recognition of our members’ achievements, and a reunion of sorts. I observed and engaged in more handshaking and hugs than I had since the pandemic came to OKC in March 2021. Note, that I did make an assumption that those in attendance were vaccinated. We lawyers are a social group despite what others may say.

The great thing about the OCBA Annual Awards Luncheon was seeing members from all practice areas of the bar and the judiciary meet and break bread together—as a family. All ages, from legal interns and new lawyers to octogenarians were represented. It was a great time, as I’m sure you’ll see from the photographs in this month’s edition of the Briefcase. I hope that you’re there for the next OCBA gathering and that we have many more opportunities in 2021.

This event reminded me that several months ago I made a statement in the Briefcase that I was going to be intentional about relationships in 2021 and not just work at our profession for billable hours, fees, or results. As a professional, results are important to your client goals and to your labors. However, we can’t lose sight of individual relationships developed and their importance to our profession. My goal was to touch base with attorneys with whom I’ve crossed paths over the decades. I have managed to eat lunch, breakfast, or meet for a cup of coffee every week with a different friend since I started this intentional quest. These days, it’s more difficult to find time in the schedule, especially when 2021 seems to be filling up with 2020 dockets and even 2019 dockets, but let’s not use that as an excuse. I have been fortunate enough to meet with lawyers I hired out of law school and haven’t seen in quite some time. I’ve also met with opposing counsel from decades of litigation. I’ve shared coffee with mentors and mentees alike. It has been good for me to be social again and to rekindle old friendships. After 2020 isolation, I believe we all missed this part of our professional lives. I know that meeting with these people has enriched and blessed my life in many different ways.

I’ve also learned a lesson on conversation starters. I started out going into these by simply asking - how are you really doing? It’s crazy, but you don’t have to ask that question to reengage an old friend. You simply need to be present and discuss whatever each of you chooses to discuss. I’m not a psychiatrist or social worker, but - how are you doing - isn’t necessarily the best way to start a conversation. Simply catching up is a great way to start. How are you doing seems to imply a mental health concern. Mental health concerns in our profession are real and especially significant post 2020 COVID isolation.

This inquiry is a next step and should be considered, but only if everyone involved is open to that level of discussion. This comes with a warning. If you engage someone, you should be ready to follow up and be there later if needed. If you say you’re going to do something, do it.

As a profession, we don’t do well in isolation or without support. Be ready to provide that for someone else, and you will get it in return. If you’re not reaching out to friends new, present, or old, then make sure you’re at the next OCBA event where a group of colleagues and acquaintances who will soon be your friend, can be found. I look forward to seeing you there and hope that lots of handshakes and hugs will ensue.

Michael W. Brewer is an attorney, founder, and partner of Hillegen & Brewer, P.C. in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. To contact Mike, email mbrewer@hbokc.law, call (405) 605-9800 or tweet him at @atty-mike. For more information, please visit www.hbokc.law.

GOLF continued from page 1

Southern Hills in Tulsa, Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club, Dornick Hills in Ardmore, and Prairie Dunes (Kansas). Maxwell also made contributions to Augusta National (home of the Masters), and Colonial (Fl. Worth). Long before Oak Tree hosted the PGA Championship in 1988, Twin Hills hosted the PGA Championship in 1935 which was won by Johnny Revolta in a playoff against Tommy Armour.

The entry fee is $175 per player (OCBA Members) and $185 per player (non-OCBA Members) which includes 18-holes at Twin Hills, golf cart, lunch buffet, and a plethora of awards and prizes. There is a HOLE-IN-ONE prize (on a hole TBD) for a trip for two to Pebble Beach, the cote of 6 U.S. Open Championships, complimentary of Holliday & Chilton, PLLC. This prize includes 2-nights, 3-days at the Inn at Spanish Bay, rounds of golf for two at Pebble Beach, the Links at Spanish Bay, and Spyglass, plus $1,000 airfare credit. There will be three flights (determined by scores after the round), more hole-in-one contests, awards and drawings. Entry deadline is August 30. You may register online at www.okcbar.org or use the registration form on page 9. Checks should be made payable to OCBA and mailed to 119 N. Robinson, Ste. 240, Oklahoma City, OK, 73102. Proceeds benefit Oklahoma Lawyers for Children.

OCBA “Striking Out Hunger” Bowling Tournament Rescheduled

By: Benjamin Grubb
OCBA YLD Past Chair

After a year and a half of anticipation (and re-screening The Big Lebowski), The OCBA YLD is charmed to announce the cancellation of the “Striking Out Hunger” bowling tournament scheduled for August 25, 2021, due to the resurgence of the

COVID-19 delta variant. The YLD hopes to reschedule the event later this year in hopes conditions improve. In the meantime, the YLD implores its membership and the membership of the greater OCBA to get vaccinated. Vaccine information is available at vaccinate.oklahoma.gov.

While the OCBA looks forward to the Chili Cook-off, Bowling Tournament, and other YLD functions throughout the year, the YLD’s events have never been simply “fun and games.” These events are a means in furtherance of the YLD’s year-long commitment to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, raising funds and awareness within our community to support the mission of the Regional Food Bank and the Oklahomans who rely on its services. These hungry Oklahomans need us more than ever.

Even though we will all miss channeling our inner Walter, Donnie, or the “Dude” this year, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the YLD to support its unwavering commitment to those in need in our community. To donate, please visit www.okcbar.org or call (405) 236-8421.
Family Counseling for the Prospective Client

By Jane F. Wheeler

Mr. A. comes storming into attorney B.’s office, dashing past the receptionist. His knit eyebrows and fiery eyes signal his anger.

B. greets him, “Hello Mr. A. – you and your wife having trouble again?”

A. takes one quick gulp of air, begins a monologue lasting a good 15 minutes. He pauses just after stating emphatically, “I’ve had it this time, I really want that divorce- TODAY!!”

B. (Thinking to himself) – “and as soon as I get it filed you’ll change your mind.”

A. says (aloud), “Mr. A., due to my past experience with you, I feel that before we file for divorce again I would like for you to try counseling. A counselor at SUNBEAM FAMILY SERVICE can help you and Mrs. A. make the decision once and for all. If you decide to stay together, you can participate in marital counseling. If you decide to divorce, you can discuss the effect upon the children and hopefully avoid using them as weapons against each other. At any rate, please give it a try for a few sessions. When you have decided for sure, I’ll represent you.”

Most lawyers are aware of the client, who with a multiplicity of family problems finds his/her way into the office seeking legal remedy. Similarly, the conflicts of litigation may be the medium for the manifestation of new problems. The client may not be desirous of the probable result of legal action, but for other reasons is initiating the step.

For the couple who have children, some exploration of the children’s needs and the effects of divorce would be appropriate in reaching a determination of questions concerning them. Treating children as a portion of the property settlement can leave a lasting scar.

When one party is against the divorce, but the other is determined, the first party may have some real trouble adjusting to the situation. Changes of any kind are tough enough, much less one that is desperately unwanted. Many of our agency clients requesting counseling want to work on their feelings about their divorce in a one-to-one session or a group counseling setting.

While it appears that some attorneys are trained in the techniques of counseling a client with family problems, many are not interested in engaging in this type of therapy. In fact, in many cases it may be inappropriate.

Sunbeam Family Services, and affiliate of the Family Service Association of America and Child Welfare League, represents a multi-service agency concerned with problems of families.

The counseling program includes individual, marital, parent-child, family, and group counseling dealing with varying situations and crises too numerous to mention.

In addition, the agency operates Sunbeam Home, an institution for adolescents who are unable to get along at home. The major goal is to work with the family to correct situations which have created the climate. Average stay at Sunbeam Home is six months.

Two day care centers in the Northeast and Southwest quadrants of the city provide children from 2 years to the 6th grade a program based on child development techniques.

Since the agency is partially subsidized by the United Appeal, the client’s fee is computed from a sliding scale.

One thousand and twenty-six families applied for counseling at the Family Service Center from November 1972 to September 1973. Of that total, 255 presented their problem as parental, 191 as parent-child conflict, 408 for individual counseling, and 172 as family. The interrelatedness of the problems becomes more obvious with subsequent interviews.

The largest number of referrals from November 1972 to July 1973 was made by other agencies (238). Self-referrals totaled 194. Schools made 78 referrals during this time, while police and court referrals amounted to 41 each. From physicians we received 58; ministers, 13; attorneys, 15; and other professionals, 16.

At the Family Service Center, the agency maintains a program in foster care, adoption, services to unwed parents, volunteers and advocacy.

We do not mean to imply that each person involved in divorce or other stressful litigation needs or will tolerate counseling. However, when the attorney makes the determination that the client would be benefitted by the services of a family-oriented agency, an early referral can be important. The counselor can work with the family simultaneously with the lawyer, or, as in decision counseling about divorce, refer back to the original attorney for legal action.
2021 OCBA Awards Luncheon

50-Year Service Awards were presented by OCBA President Don Andrews and OBA Vice President Charles Geister:

Robert D. Nelson

Jimmy Goodman

Rees Evans

Edward Goldman

Jerry Durbin

Joseph Claro

Leroy Boyer

William Cathcart

Kenneth Spears

Kent Johnson

Carl Hughes
2021 OCBA Awards Luncheon

60-Year Service Awards were presented by OBA Vice President Charles Geister and Oklahoma Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Darby:

J. Dan Batchelor

Joel Carson

Jerome Henny

Harry Merson

L. Dean Stringer

Judge Ralph Thompson

They provide the coverage you need at a reasonable price, and give great service too. The best!

- OAMIC policyholder
2021 OCBA Awards Luncheon

OCBA Awards were presented by OCBA President Don Andrews and Awards Committee Chair Michael Brewer:

- **Community Service Award** - Johnson & Biscone, Emily Biscone, James Biscone, Joe Biscone & Bryce Johnson
- **Pro Bono Award** - John Miley, pictured with his wife, Justice Noma Gurich
- **Outstanding Committee** – Young Lawyers Division, represented by Chair Kristin Meloni
- **Geary L. Walke Briefcase Award** – Katherine Mazaheri, with Briefcase Editor Ben Grubb & Judge Geary Walke
- **Bobby G. Knapp Award** – Judge Barbara Swinton
- **Steven L. Barghols Award for Ethics** – presented posthumously to Steven L. Barghols and accepted by his family, wife Catherine Campbell, and children Lauren Hanna and Dr. John Barghols
- **Young Lawyers Division Friends of the YLD Award** – Dunlap Codding, accepted by Elizabeth Isaac
- **Young Lawyers Division Beacon Award** – David Donchin
- **Outstanding Young Lawyer Director** – Carri Ruff
- **Howard K. Berry, Sr. Award** – CASA of Oklahoma County, Director of Development Christian Boone and Executive Director Kim VanBebber
2021 OCBA Annual Golf Tournament--Monday September 13--
Twin Hills Golf & Country Club

FORMAT:

- 4 Player Scramble (Lawyers, Judges or Law Clerks)
- 11:00 AM Registration
- Lunch Provided
- 1:00 PM Shotgun Start
- Hole-in-one Prizes
- Team and Player Awards
- No Handicaps – Flights will be set at the end of tournament

PROCEEDS BENEFIT OKLAHOMA LAWYERS FOR CHILDREN

Oklahoma Lawyers for Children is a team of volunteer lawyers and citizen volunteers protecting and supporting children in the foster care system. Every child in the system needs legal representation and they are a resource for the juvenile court system to make sure that happens.

ENTRY DEADLINE—September 10, 2021

PLAYER #1
______________________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________
PHONE _________________________ E-MAIL______________________________

PLAYER #2
______________________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________
PHONE _________________________ E-MAIL______________________________

PLAYER #3
______________________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________
PHONE _________________________ E-MAIL______________________________

PLAYER #4
______________________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________
PHONE _________________________ E-MAIL______________________________

Entry Fee: $175 OCBA Members/$185 Non-Members; Mulligans: $10 each – Maximum of 2 per player

[ ] CHECK [ ] VISA [ ] MASTERCARD

Total Amount: ____________

Card #: _____________________________ Exp. Date: ______________

Signature: ____________________________ CVV#: ________ (3-Digit Security Code)

Checks should be made payable to OCBA. Return this form to: OCBA/GOLF, 119 N. Robinson, Ste. 240, Oklahoma City, OK 73102
60th Anniversary of The Oklahoma County Bar Auxiliary (OCBA)

By Amelia (Kathy) Plater
Special Events Chair

This organization consists of wives or spouses of the Attorneys in Oklahoma County.

Our purpose is to promote a positive and informative view of the legal profession. Over the many years of existence we have focused on helping to fulfill the needs of children. The founders realized in 1962 the void in our community of anyone to help children who had been removed from their families for various reasons and began leading this very newly formed group to help provide funds to assist in this process. Youth Services was soon formed to help provide a short term facility to house some of the youth who were in need of a safe place to stay while their situation was being decided by the juvenile courts. Over the many years we have been able to support financially not only Youth Services, renamed Pivot, but other similar organizations who help children.

We meet monthly September through May on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Our meetings are rich in fellowship and fun while informative and very supportive of the legal community.

We will be recognizing some of the many wonderful members who have gone before us and made it possible for this group to maintain its existence who have and are making a difference in our community.

We will be kicking off our special year with a pop-up dinner the end if September, continuing with a high school essay contest and concluding with a celebration in March.

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Right Speech, by Collin Walke

By: Todd Blasdel

In his new book, Right Speech, A Buddhist Politician’s Guide to Changing Your Life and the World, Oklahoma City Attorney and politician Collin Walke discusses life lessons learned through the perspective of a practicing Buddhist. The title and content are certainly unique for an Oklahoma lawmaker. Within, Walke strives to explain and simplify some of the fundamental concepts about Buddhism, meditation, mindfulness, and how he has found them helpful both personally and professionally.

Walke notes Buddhism to be more of a psychological and philosophical framework of the world rather than a religion in the traditional sense. It seeks to achieve happiness, among other things, through detachment of worldly possessions. Appealing to lawyers, Buddhism also promotes that nothing is to be believed without critical analysis. Meditation is nothing more than setting aside a specific time of day to be aware of the present moment, and mindfulness is the practice of knowing what you are doing while you are doing it.

Right speech is one of eight core tenets of Buddhism for following the proper path in life. It focuses on three components: (1) Is the speech true? (2) is the speech beneficial? and (3) Is the speech at the right time? If both sides of the engagement can achieve these three things, then a constructive dialogue will occur, and solutions will be more abundant.

Early in the book, Walke makes the disclaimer that the reader doesn’t have to believe in Buddhism to practice right speech. Rather, Walke encourages readers to examine what emotions and motivations typically drive our communications. Much of this reflection is done through disciplined meditation. Once we have a better sense and command of our own emotions, biases, and preconceptions, we are in a much better position to foster an exchange of ideas or engage in a productive debate.

Walke has had a front-row seat to the recent erosion of civil discourse in political debate. In 2016, Walke was elected and continues to serve as the Representative from District 87 in the Oklahoma House of Representatives. In the book, he highlights his concerns about how political polarization, together with the ease and accessibility of the internet and social media, have reduced many of today’s conversations into unproductive shouting matches. He notes that the free market of ideas has been replaced with divisive echo chambers fueling confirmation bias. While this problem may feel overwhelming, Walke feels one way we can overcome this issue is by humbling ourselves to ask questions instead of assuming we know all the answers. Walke encourages readers to “play gracefully with ideas.”

Walke makes sure the reader is aware that practicing these suggested methods of reflection requires commitment. Many behaviors and thought processes must be unlearned to achieve the benefits of right speech. This includes being more skeptical of the positions we take, including with regard to ourselves. However, if we will start making small changes on a regular basis, Walke is confident his readers will develop a healthier state of mind, better quality of life, and stronger communities.

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Book Notes

Right Speech, by Collin Walke

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Bar Observer

Melvin C. Hall Moderates Panel For the National Conference On Race and Ethnicity

Last month, Melvin C. Hall moderated a panel for the NCORE 2021 (National Conference on Race and Ethnicity) special event, “When the Work is Never Done: A Conversation on Civil Rights & the Law.” This event gave participants the opportunity to learn from some of the foremost leaders shaping the struggle for civil rights as the country continues to be asked to reckon with its history of racial injustice.

Speakers on the panel included civil rights leaders, attorney and author Benjamin Crump, national-recognized civil rights lawyer and public policy leader Tom Perez, and former President & CEO, NAACP and Oklahoma County Bar Auxiliary (OCBA)
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