

My Professional Alma Mater

By Mark Petrucci

After I decided to run for the Columbus Bar Secretary/Treasurer position, one of the most common questions I heard was “Why?” Truly, I did not have a rational response. Sure, I could have said – and sometime I did say – I wanted to give back to the profession. True, but when I said it I knew that it did not sum up my feelings. Then one day I was sitting in Magistrate Skeens’ office. We were talking about some legal issue and during that discussion he turned the topic to the upcoming elections. He asked me why – why did I care about the CBA? I am glad he asked me, and that he asked me while we were in his office. The answer was suddenly very clear.

For those of you who don’t know Ed Skeens, he is a rabid Marshall fan. Emphasis on rabid. As a member of the Thundering Herd, he proudly displays the school’s mascot. His phone rings to a live version of the chant ‘GO HERD’ that he recorded during a football game. He talked me into going to an OU-Marshall game. When I picked him up, he handed me some spare Marshall apparel. I could almost understand that, but then he pulled out some Marshall car magnets and plastered them on my minivan. His “man cave” is Marshall green with the image of a buffalo braking through the wall. You get the point.

Being in his office when he asked “why run?” led me to respond with a question of my own. “Ed, why do you love Marshall?” He paid to go to school there. He paid for his books. He paid for his memorabilia. He paid for his sports tickets. What had Marshall given him to endear such loyalty? To a rational observer, his relationship with Marshall had all been one-sided. One could argue that Marshall should be loyal to him for the amount of time and money he invested in the school. Ed’s answer to my question was simple and somewhat expected – Marshall was his alma mater. There was the answer to my question. I love the Columbus Bar because it is my alma mater.

The Latin, *alma mater*, means bountiful or nourishing mother. I understand that the oldest continually operating university in the world is the University of Bologna. Its motto is *Alma Mater Studiorum*, nourishing mother of studies. The university was founded in 1088 CE. (I didn’t know that!) The Columbus Bar is the oldest bar association in the Ohio. (I knew that.) It was founded in 1869. I am of Italian heritage, a coincidence? Who knows?

The answer to the question “why do I care” is clear to me now. The Columbus Bar is the alma mater of my professional life. It has provided me with a bounty of opportunities. It continues to nourish my development as a lawyer and as a person.

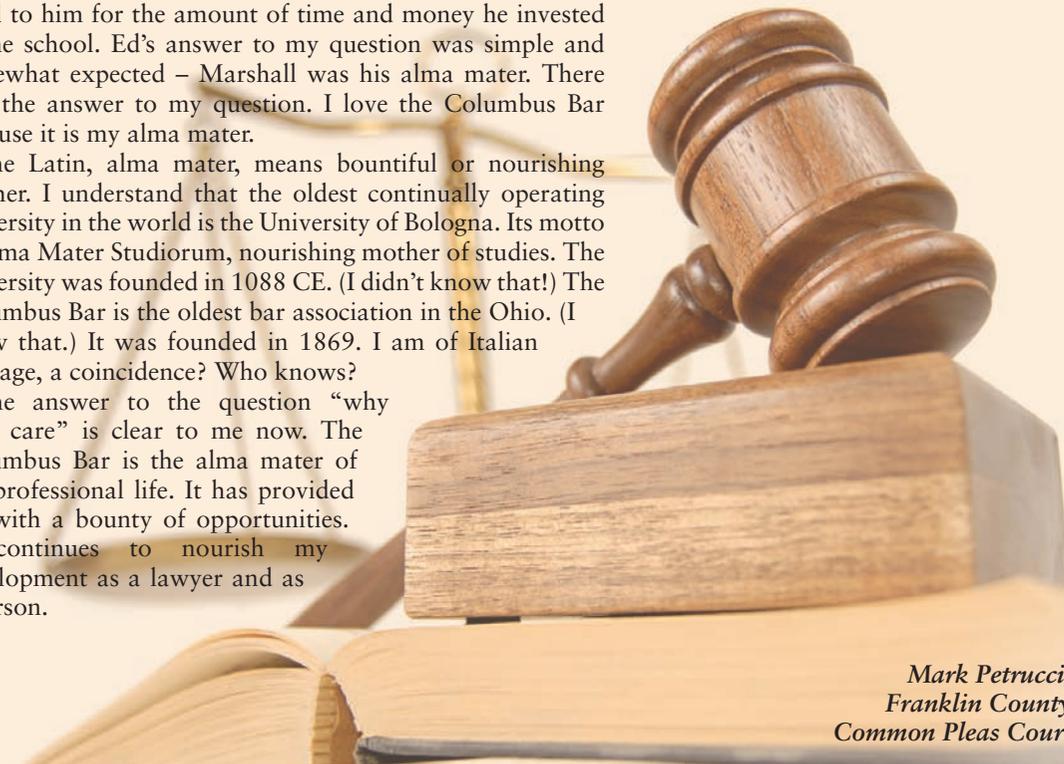
The CBA can be your alma mater if you give it a chance. There exists a host of opportunities for involvement that can only broaden your understanding of the law and the greater Columbus legal community. Like a true alma mater, the association will give you the opportunity to grow. Should you have an idea that is not met by our established committees, the CBA will give you the chance to structure and program a new committee. Opportunity is here for the taking. All you have to do is be active and involved.

We don’t have a mascot or an association song, but the Columbus Bar is an institution of learning. Formal learning through our CLE. Informal learning through committee involvement. For a new attorney the networking, educational and social programs are second to none. As you move through your professional life, the committee work, leadership roles and opportunities to effect change abound.

One of my favorite Bob Dylan lyrics comes from “Like a Rolling Stone.” It is “You’ve gone to the finest school all right, Miss Lonely, but you know you only used to get juiced in it.” Well, the CBA is the finest local bar association in the land. But like any “school,” it is up to you to take advantage of what it has to offer. Do not waste the opportunities that await you. Come, be active, be involved. Help the Columbus Bar be your professional alma mater!



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