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Chair | CMBA Young Lawyers Section

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## Behind the Tab

Two Thousand Four Hundred Fifty-Eight Dollars and Forty-Eight Cents. I swallowed hard. It was time to pay the piper. "Do you take credit?" I asked, as if negotiating a circa 1972 transaction.

"Of course, sir." The waiter smiled. He'd seen shell shock like mine a million times before. Probably reveled in it.

"Good, good. That's good." My staccato voice faded as I resisted the urge to tug at my collar. "Let's do credit." Our eyes locked. I cocked my head and delivered a smile as if accepting an award for second place in a beauty pageant of two. After preserving this Kodak moment for seemingly longer than the eternity through which my worst yearbook picture will endure, the waiter finally had his fill.

"Your card, sir." His outstretched hand should have had a club in it, because I felt like I was being mugged. Imagine that, a mugger that takes credit.

"Yes, of course. My card." I unsheathed my wallet and withdrew the plastic, focusing every ounce of will on steadying my trembling hands. I was, after all, the chair of the Young Lawyers Section. I needed to appear like I picked up bar tabs for socials like this everyday.

The waiter thanked me while prying the card from my fingers. With an over-the-shoulder nod he waived off the chef, who was standing in wait with cooking oil to aid in the extraction if necessary.

Moments later it was over. I left the restaurant dazed and disappeared into the bitter February night. Reimbursement or not, I wondered whether a \$2,400+ bar tab was better explained to my wife just before dinner, when listening comprehension takes a back seat to one's primal need to feed, or in the afterglow of desert, when chocolate highs cushion the blow of news akin to "Honey, tell your folks I quit my job as a lawyer to devote more time to my calling as a stunt man."

Succumbing to the fact that there was no easy way to soft-sell this expenditure, I decided to spend a few minutes perusing the details of my receipt. If, as they say, you can tell a lot about a person by what

they drink, then this tab—*The Tab*—was my front-row ticket into the psyche of the Young Lawyers Section. And now, for the low-low price of your annual association dues, I'll share with you \$2,458.48 worth of insight. Tell the other section leaders to beat *that* for a return on investment.

The Tab consists of five primary categories of tipplers, each of which lends itself to a reasoned extrapolation of unique virtues and vices.

### *The Winos* (54% of Beverages Consumed)

Fruit of the vine and the work of human hands, wine, was far and away the most popular drink among Young Lawyers. This is a good sign. The Tab tells us that the overwhelming majority of Young Lawyers clearly appreciate the product of calculated patience and painstaking attention to detail—from seed to wineskin. Nobody can dispute that these are bedrock personality traits forming the foundation of every successful lawyer. The legal community, and community at large for that matter, should rest easy knowing that the Winos are our future. I certainly do.

### *The Hop-Heads* (22% of Beverages Consumed)

In the caste system of imbibers, the Hop-Heads' preference for good old-fashioned suds sometimes draws a bad rap. One can't help but associate their preferred elixir with visions of a toga-clad John Belushi bathed in Stroh's. Compare, e.g., sentiments elicited by the term "wine tasting" with sentiments elicited by the term "raging kegger."

Despite its Egyptian roots, a penchant for beer is as American as apple pie. The Hop-Heads thus place a premium on *traditions*, embracing the essence of America. But it gets better. A full 52 percent of the beer consumed was *Dortmunder Gold Lager*—brewed right here in the Forest City. It seems the Hop-Heads' loyal support of American traditions spills right over into the local economy. The next time you see a Young Lawyer drinking a beer, slap that Hop-Head on the back (preferably after they've lowered the mug) and let him or her know how much you appreciate their values.

### *The Other Spirits* (17% of Beverages Consumed)

The corners of *The Tab* were haunted by Other

Spirits. Some were light, some were dark, and all found refuge on Young Lawyers' palates. Row after row of The Tab passed like footage of a war for top-shelf supremacy among the chilled sting of vodkas and gins, and the soothing warmth of aged whiskies and bourbons. Regardless of who won this war, however, the fact that so many Young Lawyers mixed company with the Other Spirits demonstrates a high regard for classic sophistication. This is an important characteristic for lawyers to possess. My guess is that, when shopping for counsel, very few people go out of their way to find one "a little rough around the edges." Would-be clients expect polished sophistication in a mouthpiece, which The Tab tells us these Young Lawyers readily deliver.

*The Worm Chasers (5% of Beverages Consumed)*  
Although they technically could fall within the Other Spirits category, the fact that the Worm Chasers attacked bottles of Patron like they were defending the Alamo put them in a class of their own. The Worm Chasers fell into two sub-categories: the fast and furious, preferring their tequila shot with lime and a dash of salt; and the tempered and methodic, preferring their tequila sipped and unadulterated.

Regardless of their approach, however, each Worm Chaser diligently pursued the same goal: one hell of a good time. The Tab, therefore, tells us that these Young Lawyers, while deliberate and goal-oriented, nevertheless are able to relax and not take themselves too seriously.

We need people like the Worm Chasers. They're our first and best line of defense to false innuendo that our profession is laden with Poindexters who, while prepared to debate the finer points of temporary insanity, nevertheless haven't the nerve to approach it themselves.

*The Designated Drivers (2% of Beverages Consumed)*  
This group of Young Lawyers didn't register a blip on the B.A.C. radar, but their significance cannot be overstated. By choosing clarity over cabernet, the Designated Drivers reflect a sensible, team-player mentality, which is the fabric of every successful organization. When you're out and about, be certain to raise a glass to the Designated Drivers (and don't let them pay a dime for their sodas).

There you have it: the Young Lawyers Section distilled to taste. We're patient and calculating; traditional yet sophisticated; and goal-oriented, team players that don't take ourselves too seriously. No surprises here. I feel good about the future of our profession, and you should too—like that Magic 8-Ball you had as a kid, The Tab doesn't lie.

You may be wondering where I fall in this spectrum of virtues and vices. Offer to buy me a drink. I'll be happy to tell you. ☺



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