

## ***It's Not Like in the Movies***

Julie Potts, University of Alabama

I can't believe the summer is officially halfway over! The time has been passing so quickly, especially because I'm busy with lots of interesting projects. I've started drafting more official documents over the last couple of weeks, and this week I completed a motion to dismiss and a proposed order. I felt a little out of my depth since I had never written either before, but the attorneys gave me great feedback on how to improve my first drafts. By the time we filed the documents with the court, I was really proud of the finished product! It was great to finish on a high note before starting the long Fourth of July weekend.

This week, we had a direct and cross examination seminar on Monday and conducted a mock direct examination on Thursday. The seminar presentation was really interesting and fun, especially since we got to watch clips of famous cross examinations from movies ("My Cousin Vinny" and "A Few Good Men"). It was interesting to learn how different direct and cross examination usually are in real life from the way they are shown in movies and on TV. The direct examination workshop was really helpful to me in learning how to ask open-ended questions while still getting the answers you need from a witness. It was so hard not to ask leading questions and supply the facts I already knew! Jens Ruiz, the Miami associate who played the witness in my workshop, really helped me learn how to phrase questions and when to pursue a topic with a witness in his feedback. This was the last workshop and seminar for the summer associates before we receive the prompt for the writing competition next week and then start working on the mock trial. I'm nervous to start that process, but I'm also excited to apply all the skills I've learned so far from the great attorneys here.

Friday was a more laid back day as everyone tried to wrap up projects before the long weekend. The Birmingham office has a meeting at lunch every other Friday, so this week we ordered food and ate together in the conference room. There wasn't any pressing business to discuss, so we just talked about cases the attorneys had worked on in the past and interesting things that are happening in the legal world. It was a nice break from my projects and a good chance to get to know everyone even better. I even ended up with a bag of M&Ms to keep in my office! I feel like I've learned so much already and become much more comfortable with trial preparation and advocacy skills. I can't wait to see how the second half of the summer goes!

Friday was also the day of our closing argument workshop. This workshop was different because we each got feedback not only from Rumberger attorneys, but also from the other summer associates. I went very last in my group, and I was a little nervous to follow all the other associates who had done such great jobs! I enjoyed giving the closing argument once I started though, and my nerves went away pretty quickly after I settled

into the argument that I had practiced. Afterwards, I got very helpful tips and advice from the other attorneys and summer associates. I'm glad that I'm getting to learn trial skills in a supportive environment surrounded by attorneys with lots of experience.