



Colleagues in Law

A Celebration of Alumni Achievement



Jeffrey Witjas
APA: Senior VP, Talent
Class of 1979



1. Of what success are you most proud?

There are many, but I would say the rejuvenation of BETTY WHITE'S career to become the #1 celebrity in Hollywood. BETTY was always popular. In the last 5-6 years her popularity exploded worldwide. She and I have made a terrific team and there is a lot more ahead for her....I am blessed to do what I do for a living. As a Talent Agent, I am in one of the most exciting jobs anyone can have: representing, nurturing, creating opportunities for people and then have millions of people enjoy the product--that's the rush; you don't need anything else. I also meet some of the most fabulous people in the world. My law background gave me balance and the ability to be reasonable and understanding. I never get too high or too low. In one day everything could change. My parents always taught me to treat people "right". Put this all together and it equals success.

2. What does being a Western State alum mean to you?

I was always proud to go to Western State prior to it becoming fully accredited. I really enjoyed the learning process. It gave me a great foundation for the alternative career choice that I have chosen. I had some wonderful Professors (i.e. Dean Snyder who taught criminal law). I must admit though when it finally got its full ABA status. I felt "legitimized". I have my diploma hanging front and center in my office.

3. What do you like most about the practice of law?

I utilize my knowledge from my law school days in negotiating contracts. I know where the red flags are. I work with many Entertainment Attorneys as well "Business Affairs Associates" at APA who are terrific to collaborate with over deals. I bounce ideas off of them as far as discussing what a good back-end participation in a motion picture would be for a client and numerous other television, motion picture, Broadway, Directing, Acting, etc deal points.

It all comes down to protecting the client. That is what I do. I want to protect the client in all types of deals. It is ALL about the client...they depend and trust in me. The last thing I would want to do is have them commence work on a project with a deal different than what they thought it was.

4. What do you like least about the practice of law?

It is the dealing with the fakes in my industry. ...I must know how to read between the lines. Some do not say it like it is...What do they really mean? Why so secretive?...I need to be "Colombo" to find out what is true. There are many people who want to be in the business of entertainment for the power they feel it brings...There are many honorable, creative people as well but is not those I speak of. It is of those pests that need to be eradicated.

5. How has the practice changed since you first started?

We have electricity today....and I don't ride around town in a horse and buggy any longer. The truth is when I started in show business in 1977; we had broadcast channels 2, 4, 7, etc on television. Now we have over 500 stations. In addition, huge corporations were not running the business like today. Relationships were more personal. With no internet, an agent needed to have eye to eye contact with the buyer. Today, you may not meet the person you have been doing business with until months go by. The business is still based on relationships...but you need to make an extra effort today.....Another thing.....specifically for actors. Years ago, if an actor appeared regularly on television, a motion picture career was difficult to attain. Today, the visibility could very well open the doors to much success in features (i.e. George Clooney's success in the television series E.R. helped launch his fabulous motion picture career).

6. How do you view Western State's position in the legal community?

Since I do not practice law on a daily basis...my view may not be totally accurate. When the subject comes up, I tell all that Western State has terrific professors, great library and is fully ABA accredited. In addition, today it has a high percentage of students that pass the Bar.....In my world it is not a very well known entity. The best PR any school could have is from its graduates. ...Maybe if more students entered the field of Entertainment the recognition factor would drastically change.

7. What do you see as the most important/pressing issues in the legal system right now?

Couple things are pressing in my world....Where is the internet and the world of new media going to go? How can we make it profitable? More and more Producers and creative individuals are putting their product on the web. You can reach millions of people but how do you monetize it? Pay-TV has not been around that long....maybe next. Pay-Internet. How to rate the viewership today in the television world. It used to be simple with the Nielsen's tracking one source....Today and depending upon who you discuss it with....it goes from the importance of time-shifted viewership to the significance of multiple platforms for video-on-demand and web

viewing to DVR tracking to even co-viewing. The proper barometer is key to the 18-49 and 25-54 demographic and what advertisers pay for each minute of time

8. What is your first memory of Western State?

I believe my life was pre-destined. I was a Teaching Tennis Professional on the East Coast (FT.Lee, Englewood Cliffs, and New Jersey). I was good but I also knew that I wanted more out of life. My father who was living in Southern California explored various law schools for me including Western State...I received an application and sent it back.....While teaching one of my students who was an attorney.....I mentioned to him that I planned to end my teaching after the summer of 1975 and hopefully go to law school in California and I applied to Western State...He probably was laughing for a few minutes and I thought this must be some school....When he regained his composure he said to me that his cousin was the Dean of the School(DEAN BOAS).Now I started laughing...I was floored!. Think about it....What are the odds of this!. I said to him...."I guess this is where I am going to Law School"....My life to this day has always had interesting and fascinating connections.

9. What is your favorite memory of your time at Western State?

[Laughs loudly].....this is funny--kind of tongue in cheek. ..I dated one of the hottest girls I ever saw in my life. She sat next to me in a couple of my classes and it took me months before I got up the nerve to ask her out. We did go to some fancy Hollywood events...Even in my daily show business life; I would still consider her a knockout.

I will always remember the sigh of relief finishing exams....Life did not exist while I was studying for exams...I was in the "zone".

Lastly, the process of graduating and being so darn proud I accomplished this while working full time at the William Morris Agency. I would travel from Beverly Hills to Fullerton on the I-5 in traffic 2 nights a week....Got home by 11:00pm....Studied, ate quickly and got a few hours a sleep to start over again the next day.....I still have the photo of my J.D degree being given to me by Dean Boas.

[Western State College of Law at Argosy University, \(www.wsulaw.edu\)](http://www.wsulaw.edu) was founded in 1966 and is the oldest law school in Orange County with more than 11,000 alumni. Located in the heart of Southern California, Western State College of Law offers both full- and part-time programs, taught by a dedicated and highly motivated faculty who serve as scholars and mentors both inside and outside of the classroom. Argosy University is accredited by the Senior College and University Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, California, 94501, <http://www.wascsenior.org>). Western State College of Law at Argosy University is fully accredited by the American Bar Association (321 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60610, (312) 988-5000). See [wsuprograms.info](#) for program duration, tuition, fees, and other costs, median debt, federal salary data, alumni success, and other important info.