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During uncertain times, ArkBar is moving forward with virtual conferences and new technology benefits.

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A GUITAR LESSON FOR LAWYERS

By Steve Quattlebaum

These are challenging times to be sure. While staying healthy is most important, it is only natural that we also contemplate how the economic effects of this pandemic may impact the country, our profession, and our individual practices. However, history has shown that opportunities exist even in the most challenging of circumstances, and there is much to learn from those who not only make the best out of turbulent times but see pathways to success. The story from the Great Depression about a new guitar design offers just such a lesson.

First, let me explain my remote connection to the story. I grew up working at my family's modest little music store on the court square in Searcy, Arkansas. My mom and dad owned and operated it. My sister and brother-in-law still do. We sold all sorts of musical instruments and equipment, including pianos, drum sets, amplifiers and, most of all, guitars. I still remember well when we were notified by C. F. Martin & Co. that we were a recognized dealer of Martin guitars. That was a big day in our house. We carried several well-known, high-quality guitar brands like Gibson, Fender and others, but being a Martin dealer was a meaningful step up. More country music stars played Martins than any other brand. Musicians

playing Martin guitars were expected to be good. Martins were expensive compared to other makes, but they were worth it. The workmanship was precise. The hardware was robust and tight. The woods used on the body and neck had a beautiful, deep luster. But what really set Martins apart was the tone. In the hands of a talented musician, the notes were crisp and the chords rang out with a dynamic resonance. Martin guitars were fine instruments, and being recognized as a Martin dealer was a badge of honor.

C. F. Martin & Company was founded in 1833 by Christian Frederick Martin. He had immigrated to the United States from Germany with the skills of an instrument craftsman learned from his father. At the time, guitars were not as popular as certain other stringed instruments such as banjos and mandolins. Guitars of that era were based on Spanish designs. They had 12 frets, used gut strings, and were finger picked. Mr. Martin set out to build a guitar business focused on producing high quality instruments at a fair price. He distinguished his guitars from the traditional designs by changing the bracing structure and the neck-body junction. This innovative design enhanced the resonance of the instrument and added to its overall strength. The family business went through some hard times. But his descendants stayed true to his principles of excellence and innovation, and the business eventually flourished. In 1916, Frank Martin worked with a craftsman named Harry Hunt to develop a new design they called "the Dreadnought" after a ship design claimed to be unsinkable. It was to be an ideal accompaniment to singers which made its purpose different from that of guitars primarily intended for instrumental music. At the time, the Dreadnought design did not gain much of a following, and the primary Martin lines were based on more traditional designs.

The business continued to grow, turning

out 5,000 guitars per year by 1928. Then, the Great Depression hit. Like many companies at the time, Martin faced tough times. But something was happening amidst the turbulence of the early 1930s. The radio was becoming ubiquitous in America. It allowed for a momentary escape from a hardscrabble daily life. At the end of the day one could sit by the fireplace or on the porch and listen to folk singers like Gene Autry, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, and other musicians from far-away places. Music offered an opportunity for fun in a time when some fun was much needed.

The leaders at Martin saw promise during this time when most saw obstacles. Things were changing with guitars. Steel strings rather than gut had gained wide acceptance over the preceding years, and the tension of steel strings demanded a stronger design. In 1931, the designers at Martin developed a 14-fret neck rather than the traditional 12-fret neck. They labeled this new design the "Orchestral Model" or "OM" guitar. It was smaller bodied and was designed to be played with a pick rather than fingers. Of course, it was built to the Martin standard of excellence. The 14-fret design became so popular that Martin eventually adopted it for all its models. The Martin OM became the first truly modern acoustic guitar. But they did not stop there.

That Dreadnought guitar designed back in 1916 to accompany singers was now perfectly suited for the folk-singing radio stars whose talents were being broadcast into homes all over the country. So, Martin incorporated the Dreadnought design into its lineup by adding the D-18, D-28 and D-45 models. The decision to modify a successful product line at a time when money was scarce and chiefly dedicated to the necessities of life could not have been an easy one, but it paid off. The Dreadnought was a gamechanger. Extremely popular, it soon became the standard for guitar design.

The depression eventually passed, as did



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World War II, and folk singing resurged in the 1950s and 1960s with the likes of Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Neil Young and many others. Martin was the guitar of choice. And it still is. Today, songwriters and singing stars like John Mayer, Ed Sheeran, Willie Nelson and scores of others in all genres of music play Martin guitars. These artists not only get a guitar of the highest quality, but their association with Martin elevates their stature as musicians.

C. F. Martin & Company found new success in the midst of a national crisis by engaging in keen foresight, innovative design, and an insistence on excellence. Martin guitars remain the standard by which other guitars are measured. Musicians aspire to own one. And independent music stores in small town America find great pride in being recognized as Martin dealers.

Even with the limitations of courthouse closures, working from home and restricted travel, opportunities abound with the advent of Zoom meetings and other technological advances. Furthermore, many of our clients need our services now more than ever. By providing excellent service through innovative means while adhering to the highest ethical standards we provide our clients the peace of mind that comes from knowing at least some of their troubles are in the hands of lawyers dedicated to their best interests. And if we look to the other side—because there will be a time when this is behind us— and anticipate the types of legal services that will be needed, we can develop the expertise needed to expand our practices to address those emerging issues. The practice of law will change in some ways as a result of COVID-19, but if we have the foresight to identify the issues our clients will face and we hold fast to the principles of excellence and innovation, we may just find a new pathway to success in the midst of this crisis. ■

View from the Law Schools

UA LITTLE ROCK
WILLIAM H.
BOWEN SCHOOL
OF LAW

Dean
Theresa M. Beiner



The COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique time in legal education like nothing I've ever seen before. The American Bar Association, our accrediting agency, recently had expanded opportunities for online legal education, although it fell short of approving wholly-online programs. While law schools were just beginning to

contemplate what the addition of more online classes might mean for their academic programs, no one thought law school classes would be online so swiftly and completely. And yet we transitioned to online classes in a day. I have been incredibly impressed with how everyone at Bowen—professors, students, and administrators—have stepped up to make the transition to online law school classes and programming. Some clearly have thrived with this transition.

One of my colleagues commented to students that our current situation provides an excellent example of how attorneys are called on to adapt and adjust to unusual situations. Indeed, our student bar association president has suggested to her fellow graduates that “2020” on a diploma or a bar license will be an exclamation point instead of an asterisk. I believe that is true. The graduates from this semester have already proved they are capable of rising to a difficult challenge. They have formed a bond with their colleagues forged by something larger than their final exams or bar exam studies. There is little doubt that this experience will continue to influence their professionalism as members of the bar.

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Dean
Margaret S. McCabe



The words that continue to come up when I think of our student, faculty, and staff reactions to the COVID-19 crisis include: resilience, adaptability, optimism, and perseverance. But perhaps more than all the rest is uncertainty. As with professional practice, this pandemic has brought uncertainty to every level of legal education –

from taking the LSAT, to recruiting and admitting a new 1L class, to how to safely hold classes, to how to effectively teach students, to experiential learning opportunities, to celebrating the accomplishment of graduation, to taking the bar exam, to finding employment – each step is accompanied by a question mark, and much of it is out of our control.

So, what do we do? We create contingency plans, a skill we have all learned, even if we have not applied it at this level before. Just as LSAC developed the LSAT-Flex and states are considering new approaches to the bar exam, we are looking at new ways to educate. That means more consideration of distance education, hybrid-learning, fewer people in classrooms, finding hands-on learning opportunities that respect public health guidelines, and other arrangements.

We continue to recognize the unique needs of the Class of 2020 as we find ways to celebrate them, help them navigate the changing landscape around the bar exam, and guide them in their employment opportunities during this unprecedented time. At the center of every decision are assuring the safety of our law school family, supporting the Arkansas bench and bar, protecting the rule of law, and providing an excellent legal education.