



Be Neutral

February 2011

A Publication of the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution

From the Director: Escape from Egypt!



You may believe that the life of a Georgia Supreme Court justice is all about quiet contemplation and scholarly deliberation over critical, history-making legal issues of the day. That may be true in chambers, but one justice found a way to participate in some history-making in his personal life – by trying to get out of Egypt during the current national political crisis.

Justice Hugh Thompson, who is the Supreme Court's liaison to our Commission on Dispute Resolution, was on vacation in Egypt when the government of President Mubarek started to unravel under widespread opposition protests. To sum up, after camping out for 24 unnerving hours in the Cairo airport – the government told tourists that they would be shot if they left the terminal – Justice Thompson, his wife and their tour group barely made it out of Cairo on one of the few flights available. Thankfully, the Thompsons are back safe in Georgia now.

Before he left, Justice Thompson said his trip to Egypt was going to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It seems his prediction was spot on. Prescience is a great quality for a judge to have, don't you think?

To read more about Justice Thompson's adventure, click [here](#). The link will be available until February 21.

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Archive



Case Watch: The Nightmare of Joint Mortgages

Joint mortgages – mortgages on which two (or more) people are obligors – present particular headaches in divorce mediations. Divorcing couples often agree that one spouse will stay in the marital home and remove the other spouse's name from the mortgage. And people, especially divorced couples, always do what they promise each other, right? Wrong! In this installment, divorce attorney and registered mediator Mary Ellen Cates advises mediators how they can help divorcing couples avoid the minefield of untangling a jointly held mortgage, as illuminated by the recent Georgia Supreme Court decision in *Darroch v. Willis*. [[PDF copy](#)]

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Theory to Practice: Mediation Ideals v. Mediation Reality

It's a tough world out there, isn't it? Those virtuous ideals that you solemnly pledged to uphold in your cloistered mediation training often seem like cruel fantasies when you're out there in the jungle trying to make a buck. It's challenging for well-meaning mediators stick to their ethical standards when the participants demand only results – settlements. In this



second installment of our new Theory to Practice column, attorney, professor and registered mediator Robert Thaler tells you what research has to say about how mediators can help themselves and their ethics survive the pressures of daily practice.

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Marketing Tip: The More Friends (and links) The Better



It turns out that having a lot of friends is a good thing, in life and in web marketing. If your ADR practice has a website, the number and quality of links on your website can determine your site's ranking in the popular search engines. This month, marketing specialist and registered mediator Michele Gibson will show you the best ways to get internet search engines to rank your site more highly, thus making your website more visible to potential clients.

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GSU Law's Mock Arbitration Team Wins ABA Nationals



Georgia State University College of Law's first mock arbitration team continued GSU's trial competition success by winning the national championship at the American Bar Association Mock Arbitration Competition in Chicago, January 21-22. The nationals, held at ABA headquarters, comprised 12 teams – two finalists from the six regional competitions. In the final competition, GSU defeated the University of Kentucky's Chase Law School, which it had also defeated in the regional finals.



Professor Douglas Yarn

Members of the winning team were Lisa Bobb, Andrew Hagenbush, Madeleine Peake and Wesley Starrett. "They approached the task as lawyers, not as students acting like lawyers," team coach Professor Doug Yarn explained. This team had the potential to win it all because of the members' professionalism, comfort level with the law and evidence, ability to adapt and think on their feet, and overall maturity, Yarn said.

In the competition, each four-student team split into two "attorneys" and two "witnesses." Each attorney/witness team must learn both claimant and respondent sides of the case and must be prepared to argue whichever side they are assigned. In the fictional case for the finals, a former employee of a nursing home company claimed that, under the state whistle-blower's protection act, he was wrongfully terminated for reporting staffing level violations in the facility. Each side had one hour to present its case to a three-arbitrator panel, and teams were scored on the quality of their presentations and the strength of their legal arguments.

The winning GSU team received a trophy, individual certificates, a set of ABA publications, and \$1,000. The ABA filmed the final and will produce it as a DVD.

GSU Law Mock Arbitration Team members (l to r) Hagenbush, Peake, Bobb and Starrett. Photo by Doug Yarn.



Georgia ADR Blog

While GODR staff have not had the time to blog for you, we encourage you to visit the [blog](#) created by Georgia State University law professor Doug Yarn and GSU law student Tom DeFreytas to inform and encourage discussion. Please add it to your reading list, send the link to your colleagues, and visit often. The address: <http://georgiaadr.wordpress.com/>



Commission Meeting in March

The next meeting of the Commission on Dispute Resolution is scheduled for Thursday, March 3, 2011, at 2 pm, in Meeting Room 1 of the [State Bar of Georgia](#) Conference Center, 104 Marietta St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30303. Meetings are open to the public. Upcoming Commission meetings, agendas and minutes are always posted on our [website](#).



Upcoming CE and Training Offerings

Don't wait until the 2011 renewal season to get your CEs. Check frequently at our [website](#) for the latest CE and training offerings. Remember, any training you take counts as CE as long as you took it since your last renewal or your initial registration, whichever comes later. Lawyers, any CLE you took during that same time period counts as CE. Likewise, judges and CJE. Accountants and other professionals with CE requirements, same thing.



Be Neutral Back Issues Available Online

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