

TRY MOCK TRIAL

by M. Donna Ross

**Most of a lawyer's skills
can be obtained from a
paralegal school and
a good high school
forensics class.**

**--Andrew Peyton Thomas
in
The Wall Street Journal
of
September 10, 1996**

What I like about mock trial is that it is so easy. Tell me any other way that you can think of to get a \$200.00 an hour lawyer to work for you for free. Can't do it? So try mock trial. The students love it because they can go to a real courthouse with a real judge and try a case just like (almost) they were real lawyers. Your students can see whether they belong in a law-related career, and they can see that real life is just a bit different from a Grisham movie.

Relax--don't try to do what you don't know how to do. Let your attorney-coach do the legal stuff. Keep right on with the speech stuff that you do know how to do. The pair of coaches can make a wonderful team--with your students as the beneficiaries. Get help. Here's how.

If your area doesn't already have a developed mock trial program, contact members of your Local Bar Association and encourage them to sponsor a high school mock trial competition. They can receive information from the annual "Mock Trial" issue of LAW RELATED EDUCATION, a publication received by all Bar associations. Additional information is available through:

National Street Law Institute
605 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Mock trial and moot court have long been staples in the training of attorneys. Since many forensics students aspire to join the legal

lions, what better way to introduce them to the courts than with hands-on experience in a real courtroom, with a real judge, under the guidance of a member of the Bar?

Just as in anything to do with people, we can learn by the things that go wrong. The following "Laws" are based on events that actually happened while we were in mock trial. While they constitute a representative sampling, they have many unnamed siblings.

Murphy Ross's Laws of Mock Trial

Lindsay's Law

If any luggage is inadvertently left on public transportation, it will be the one with all mock trial information.

Corollary 1: All attempts to retrieve the bag will be futile.

Corollary 2: Attempts to retrieve the bag will consume a minimum of all free time the team was scheduled to have.

Corollary 3: All bag retrieving efforts must be in the least savory part of town.

Ajay's Axiom

Part A: The witness you're to cross examine is 4'10" and weighs 90 pounds while carrying luggage. You must prove she used only her bare hands to kill an adult male body builder who could bench press Alaska.

Part B: The witness you're to cross examine is the most blindingly attractive member of the opposite sex you have ever seen.

Extension I: In 10% of all trials, the witness will have a leg cast with crutches and be movie-star good-looking.

Part C: In all cases, the appearance of the witness will turn your legs to bungee cords and your brain

to wheat bran.

Tracy's Theorem

If you are supposed to introduce your teammates, the one name you will be unable to remember is your own.

Damon's Refinement

If you can remember your name, you still won't be able to pronounce it.

Bobby's Paradox

If you are able to get certain evidence that would be damaging to your side excluded, you yourself will bring it up later.

Eddie's observation on Bobby's paradox

You may as well bring up excluded evidence yourself because if you don't, your teammate will.

Hugh's Postulate

If one brilliant idea would guarantee success to one side of a case, you will think of it 10 minutes after the last time you will ever use that case.

(Mary Donna Ross, co-host of the 1998 St. Louis Nationals coached at Parkway Central (MO) HS. Her mock trial record includes four state champions and superior national results.)