

CONVERSATION WITH A COLLEAGUE: SAM HODGE

This article is part of the continuing series of interviews between The Practical Lawyer Editorial Board Member Rajiv S. Khanna and leading practitioners across the country, designed to provide personal and professional insights into various areas of the law.



SAMUEL D. HODGE, JR. is an award-winning professor at Temple University where he teaches law, anatomy, and forensics. His engaging teaching style has been the subject of stories in The New York Times, the Philadelphia Daily News, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Chronicle of Higher Education, National Public Radio, and television. He is also a member of the Dispute Resolution Institute in Philadelphia, where he serves as a mediator and neutral arbitrator. He is one of the most published scholars on medical/legal matters in the United States and has authored more than 700 publications, six medical/legal texts, and two law books. Sam has been named one of the most popular continuing legal education instructors in the country.



RAJIV S. KHANNA, US Immigration attorney, is the principal of the Law Offices of Rajiv S. Khanna, PC. Since 1993, Rajiv has focused his and the firm's practice on employment and business-based immigration and related administrative and federal audits, investigations, and litigation. The firm represents individuals and businesses from every major city in the US and internationally. Rajiv's immigration practice includes transactional work (immigration/visa petitions, etc.), compliance consultations, defending government audits, and related litigation as well as providing assistance to criminal defense teams against allegations of immigration violations. Rajiv has

been providing educational seminars for more than ten years with an emphasis on practical approaches for compliance with immigration laws. The firm's website (<http://www.immigration.com>) is the oldest portal and compendium of immigration law.

Rajiv: Please talk a little bit about what are you doing currently.

Sam: I am a professor at Temple University, where I teach law, anatomy, and forensics. This is my 47th year of teaching. I was also a litigation attorney for many years handling complicated medical matters. In addition to teaching, I am a national lecturer, teaching medicine to lawyers. I've taught over 500 continuing legal education courses around the country and my Into the Lab program was the recipient of an award for the best CLE program in the country. I have transitioned from being a trial attorney to serving as a neutral arbitrator and mediator with a dispute resolution service in Philadelphia. That's my academic and professional background. However, I love to write and spend many hours pursuing this endeavor. I have written hundreds of articles, several medical and legal texts, and multiple supplements to those publications.

Wow. That's a lot. Out of all the jobs that you have ever held, which one have you enjoyed the most?

I enjoyed practicing, but my passion is teaching. It is so satisfying working with students when they know little about the law. And by the end of the semester, they can argue forcibly about a legal concept. It is gratifying to mold a person's thought process and see them gain an appreciation of an area of law or medicine.

How would you distinguish the life of a purveyor of education from a purveyor of practice?

A litigation attorney's life is very hectic and unpredictable. In Philadelphia, a matter goes on the trial list, and you must be ready on half an hour's notice to try the case. While trial work was enjoyable, it was very chaotic. I love teaching because you can craft your course presentation months in advance, and no one is looking over your shoulder objecting

to how you explain something. Litigation's hectic aspect is the distinguishing factor.

I'd love to hear any of your war stories if you have something that you want to tell us about your teaching experience or even practice experience.

I started teaching one year after law school. In the beginning, I was younger than some students in my classes. A strange experience that occurred early in my academic career is when one of the students in my class was a high school classmate. But what made me feel old was when a student came up to me and said, "My mom says hi." She was a former student. So, I had gone through two generations. It's also interesting to have cases against students that I taught in law school. That's a gratifying feeling.

If a young law student or a lawyer asked how to get into the profession of teaching, what would be your advice to them?

I became an educator by accident. I was just out of law school, and a lawyer I worked for said, "I can't make my contracts course tonight. Will you go teach the class?" So, I did and fell in love with it. Over the years, I have taught more than 25,000 students and countless lawyers, judges, and insurance professionals. I also served as chair of the legal studies department at Temple University for 25 years. My advice to somebody who wants to become involved with teaching is to publish. The key to getting a teaching position is publication. It really is "publish or perish" in an academic environment and a person who has written articles has an advantage in securing a teaching position.

When you say "publish," what kinds of publications do you think help? Publications for a lawyer can range anywhere from practical, legal advice like we have in *The Practical Lawyer* to comment pieces in newspapers of general circulation to highly academic peer review journals.

Law firms and academic institutions love people who have written law review articles. However, law reviews are not the only important publication

outlet. A practice or professional journal is just as important to show your diversity and understanding of a topic. The idea is to demonstrate that you have mastered an issue and can explain it to others in a logical format. After all, a practicing lawyer must possess two skills—writing and advocacy. These talents are on display when you write an article. So yes, law review is the key, but professional and practical journals are also important.

Even for those who do not wish to teach, how do we improve our writing and our oral advocacy?

Practice makes perfect. Writing eloquently or writing as an advocate are acquired skills. When I graduated from high school, I found writing a chore. I now enjoy the process and attribute that transformation to practice. Most colleges and law schools now recognize the importance of writing. This skill is incorporated into most curriculums. Law schools force students to practice writing during their first-year legal writing courses. The two law school classes I teach require multiple written research papers over the semester. Even when I teach an undergraduate course, I require the students to turn in multiple papers. Writing is an essential skill that must be mastered, and it is important to have someone continually provide feedback about your writing abilities. And with repetition, it becomes easier and more comfortable.

How about oral advocacy? What are your pointers for oral advocacy, whether it's at the trial level or the appellate level?

I owe my success to preparation. I also learn from my mistakes and use these experiences to improve my work. For instance, I never teach a course the same way twice. I'm constantly refining and making it better. I am also a firm believer in demonstrative evidence. Today's generation receives their information visually. My peers learned by reading. Information delivery systems have changed to accommodate this new reality. Trial attorneys need to convey evidence through visual representations. This type of presentation resonates so much better with factfinders. I incorporate the same principles when I

teach law or anatomy. I spend a great deal of time creating animations, graphics, illustrations, and videos to convey the materials in an educational but exciting format. I call this “edutainment.” A person wants to be educated and entertained at the same time. The same is true in a courtroom. Counsel needs to engage the jury by showing visual representations of the evidence as you tell a story. This helps you engage the audience or factfinder and tell a narrative they’ll follow.

What do you typically use in courtroom presentations? What is your medium?

I am an advocate of PowerPoint. It is a platform, not just a way of showing words. You can use it to project a picture, video clip, or timeline. When I handled a personal injury claim, I would go out to an accident scene and take my own pictures. If I were presenting medical evidence, I would use illustrations that I was able to draw or create. I would scan these images or illustrations and drop them into a PowerPoint presentation. When I entered the courtroom, I would bring a laptop and a video projector. If I wanted to explain a document or cross-examine the witness, I wouldn’t just hold up the exhibit and talk about it. I would project the image onto an eight by 10 foot screen so everyone could see it.

You mentioned something rather casually, but I think it’s extremely important. You said you do your own illustrations? You must be very, very good. Talk about that.

I once aspired to be an artist, but there was one problem. I am colorblind. In grade school, I was reprimanded because I couldn’t tell the color of the crayons. The teacher would ask me to hold up a red crayon, and I held up an orange one. She must have thought that I was playing around or not very bright. It was not until later in life that I learned I was colorblind. Anyway, it became apparent that I wasn’t going to make it as an artist because of my inability to distinguish colors, but that didn’t stop me from drawing. I continued to draw and take photographs. I even take my own pictures of accident scenes, injuries, and things like that because it’s a

form of art. Another irony is that I wanted to learn how to fly a plane, but a pilot must be able to tell colors to obtain a license. If there’s an emergency and you lose radio contact, the control tower will flash a colored light to the pilot as a signal to land or go around. But I went to a doctor and learned that there was a contact lens that restores partial color vision. It is called a monochromatic lens. I had to wear a red lens in my nondominant eye. But it was amazing. I would put the lens in my eye, and as I was driving to the airport, things would jump out at me that I never saw before because of the colors.

These stories are quite entertaining. I also think that people need to understand that none of us is born perfect. We have our challenges. We deal with them, and you have dealt with them admirably. What else do you do for fun?

I grew up in the music business and have run a music publishing company for many years. Songs in the catalog have been recorded by artists such as The Isley Brothers, Barry Manilow, and The Pointer Sisters. These songs have even been used in movies and television shows like *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

When you had a song in a movie or show, what was your role? Did you arrange the music?

I am the publisher of the composition. I negotiate and license the songs to people who want to record them or use them in films, television shows, and musicals.

Anything else you would like to share with your colleagues at the bar?

So many important things in my life have occurred by chance. I had no intention of becoming a lawyer, but I took a law course in college and fell in love with it. No one in my family had a college education, so I had little guidance on how to proceed. I just signed up and took the LSAT, did well, and applied to law school. I also became involved with medicine by accident. One day, I read a newspaper article about a new diagnostic test that detected breast cancer through thermal imaging. The picture looked like

an abstract painting to me, so I set out to learn more about it. One thing led to another, and I became knowledgeable in novel scientific devices and how to get these experimental and investigative medical tests reimbursed. I started writing articles on the topic and was invited to talk at medical conferences because doctors wanted to learn how to obtain reimbursement. I attended a number of these conferences and listened to the presentations by the physicians as I waited my turn to speak. After a couple of years, I understood the medical information being presented. This led me to take an anatomy course in medical school, and a new interest was born. After writing multiple articles on the intersection of medicine and the law, I started teaching anatomy. So, being colorblind played a role in my becoming a law and anatomy teacher.

I think that is a very interesting point you have made. Let's not close our eyes to opportunities because we, as human beings, are so rich. If we ignore one part of ourselves at the expense of another, we become that much poorer. Your life is an example of that. And I see there is a skeleton behind you?

Yes, I have a skeleton hanging in my office that I use when I teach anatomy. I also have a soft sculpture of a person dressed half as a lawyer and half as a doctor. He has a gavel in one hand and a knee model in the other. So, that is my career – law and anatomy. 🦴