

Sotomayor Law

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Mediation, Arbitration and Business Dispute Services

Short Lives. Rich Lives.

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Life is short. Some short lives are longer than others. Some short lives are full of love, good health, happiness, and fulfillment. Some short lives are troubled by countless struggles, tragedies, and suffering. Of course, most of our short lives are a mix of it all.

I visited Vancouver last week for a mediation conference. Every time I attend this particular conference, my world expands with greater knowledge and insight. The job of a mediator is to help people resolve conflicts. Conflicts are consuming – they eat up valuable chunks of our lives and business. And so we search for solutions that preserve resources and save time.

Which brings me back to my focus on our short lives, and how my first visit to Vancouver will forever influence my perspective on how I use my time and what I value.

I had been planning this trip for a while and had limited time to explore the city. Because I love the mountains, and enjoy hiking and running on challenging trails, I chose a signature Vancouver attraction as my main non-conference activity – the “Grouse Grind.” This is a 1.8-mile hike up Grouse Mountain, with an elevation gain of 2,800 feet. That’s pretty steep. I was looking forward to timing myself, seeing how it felt, checking out a different environment.

It *was* steep, and difficult. But fun too. Not to mention gorgeous. There were lots of people, and lots of warning signs, including one that in a long, wordy way emphasized the “assumption of the risk” doctrine.

About a third of the way up, I ran into an “obstacle” that threw my plans off entirely. I “lost” an hour, but “gained” new perspective on the power and beauty of the mountains. Thirty feet in front of me, a 66-year old man had a heart attack and died. I held his adult daughter for an hour while doctors and paramedics worked their hearts out to revive him, to no avail.

While the emergency team worked, and in between bouts of the daughter’s hysteria, she and I reflected on the immense beauty surrounding her Dad, and her, and the eternal quality of the mountain, just like her family’s love for their Dad. She got it; she was soothed by the majesty of their love but overcome by the suddenness of their loss.

After the team escorted the daughter down the mountain, I proceeded to finish the hike. The sun was beginning to set. I had to text colleagues who had invited me to dinner. And I *had* to take a bit of time to look over the immensity of the forest, take in the vista of the cosmopolitan city far beyond, and sit at the bar with a very cold beer and some French fries to replenish my body and my spirits.

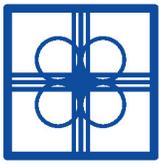
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Taking the tram down, riding the shuttle bus back to the city, and sprinting to the restaurant with permission to meet new colleagues in my workout clothes, I felt a part of the mountain, and a part of the outpouring of love and compassion that we know exists in our world, even if it is only a footnote on the nightly news.

It's not a footnote to me. It is my treasure. Amazingly, only a few days earlier, I read the following from John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra*:

Oh, these vast, calm, measureless mountain days, inciting at once to work and rest! Days in whose light everything seems equally divine, opening a thousand windows to show us God. Nevermore, however weary, should one faint by the way who gains the blessings of one mountain day; whatever his fate, long life, short life, stormy or calm, he is rich forever.

All of us on Grouse Mountain that day, or on any mountain on any day, venturing out, confronting challenges, trying something "just once" as that man did, are rich in Muir's estimation. The nightly news footnote is my lead story, and I'm a rich woman, whatever my fate may be.

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