

# My Death and Why I Still Have To Work Too Hard

by Evan L. Loeffler

I received a telephone call from a client recently and learned, much to my surprise, that I was dead.

"I'm so pleased to hear your voice!" my client said.

This statement was surprising enough by itself. Very few people like to speak to their lawyer. I asked her why she was so relieved.

"Well," she explained. "I looked up your phone number on the Washington State Bar Association website, and your profile says you are 'deceased.'"

I checked the website and determined that my client was correct: somehow, in the Bar Association's website directory, my "active" status had changed to "deceased." I immediately called the WSBA and reported the error.

"Hello, my name is Evan Loeffler, and I'm a lawyer in Washington. Your records say that I'm dead."

"So, what's the problem?" the records department person asked.

"I'll tell you what the problem is," I said. "I'm not dead."

"Are you sure of this?" she asked.

"I'm speaking to you," I pointed out.

"Why would you have changed your status to 'deceased' if you were not dead?" she asked.

"I'm fairly certain that if I were dead — which I am not — I would not be the one reporting the fact to the Bar Association. I would like you to change my status."

"Very well," she relented. "What status would you like?"

"Undead," I said.

"I don't think that's an option," she answered after a moment.

"Why not?" I asked. "You guys killed me and I'm not dead. Lots of people refer to lawyers as vampires and bloodsuckers. I think my status should reflect that."

She insisted that she could not list me as "undead," and similarly refused to list me as "revived," and "not dead yet." Finally, we agreed on "still active."

It turned out the WSBA was moving computer files to a new system and in the process I became dead. Within a day the error was fixed. In the meantime, news of my death filtered through my firm. Reactions were pretty much what I would have expected if I had planned to become dead. My assistant immediately took the rest of the day off. Two attorneys walked into my office and spoke reverently about the departed:

"I never liked him anyway," said one attorney.

"Me neither," said the other. "But look at him. Doesn't he look lifelike?"

"He really does," agreed the first attorney. "He looks just like I remember him."

"I must say that hand gesture he's giving us is just like him."

"He should be more careful. If rigor mortis ever sets in (and it can't happen quickly enough for me) he'll freeze that way."

I called my parents for sympathy — demonstrating that I've learned nothing, even in death. I explained what was going on and suggested that since I had been dead and was alive again that I was technically entitled to two birthday presents. My parents took the position that since I was dead the need to recognize my birthday was unnecessary, as was keeping a provision for me in their will.

It was turning out to be an unfruitful day, when I discovered a way to make my death work to my advantage. I changed my e-mail autoreply to generate the following response:

You have reached the ghost of Evan Loeffler. I'm sorry I cannot answer your e-mail right now, as I am dead. Please be patient until I am reborn, reanimated, resurrected, or reincarnated into someone who gives a damn. I will answer your e-mail at that time.

This had the desired effect: clients and opposing counsel stopped harassing for me for the rest of the afternoon, which allowed me to get more or less caught up on work. The respite proved to be short-lived, however. The Bar may not recognize the concept of the undead attorney, but my clients certainly do.