

“This is Ed!”

On my second of interning at the Congressional District Office, I figured that had to be a common name. I picked up enough calls the past two days to know not to assume anything on the phone lines. So, I naturally retorted with a “full name please?” He proceeded to slowly spell it out, Ed R-O-Y-C-E. The pit of my stomach shrank to the size of a nickel. I transferred his call, but I couldn’t shake the thought of losing my internship on the second day. The preconceived misconceptions made that day could have failed me; instead they helped me understand that life can’t always be taken so seriously, that I have to be able to laugh at myself.

Before even walking into the 39th District of California office, I assumed much. The list of preconceptions was endless: Politics was a menacing arena full of schemes and power-plays, and the staff and other interns would largely ignore me, assuming I’m simply another brown-noser. The truth was far from my notions. As soon as the Congressman entered the room, his charisma was infectious. His enthusiasm and candor energized every staff member, volunteer, and intern to perform to their fullest. Without the slightest pause, he came to the intern desks and noticed that I was the new face. Of the close to a million constituents he had, he spoke to me with what I imagined the same sincerity he spoke to everyone. Asking me about my goals for the future and laughing with me about my family’s antics, he engaged in a conversation that was much more than skin deep. I realized that politics and the people who make the machine run were not what I assumed. Even in this most serious of environments, the Congressman alleviated the atmosphere with his jokes and smile.

So, one would imagine I’d learn to just take the office as it was: a working amalgamation of singularly focused people all working towards one goal. Yet, when “Ed” called, I made a complete buffoon of myself. I assumed someone of his importance would have direct lines to the staffers. After transferring the call to Cynthia, head of scheduling, I walked over to her and the redness of my face exposed the embarrassment I futilely tried to hide. When he spelled his name, I died a little bit. Cynthia reassured me that Ed does this all the time. Returning to the call, I could only hear a hysterical Ed laughing at me.

Before, I tended to take life a bit too seriously whether it were my grades, archery, or volunteer work with cancer patients. Of all the people, Ed Royce helped me find the laughter in life. So, as I call into work, worrying that I might be about fifteen minutes late, I remark, “This is Jason!” only to hear a silence and a confused hum on the other side. “Jason the intern…” I repeat. Laughter erupts on the other end and I know they were just pulling my leg, and I can’t help but chuckle while I drive in to work.