

President's Corner



By Elizabeth M. McGeever, Esquire

All good things come to an end! As my term as DSBA President winds down, I will use this final column as a “State of the Bar” report and as an update on some of the Association’s activities over the past year. Before doing that, however, I do want to thank my law firm, Prickett, Jones & Elliott, P.A., the staff of the DSBA, and the members of the Executive Committee for their support throughout the year.

The Bar Association remains financially sound. Membership dues and CLE revenue provide most of our operating income. On the expense side, member functions, CLE programs, the mortgage on our Bar Center building, and staff salaries constitute the largest line items. Over the years, we have built up a reserve for maintenance expenses related to the Bar Center building. In the near future, some of the reserves will be tapped as we address a number of building maintenance items once the dust on Market Street, literally, begins to settle.

As many readers know, in 2005, the Association purchased two run-down properties adjacent to the Bar Center. In addition to being a colossal eyesore, the dilapidated buildings threatened the structural integrity of our Bar Center building. The Association paid to have the dilapidated buildings removed. Over the next few years, we must decide what to do with this property, including possibly selling it to a developer.

The Bar Association formed an insurance joint venture in 2005 called Delaware State Bar Insurance Services, Inc. (“DSBIS”). DSBIS offers a variety of insurance products for Delaware attorneys, their firms, families, and clients. As a full service brokerage, DSBIS has

created exclusive discount programs for DSBA members. Beginning June 1, 2008, it began offering a program for auto and homeowner’s insurance through Harleysville. DSBA members and staff receive a 5% discount. As a satisfied DSBIS client, I invite you to consider becoming one as well. The DSBIS venture has the potential to provide substantial revenue to the Bar Association that can be used to support a variety of *pro bono* activities. For more information, visit its website, www.dsbis.com.

Over this past year, the Association has been involved in a wide range of activities. A committee led by Allen Terrell studied a series of proposals made by the Australian Law Council involving the admission of Australian lawyers to the Delaware Bar. The committee submitted a report to the Delaware Supreme Court. Among other things, these activities resulted in the enactment of a Foreign Legal Consultant Rule in Delaware (Supreme Court Rule 55.2).

Under the leadership of Judge Susan Del Pesco, a committee considered an ABA Model Rule dealing with the provision of legal services in times of a disaster. The Model Rule grew out of the experiences from Hurricane Katrina. The DSBA has recommended that the Supreme Court adopt a slightly modified version of the ABA Model Rule.

Throughout the year, DSBA staff has been working on a new and improved Association website. Among other things, the new website will provide information and links to *pro bono* legal service providers in Delaware. This should make it easier for attorneys to match their interests and skills to an appropriate *pro bono* provider. The new website also allows

members to register for CLE seminars and other events online.

The Bar History Committee, under the leadership of Helen Winslow and Mike McTaggart, has had a busy year. A multi-year effort to publish the so-called “Cooper Manuscript” came to fruition. Written in 1917, the manuscript is Alexander Cooper’s reminiscences of members of the Bench and the Bar as he knew them 50 years earlier. The book, published courtesy of LexisNexis, will be given to all Bar members. The Bar History Committee is also at work on a supplement to *The Delaware Bar in the Twentieth Century* (commonly referred to as the “Bar History Book”) which was published in 1994.

Many of the DSBA Sections had active years. Under the direction of Patty Schwartz and Laina Herbert, the Women in Law Section sponsored another successful Silent Auction to benefit the Roxana Arsht Scholarship Fund. The Multi-Cultural Judges & Lawyers Section, chaired by Darryl Parsons, sponsored a number of activities, including a trip for students from the University of Delaware and Delaware State University to a Law School Forum in New York that convened to increase the number of students of color enrolling in law school. The MJL Section’s Supplemental Bar Review Course garnered a 2008 ABA Partnership Award, which will be presented at the ABA Annual Meeting in New York in August 2008. The New Lawyers Committee, chaired by Jennifer Bechnel-Guzzo, sponsored a social event to raise money for calling cards for our troops overseas. The Government Law Section has been reorganized under the direction of Max Walton. Finally, while not yet a

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formal section or committee, a group of lawyers led by Craig Martin is examining ways that members of the Bar can support our veterans and enlisted servicemen and women.

In May, the Association and its members lent a critical helping hand to the National Mock Trial Competition. Hundreds of you helped to judge the competition once, twice, and in Randy Herndon's case, for all four rounds! The Competition was a tremendous success. Next year's host city, Atlanta, will have to work hard to match close to what Delaware did.

It has been an honor to serve as President of the DSBA. I am fortunate to have practiced in Delaware for nearly three decades and pleased that I have been able to give back to a legal community that has provided me with so much opportunity and satisfaction. I look forward to continuing to serve as a member of the Executive Committee led by Allen Terrell. So, au revoir for now. ☞

"But surely you can't put a price on your family's safety." As Homer closes the door in the salesperson's face, he says, "You wouldn't think so, but here we are." The point is, your priorities can be measured in a concrete manner: allocation of time and money. Thus, we have a simple, scientific method for measuring our internal integrity if we choose to espouse lifelong learning.

Analyzing the benefits of an unquenched thirst for new knowledge proves a bit more elusive. This brings us to Mary Schmich's speech, in which she notes the unscientific basis of advice like mine involving lifelong learning as consisting of nothing more than personal experience. This is as opposed to the studies demonstrating the benefits of sunscreen. Therefore, it is with more certainty that I close, as did Ms. Schmich, by saying, trust me on the sunscreen. ☞

2008 National High School Mock Trial Competition

The Supreme Court of Delaware, the Delaware Law Related Education Center, and the Delaware State Bar Association hosted the 2008 National High School Mock Trial Championship May 8 – 10, 2008 in Wilmington, Delaware. There were 43 teams from the United States, Guam, Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands, and South Korea attending the 25th Annual Championship. The cover of this month's Bar Journal shows the Delaware Champions from the Charter School of Wilmington, who came in third at the National Championship. The first place team was from Jonesboro High School, Jonesboro, Georgia and the second place team was from Kalamazoo Central High School, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Next month's issue will provide additional information about the Championship. ☞

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