

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 162, No. 129

Serving Chicago's legal community for 161 years

## Glimpses of legends among today's bar group leadership

Those guiding the profession deserve credit — don't just brush them off as competitors

**A**s I am approaching my 26th year as a lawyer, I find myself reflecting back on my earlier years as a fledgling lawyer.

I was very fortunate to have mentors, both directly and indirectly, that were leaders of various bar associations.

As a member of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association, Robert A. Clifford, Joseph A. Power Jr. and Patrick A. Salvi were all presidents during my formative years. When you think of that trio and where they are today, their vision was mind-boggling. They were the ultimate leaders and warriors fighting for the cause.

The Chicago Bar Association was led by such stalwarts as Chester Blair, Gordon B. Nash Jr., Laurel G. Bellows, Thomas A. Demetrio and John B. Simon.

Once again, not a bad Mount Rushmore of Chicago lawyers.

Leonard F. Amari, Thomas A. Clancy and Terrence J. Lavín paved the way at the Illinois State Bar Association.

I revered these people. To me, they were in a different stratosphere than my peers. I found myself wondering if my era of lawyers could ever live up to their lofty accomplishments and incred-

ible leadership qualities.

Unequivocally, I can say my generation has done quite well. I need only look at this year's bar leadership to validate my point.

Daniel M. Kotin is The Chicago Bar Association's new president. I have known Dan throughout my career and proudly call him a friend. He's CBA president for the right reasons.

In a Daily Law Bulletin article last week, Dan quoted the late, great Phil Corboy, a mentor for many: "I have no grand illusions that we are going to change the world during the next year. And I have no great ideas that we are going to change much of our profession. But with a little luck, and with a little help from all of you, we will make a dent in it."

Dan is trying to help the people that need it most — those seeking access to justice.

Statistics show that the civil needs of 80 percent of low-income individuals are not being met. One of the things Dan is trying to accomplish is a marriage between individuals in our society that do not have access to justice and lawyers. Seems simple, doesn't it?

Especially when there are an abundance of unemployed lawyers who have the skills to help. Of

### BALANCING LIFE AND THE LAW



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course, those lawyers have mounting debt and ridiculously high student loans; they may think they cannot "afford" to help.

To them, it is financially irresponsible. However, we need their help to service society. Similarly, there are scores of lawyers that claim they are too busy to help. Really? If you cannot find time to help, make time. How many of us are really helping those that cannot afford our help? With a little luck and help from all of us, Dan will put a dent in this travesty of justice.

Christopher T. Hurley, the current president of ITLA, is someone that I have looked up to throughout my career. He is a friend.

Is Chris serving as president merely to obtain more business? Knowing Chris, the answer is a definitive "no." He is trying to protect the rights of the injured and defend our civil justice system, which is under constant attack. To many, Chris is their voice.

The Illinois Bar Foundation is yet another excellent example of my current admiration for my generation of lawyers. The immediate past president is Shawn S. Kasserman. I met Shawn the first day of law school. He is a great

trial lawyer. And he is one of the funniest people I have ever met. We stood in each other's weddings. In her first two years of life, I easily spent more hours babysitting Katie Kasserman than reading advance sheets.

Am I biased? Possibly, but Shawn has a heart of gold. The Illinois Bar Foundation's mission is to enhance the availability of justice for those without attorneys and to support lawyers in financial need. Does Shawn have an agenda? Absolutely not. Did Shawn want to help those that demand it most? Not a doubt in my mind.

The cynic may read this and think, why would you write a favorable column about three of your "competitors?"

Competitors? Nothing could be further from the truth.

We are all members of an honorable profession. For me, the practice of law is more than just a job. I truly do want to make a difference in the lives of the people I represent. I can proudly say that I know these three individuals are trying to leave this noble profession in a little bit better of a place than when they entered it.

For that, I am thankful to them for trying to serve the needs of those that long for it most.

Former President John F. Kennedy famously said: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." The question facing us should be not what can our bar associations do for us, but what can we do to better our profession and help those that need it most.

Get involved in the bar associations. Be active. Every little bit helps. Let's do all we can to help out Dan and the rest of the bar association leaders by doing anything possible to fix some of the deficiencies facing our justice system.