

president's message . . .



John M. Edgar

Think Again About Lawyer Jokes

We are awash in lawyer jokes. Everywhere we turn someone confronts us with another joke. My barber tells me lawyer jokes. My friends tell me lawyer jokes. Even my clients tell me lawyer jokes. I suppose there is nothing wrong with a little good-natured humor, and I will confess to enjoying a few of them. However, the vast majority of these jokes generally go way beyond a little good-natured humor. They typically portray lawyers as greedy, selfish, uncaring and self-centered. They attempt to apply those labels to all of those in the profession without exception. These jokes draw laughter from non-lawyers, perhaps reflecting what they really feel about lawyers. The sheer number of these jokes indicates that lawyers are all too often regarded by lay people as having the characteristics indicated by the jokes. A look at lawyers

in our community will prove these characterizations untrue.

There are many good and deserving causes in the Kansas City Area. All of these causes would fall under the heading "not for profit." The subcategories are many. There are the great civic causes such as the Civic Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the economic development organizations. There are the great cultural organizations such as the Kansas City Symphony, the Lyric Opera, the Kansas City Ballet, the Missouri Repertory Theater, the Nelson Museum and the Kemper Museum. Charities that benefit groups dedicated to fighting diseases abound. The list goes on and on including educational and religious causes. All of these causes share another common thread.

The common thread — all of them
(continued on page 25)



NORM SANDERS WALT SIMPSON

MEDIATION ARBITRATION KANSAS & MISSOURI

- PERSONAL INJURY
- MALPRACTICE
- PRODUCT DEFECT
- BUSINESS DISPUTES

Phone (816) 471-6444

FAX (816) 471-6664

Lon Hocker Award (both)
Past President - KCMBA (both)
Dean of Trial Bar (both)
Outstanding Lawyers in America (W.S.)
ADR-approved (N.S.)

Meet the KCMBA Staff

*Nancy Erickson,
Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director*



The staff member with the longest title is Nancy Erickson's claim to fame at KCMBA. Erickson has been with the Association for one year and has worn many different hats over the last year. Her primary function is to assist Rae Jean McCall, executive director, with the day-to-day functions of running the Association. Erickson attends the Board of Director's meetings and records the minutes; assists with planning special events such as the Board Forward, Bench-Bar Conference and the Annual Meeting; coordinates special projects and is the back up for all of the administrative positions at the Bar Association.

Erickson describes herself as a "volunteer junkie" because she loves being involved with many different great non-profit organizations. She belongs to the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, Friends of Art and Bugs for Kids to name a few. She is "proud to work for an association whose members are so willing to give back to the community." Erickson is from Cambridge, Minn. and is one of five children in the Erickson family. She graduated in May 2001 from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social/Cultural Anthropology and plans to attend graduate school in the future.

In her spare time, she visits her family, gardens and plays with her new dog, Riley, a terrier. Erickson is a movie junkie who also enjoys traveling, collecting wine and attending wine tastings.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from page 2)

have lawyers heavily involved in their operations, projects and successes. Running down the lists of those involved in the organizations, whether it be directors, officers, workers or donors, will invariably turn up multiple lawyers in each category for each organization. Certainly, these organizations draw on lawyers for financial support. More importantly, lawyers give freely of their most valuable commodity — time — to further the goals of the organization. It has been my experience in watching this wave of commitment to observe that these lawyers get very involved in the undertaking. We are not a shy and retiring bunch, and when we get involved, it is generally to make a difference.

A discussion of this area would be incomplete without mention of the general area of "pro bono" work. Much has been written in recent years regarding the profession's commitment to "pro bono" work. In our community, some of these involvements have been formalized through such programs as the juvenile representation appointment program or the volunteer attorney project. Other lawyers just seek to help people with legal services as a part of an informal "pro bono" obligation.

Involvement in The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association is itself a form of service to others — to other members of the profession. More importantly, the KCMBA, together with its companion, The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Foundation, has many public service projects through which bar members give of their time and money to benefit others. Foremost in my mind is the SLIP program which was created and funded through the generosity of one of our members and is operated by the KCMBA. In this program, disadvantaged youth who are interested in a career in the law are given a summer job in a law firm where they can both earn money and learn about a career in the law. The program even provides them with appropriate clothing for their job. I have watched these young people go through this program reaping its intended benefits while also gaining self-confidence. The Michael Coburn Blood Drive and the Lawyers Encouraging Academic Performance (LEAP) are additional KCMBA-

sponsored projects which offer service opportunities.

Having said all this, when you talk about the KCMBA and public service, you must talk about the Young Lawyers Section of the KCMBA. This group is a shining star in so many ways, not the least of which is dedication to public service. Their appetite as an organization and among their individual members for public service projects is insatiable. With boundless energy, they take on projects as follows:

Big Brothers/Sisters Annual Picnic

- Legal Beagles Chapter — Pets for Life
- Habitat for Humanity
- Christmas Party at El Centro
- Annual Benefit Golf Tournament
- Halloween Party at local battered women's shelter
- Protect Your Child Day
- Read Across America
- Children's Book Drive

This group is setting the standard for all of us, and its members are creating a tradition of service that will carry on long after they are no longer "young lawyers."

With this huge outpouring of time and money, year in and year out, lawyers can hardly be characterized as greedy, selfish, uncaring or self-centered. If those who use the derogatory labels had to do without the contributions by lawyers of time and money, the joke might be on them.

Foundation Honors Bernard

(continued from page 15)

Foundation. "The Chisholm Award gives us an opportunity to recognize Jim's lifelong commitment to helping his clients improve quality of life for others in Greater Kansas City."

The Chisholm Award, launched by the Community Foundation in 1999, was established to honor Donald Chisholm, a founding director of the Community Foundation, whose life and career epitomizes the essence of the award.

Solo Committee Update

(continued from page 16)

areas of the law in the various geographical areas of the metropolitan area. We are hopeful that the directory will promote and encourage our members to interact with other small firms and solo practitioners within the KCMBA.

We encourage all members of the KCMBA that are solo practitioners or practice in a small firm environment to consider joining our committee and get involved in the Bar Association and its activities. To join a KCMBA committee, please contact Alleda Cammack, committee coordinator, at (816) 474-4322.

RESOLVE CASES MORE EFFICIENTLY

Enhance your clients' feeling that justice has been done.

Be a stronger advocate by involving them in the process of mediation or arbitration.



Fred Slough Mediation/Arbitration

Panelist: American Arbitration Association and U.S. District Court, Western District of Missouri

Extensive experience in Personal Injury and Civil Rights

ADR Training:
University of Missouri and AAA

Phone (816) 531-2224
fslough@swbell.net