

ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

SUMMARY

On December 6, 2012, at the Wildhorse Saloon in downtown Nashville, there was more than enough collegiality to go around at the Annual Meeting & Banquet of the Nashville Bar Association. So much collegiality, in fact, that outgoing President **John Kitch**'s podium announcement at 7 p.m. for everyone to take their seats did not take effect on the attendees until well after 7:10 p.m., because people were talking, drinking, and just enjoying being together in one room for one night.

With the evening underway, Executive Director **Gigi Woodruff**, as in past years, welcomed all in attendance thanking especially the three major sponsors – year-round Title Sponsors SunTrust (**Bob Lawhon**, **Steven Simmons**, and **Debbie Hooper**), IPSCO (**Pam McGrath**), and Banquet Sponsor, Document Solutions, Inc. (**Austin Maddox**). Program and Events Coordinator **Traci Hollandsworth** was recognized for her role in the production of the banquet, and the officers and board members were thanked for their efforts and sacrifices throughout the year.

Videographers who at no charge, recorded and preserved the stories and insight of many senior bar members via the Bar Historical Committee's Oral History Project were singled out including **Jim Vowell** and **Gene Jennings** of Vowell & Jennings, **Jim Davis**, and **Todd Davis** of Legal Video Services of Tennessee, and **Mike Mitchell** of VCE. A special remembrance was offered up to volunteer videographer, **Tony Nolan**, who passed away October 20.

Woodruff thanked President John Kitch for his leadership in 2012, and especially in the formation of NBA's new Lawyer-to-Lawyer Program connecting mentors with protégés in elevating competence, professionalism, and success through the practice of law.

Following Woodruff, President Kitch, in what could best be described as an "Aw, Shucks" moment, thanked everyone for their attendance, especially the judges *en masse*, thus avoiding, in his words, "Leaving the one judge out in whose court I would have to appear tomorrow." He then called the meeting to order, and the first order of business was the reading of last year's minutes by Secretary **Rebekah Shulman**. Before she could begin, though, **George Barrett** stood from among the crowd and moved that the reading be waived which the membership seconded and unanimously approved.

Treasurer **Bernadette Welch**, succinctly stated what all wanted to hear; there was money in the bank, money left over, and receipts were bigger than expenses. The auditors were happy, so the membership was happy. At the banquet, the members present expressed their delight by applauding the news and especially the extreme brevity by which it was delivered.

Amendments to the Association's By-Laws were approved without any voiced dissent. Retiring board members were recognized and thanked including **Judge Randy Kennedy**, 1st Vice President, **Judge Marrietta Shipley**, 2nd Vice President, **Rebecca Blair**, **Barbara Holmes**, **Mandy Haynes Young**, Treasurer **Bernadette Welch**, and Secretary **Rebekah Shulman**.

Young Lawyers Division (YLD) President **Sara Reynolds** and YLD President-elect **Robb Bigelow** were then introduced to present awards for the YLD. Their first award was presented to **Matt Cox** and **Becca Barnett** for exhibiting exemplary service to the YLD in organizing the Davidson County Mock Trial event and thus introducing young people to the legal system in meaningful and tangible ways. The Leadership Award went to **Tera Rica Murdock** for stepping in and leading the efforts to establish a Help Clinic at Room In The Inn and for the Annual Toiletry Drive for the Homeless.

The Honorable Judge Randy Kennedy presented the 2012 Emeritus Awards to those attorneys who have participated as members of the Nashville Bar Association for 50 years. **Jack Butler**, **Paul Kent Harrell**, and the Honorable Judge **Seth Norman** each were recognized for their many years of participation and service to the Bar.

Judge Kennedy called upon **Kelly "Almost-Fried" Frey**, and **Tracy "Not-Able-But" Kane** to present the *Nashville Bar Journal* Awards on behalf of Journal's editor-in-chief, **Bill Ramsey** and the Journal's Director of Communications, **Nikki Gray**. Contributor of the Year went to **Everette Parrish** and Article of the Year went to the **Mark Donnell** and **Ryan Holt** for their article, "Civil Lawyers in a Criminal World: *Gideon v. Wainwright* and Training with the Public Defender."

The CLE Award was presented by **Ed Lanquist, Jr.** to long-time member **Jeff Mobley**, who with over 20 years of CLE education instruction in ethics, estate law and more, made the mundane interesting, and improving the quality of continuing legal education.

Lucinda Smith, Director of the Nashville Pro Bono program, took to the podium next and thanked the membership for providing necessary volunteer services unselfishly and tirelessly. She presented the 2012 Pro Bono Leadership Award to the law firm of **Stites & Harbison** directing attention to the firm's assistance in over 148 unemployment cases for low-income clients since 2008. Volunteer of the Year went to **Perry Happell** who has volunteered in bankruptcy cases and SSI appeals going back to 1989, with 19 pro bono bankruptcy cases already handled in 2012.

The Honorable **Bill Purcell** presented the John C. Tune Community Service Award recognizing the highest degree of dedication as lawyer and for the betterment of the community. He presented it to **Harlan Dodson, III**, whose father was a mentor of John C. Tune and award recipient in 1985. Dodson's achievements include teacher at Vanderbilt University and Nashville School of Law, author of the annually updated, "Estate Planning and Administration in Tennessee," editor of the Tennessee Practice Series, member of the Tennessee Judicial Council, and founder of the Oasis Center. In honoring Dodson, Purcell remarked, "Good government is good politics which becomes good public policy, and in the end transforms our city and our state"

Dodson in accepting his award quoted Lou Gehrig when he expressed, "I'm the luckiest man on earth. I say this because I've spent a lifetime and career with Nashville Bar lawyers. We have a tradition of great competence and great collegiality." He then thanked his law partner and life partner, **Margaret Behm**, for her love and her special gift as a problem solver. He further thanked his "Staff-of-Staff" of 31 years, **Lisa Woodruff**, concluding by recalling, "John C. Tune was not a 'teddy bear' for he was fierce when he tried a case - teeth, hair and eyeballs. He had a 'Fight for money, friends for life' approach to members of the Bar." Dodson then expressed his commitment to carrying on traditions of competency and collegiality, in order that - 25 years from now - the same might be said of him.

Outgoing President John Kitch, in his final remarks as president, acknowledged the lack of scandals under his watch, thanked his wife, Jaci, expressed admiration for the many people he had met as presi-



dent, and offered gratitude to his 36-year assistant, Debbie, the entire NBA Board, Treasurer Bernadette Welch, Secretary Rebekah Shulman, as well as the committee chairs and committee members for developing programs, implementing policies, and developing CLEs. He thanked the NBA staff for efficiency and advice at all times, and ended his accolades with, "The collegiality: that's what makes it work. Thank you all so much."

Law Day with Senator Lamar Alexander and the recent *Baker v. Carr* program were two programs Kitch was especially proud of as well as the new Veterans Committee comprised of all ranks of all branches from corporals to generals. He applauded their support for veterans and families, the Wounded Warrior project, and Operation Stand-Down. He endorsed the success of the Lawyer-to-Lawyer program as he emotionally acknowledged his own mentor and criminal law professor and friend since 1973, **Donald J. Hall**, who passed away just a few weeks ago. To Professor Hall's honor, President Kitch led a toast in which the entire assembly joined.

Kitch's first President's Award went to **Tom Lawless**, a 12-year volunteer of Dial-A-Lawyer who chaired NBA ethics and professionalism committees, and who is a fellow of the NBA. Kitch noted that, "Lawless, out of his own pocket in the past, has sponsored Law Day, the Annual Meeting & Banquet, and the picnic."

General Judge **Robert Echols** received the second President's Award singling him out as a retired army general who was appointed to be the first chair of the newly formed Veterans Committee. Judge Echols assembled lawyer members for the Veteran's Day march down Broadway behind a sign saying "Nashville Bar Association Veterans." Kitch expressed to Echols heartily, "General Judge or Judge General, Congratulations!"

James Mackler and **James Haltom** received the last two President's Award for their decision to form the Veteran's Committee and for their leadership in encouraging its first meeting hosted by

Judge Echols. "This new committee has already helped many fellow veterans who are suffering and it is a well-earned award," Kitch expressed to Mackler and Haltom on stage before a standing ovation.

As one final act as president, Kitch introduced **Tom Sherrard**, another of President Kitch's former law professors, as the next President of the Nashville Bar Association.

President-elect Sherrard stated that Gigi Woodruff had confirmed his calculations in that he is to be the 100th President of the NBA. He recalled his involvement in the last three years on the Board, and in that time was impressed to have seen so many lawyers actively engaged in productive committee work. He recognized a dynamic and productive YLD, the Bar's strong ties with the Napier Looby Bar Association and with LAW, concluding with sincere recognition of the Bar staff in their dedication and hard work providing Nashville with a first-class association.

On his "pet" project for 2013, Sherrard stated, "We have about 2800 members, a level number over the last few years. I want to entice those who are not yet members to join us. I want our value proposition to remain strong, to focus on retention,

moderate growth, and member feedback."

President Sherrard commended John Kitch, complimenting his punctuality, delegation skills and efficiency and focus in running his many meetings throughout the year. "John doesn't rule his meetings with an iron fist, but more like a lead foot," Sherrard quipped and backed that up indicating that, "The last board meeting lasted only 13 minutes. Thank you, John, for moving us through with great dispatch. Your articles were fun to read. You have good judgment and excellent humor." As John passed the gavel, President-Elect Sherrard smiled and said, "I can see the relief on your face!"

The new president recognized the newly elected 2013 board members: **Kay Caudle**, Hon. **Randal Mashburn**, **Andrea Perry**, **Matt Potempa**, **Saul Solomon**, and **Jocelyn Stevenson**, as well as the new Officers for 2013: General Counsel **Gareth Aden**, Secretary **Cornell Kennedy**, Treasurer **Trace Blankenship**, 2nd VP/Membership **John Tarpley**, 1st VP/Governance **Patricia Moskal**, and President-elect **Charles Grant**.

May 2013 be the year for competency and collegiality from every member of the Nashville Bar Association next year! ■

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