Pa.'s Chief Disciplinary Counsel Paul J. Killion

by Beth Orbison, Esq.

With his warm and engaging manner and his sincere desire to educate attorneys, Pennsylvania lawyers can be grateful that Paul J. Killion is Chief Disciplinary Counsel for the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. In a recent interview, he graciously agreed to answer a few questions about his role as Chief Counsel, the workings of the disciplinary system and proposed changes. He also offered some basic advice to attorneys, derived from the thousands of complaints that arrive in his office yearly.

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO PRIOR TO TAKING ON THE JOB OF PENNSYLVANIA'S CHIEF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL IN 2002?
A: After graduating from Suffolk University School of Law in 1970, I went to work as an Economic Crimes Specialist for the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. I worked in the Internal Security Division, and became involved in the Berrigan trial that was held in Harrisburg, Pa., from January through May of 1972. I was then asked to manage the U.S. Attorney’s office in Harrisburg, where I remained until 1980. From January 1980 to June 1981, I was the Economic Crimes Coordinator for the Justice Department in Boston, Mass., and left that post to be the Director of the Medicaid Fraud Unit in the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General until 1984. In 1984, I decided to enter private practice, which included a fair amount of white-collar criminal defense work and part-time employment as counsel for the Client Security Fund.

Q: HAVE YOU IMPLEMENTED ANY CHANGES IN THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS SINCE REPLACING JACK DOHERTY AS CHIEF COUNSEL?
A: In the early 1990s, when Jack took over as Chief Counsel, there was a tremendous backlog of cases in the disciplinary system, and we never quite got caught up. We receive about 5,000 complaints a year, so it’s a challenge. One of the things that I would like to see is more prompt disposition of complaints—ideally, each complaint would be either at the hearing stage or closed within six months of being instituted.

Q: HOW DO ATTORNEYS RESPOND WHEN THEY FIRST RECEIVE A LETTER FROM THE OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL?
A: Surprisingly, attorneys frequently do not respond to correspondence from our office. Often, if an attorney would simply return our call or respond promptly to our letter, the matter would not escalate into the formal disciplinary process. Again, I would rather take an opportunity to educate than to ultimately have to seek a harsher penalty.

Q: WHEN AN INFORMAL ADMONITION IS THE DISCIPLINE TO BE IMPOSED, CHIEF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL MEETS WITH RESPONDENT ATTORNEYS TO DISCUSS THE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED. THE INFORMAL ADMONITION IS KEPT CONFIDENTIAL, BUT CAN YOU TELL US WHAT COMMONLY OCCURS DURING THIS MEETING?
A: On occasion there may be some scolding involved, but I primarily view the informal admonition process as an opportunity for me to educate the attorney, as a positive learning experience. Oftentimes, an attorney will “get in over his head,” and then soon after that, there is a breakdown in the relationship between the attorney and the client. I often find myself telling attorneys that if they have found themselves in a difficult situation with a client, whether it is the subject matter of the work or a clash of personalities, it is better to terminate the relationship, than to hope that the difficulty will eventually go away. It doesn’t.

Q: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD AND THE PBA’S LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS COMMITTEE?
A: continued on page 4
President’s Message

Preaching to the Choir

by James R. Silvis, Esq.

I remember driving east on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the early 1960s and seeing billboards with the message, “Impeach Earl Warren.” Chief Justice Warren’s perceived offenses were allowing black children to attend the same schools as white children and affording basic constitutional protection to alleged communists and criminals. I thought, then, that this attack on the judiciary, and, by implication, lawyers, was just a manifestation of certain segments being pulled reluctantly into the 20th century. Never did I imagine that, 40 years later, I would see such unrelenting attacks on the courts by both elected officials and private citizens.

Following the Supreme Court’s decision not to become involved in the Terri Schiavo case, these attacks were ratcheted up. Recently, Tom DeLay blasted the judiciary members involved in that case, threatening that they will have to “answer” for their interpretations of the law. What started the criticism was the Supreme Court’s refusal to overturn the numerous decisions of state and federal judges who actually had heard the evidence and decided the case on its merits. Even more recently, the Supreme Court rightly found that federal law regulating illicit drugs supersedes any state law allowing the growing and consumption of medical marijuana. Opponents of this ruling are bashing the justices for being unfeeling, when it is the federal law, rather than the court that upheld the law, that deserves the criticism.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist has talked about impeaching federal judges whose decisions, he believes, do not conform with American values. It frightens me that politicians would advocate a judiciary that bases its decisions on the way the electoral winds are blowing. I fear that many of our political and religious leaders lack an understanding of the purpose of the three branches of government and the function of an autonomous judiciary. We know that federal judges have lifetime appointments so they will make their decisions unencumbered by the findings of voter polls. Former Solicitor General of the United States Theodore B. Olsen, in a recent article in The Wall Street Journal, addressed the attack on the judiciary as follows:

“But, absent lawlessness or corruption in the judiciary, which is astonishingly rare in this country, impeaching judges who render decisions we do not like is not the answer. Nor is the wholesale removal of jurisdiction from federal courts over such matters as prayer, abortion, or flag-burning. While Congress certainly has the constitutional power, indeed responsibility, to restrict the jurisdiction of the federal courts to ensure that judges decide only matters that are properly within their constitutional role and expertise, restricting the jurisdiction of courts in response to unpopular decisions is an overreaction that ill-serves the long-term interests of the nation. As much as we deplore incidents of bad judging, we are not necessarily better off with—and may dislike even more—adjudications made by presidents or this year’s majority in Congress.

“Calls to investigate judges who have made unpopular decisions are particularly misguided, and if actually pursued, would undermine the independence that is vital to the integrity of judicial systems. If a judge’s decisions are corrupt or tainted, there are lawful recourses (prosecution or impeachment); but congressional interrogations of life-tenured judges, presumably under oath, as to why a particular decision was rendered, would constitute interference with—and intimidation of—the judicial process. And there is no logical stopping point once this power is exercised.”

Certain legislators would ignore the law and destroy the independent judiciary in order to combat what they perceive as wickedness. Attacks on the adherence to law in judicial decisions, although becoming more vicious lately, are nothing new. I am reminded of a dialogue from “A Man for All Seasons” between Sir Thomas More and his protege, William Roper, regarding the protection afforded by the law in the pursuit of evil:

William Roper: So, now you give the Devil the benefit of law!

Sir Thomas More: Yes! What would you do? Cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil?

William Roper: Yes, I’d cut down every law in England to do that!

Sir Thomas More: Oh? And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned round on you, where would you hide, Roper, the laws all being flat? This country is planted thick with laws, continued on page 8
WBA Members Honored for Commitment to Public Service

Milton V. Munk, Jr.

Pennsylvania Bar Foundation’s Louis J. Goffman Award

Milton V. Munk, Jr., was one of four recipients of the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation’s Louis J. Goffman Award during the PBA Annual Meeting held in Pittsburgh May 4–6, 2005. Named for a late PBA president, the award is presented to an individual, group or organization for outstanding pro bono work over the past year.

In nominating Milt for the award, WBA Executive Director Diane Krivoniak said, “Milt has been the strongest proponent of our Pro Bono program since its inception. If ever there were a person who should be recognized for his involvement in Pro Bono, it’s Milt Munk.”

Over the years, Milt has worn many hats for the Pro Bono program, including Treasurer, leader, grant writer and volunteer attorney.

As Treasurer, Milt has created every budget for the Pro Bono program. In 1993, he worked with IOLTA to help direct the locally designated IOLTA contributions into the bar foundation account for the benefit of the Pro Bono program. Because of his efforts, the Westmoreland Bar Foundation was one of the first local bar foundations to receive IOLTA funding.

Milt’s leadership has been instrumental in increasing the number of cases handled by Pro Bono, soliciting contributions from the Westmoreland Bar Association for use in running Pro Bono and designing two new programs to meet the needs of the indigent in Westmoreland County.

The first is the Custody Program, where family law attorneys work as independent contractors, representing indigent clients through the initial custody conference. The second put Pro Bono on the road. Milt acquired funding so the Pro Bono program can travel monthly to an outlying area of the county to provide free legal representation to pro bono clients.

Milt also has been active with Pro Bono’s Attorney-for-the-Day program since its inception in 1996.

“Many of the accomplishments of our Pro Bono program can be attributed to Milt,” says Diane. “His dedication, wisdom, and leadership have allowed the program to grow.”

The Hon. John J. Driscoll

University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg’s President’s Medal for Distinguished Service

The Hon. John J. Driscoll received the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg’s highest honor, the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service, at commencement ceremonies held April 30, 2005. The award was established in 1998 to honor those

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Since 1991, the Westmoreland Bar Foundation has raised thousands of dollars to assist the poor, disabled, elderly and children in our community. Through the Memorial Program, you can honor a colleague or loved one with a contribution to the Foundation. Your gift will help serve the needs of our own who have nowhere else to turn for legal services.

If you would like to make a gift to the Foundation as a meaningful expression of respect, please make check payable to the Westmoreland Bar Foundation and mail to WBA Headquarters, 129 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Greensburg, PA 15601.
Pa.'s Chief Disciplinary Counsel
Paul J. Killion
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**Q** The Board provides a significant portion of the funding for Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers. We make referrals to LCL when appropriate, and participate jointly in the Sobriety Monitoring Program, a program in which volunteer-attorneys work with the Disciplinary Board to help attorneys who have problems related to substance abuse and are subject to disciplinary action.

**A** Nobody wants to make these calls, but many times, concerned parties should be calling sooner. If someone is clearly involved in a rules violation, or is in contempt of court, do not hesitate to call. If money is involved, that’s definitely a referral to our office. When substance abuse or mental health may be an issue, LCL should be called too.

**Q** In December 2004, the Board recommended rules changes to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania that would open the disciplinary process to the public at an earlier stage of the proceedings. What is your opinion about this proposal?

**A** I think that private forms of discipline—dismissal with an educational letter, dismissal with a letter of concern, informal admonition and private reprimand—serve a good function and I would not want to see that done away with. But, when disciplinary proceedings are not open to the public, there is a perception that we are hiding something, that we are taking care of our own. This perception is not true. Under the proposed system, if a lawyer denies violating any rules when private discipline has been recommended, that matter will stay private unless public discipline is ultimately imposed. If the recommendation is for public discipline, the matter will be opened to the public upon the filing of the charges. By making such a change, we will be following forty other jurisdictions throughout the country that have public trials.

**Q** The PBA spent $250,000 on a public relations project that revealed, among other things, that the image of lawyers is greatly diminished by some forms of lawyer advertising. How does your office handle unethical advertising?

**A** Each district office has an attorney who is responsible for handling cases involving lawyer advertising. The majority of the complaints that we receive are from other lawyers. Usually a telephone call to the offending advertiser is enough to handle the matter, and the contacted attorney will promptly make the necessary changes to his advertising. From time to time we have taken a more proactive approach in looking for unethical ads, but we really do not have the time to do that.

**Q** Since coming into the office of disciplinary counsel from private practice in 2002, what is your overall impression of how the disciplinary system works?

**A** Few people recognize or appreciate the amount of work and effort that goes into policing our own profession.

The legal disciplinary system employs 30 attorneys, with supporting staff, who investigate and prosecute about 55,000 active lawyers. The number of volunteers who contribute their time particularly impress me. Each hearing committee is comprised of three attorney volunteers who review pleadings and exhibits, conduct hearings, and write reports of recommendation, often in several matters during the course of a year in their six-year tenure. The Board consists of fourteen lawyers and two lay people who meet six times a year for two days at a time, with each case given careful consideration and detailed analysis. And then there are the Justices who review each case before a final decision is rendered. As a profession, we should be proud of what we’ve done.

By way of contrast, the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs of the Department of State employs about the same number of lawyers as we to police every other licensed profession in Pennsylvania, except insurance agents and teachers. Under their umbrella, 27 different boards monitor 1.3 million licensees.

**Q** If there were one cautionary instruction that you could give attorneys, what would it be?

**A** Be more responsive to your clients. Return telephone calls. Attorneys are often bad businessmen. If you were a salesman, and you got a call from a prospective buyer, you’d call them back immediately.

**Q** Can you give us a final word of advice?

**A** Take the time to pull out the Rules of Professional Conduct, and look them over. Keep in mind your ethical responsibilities.

Editor’s note: Pennsylvania’s Rules of Professional Conduct can be found on the Disciplinary Board’s Website at www.padisciplinaryboard.org.
Westmoreland County’s Seniority List

by The Hon. Charles H. Loughran

On July 1, 1972, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court adopted “Bar Admission Rules” which specifically abrogated any local procedural rules that governed the right to admission before any court of any county of the Commonwealth. See Bar Admission Rule 232 (amended 1977), Effect of Admission to Practice. This rule ended the practice in Westmoreland County whereby newly eligible attorneys were admitted to practice before the Court of Common Pleas and the separate Orphans’ Court. Prior to 1972, only lawyers specially admitted to practice in Westmoreland County were allowed to present motions to our judges and try cases. Furthermore, an out-of-county lawyer could practice before the local court only after a locally admitted attorney vouched for his behavior and agreed to be held accountable.

An advantage to being admitted locally before the Court of Common Pleas and the Orphans’ Court is that you obtained a position on the “seniority list,” a list of attorneys ordered chronologically based upon the date of admission to local practice and not based upon age. The Prothonotary’s Office—at that time there was no Court Administrator’s Office—kept track of these admissions, beginning with the first recorded admission of Albert Harvey Bell on April 8, 1884.

For example, while I was home on leave from the service for only a few days, my father, and later law partner, Joseph Loughran, persuaded the Court to sit “en banc” on April 19, 1961, to hear motions for admission to the Westmoreland County Bar from Clarence McBride (now deceased), Thomas Ceraso, Irving Bloom and me. Prior to the formal motion being made, each of us had been interviewed and determined to be of good moral character by the Westmoreland Bar Association’s Board of Local Examiners.

One of the nuances of our rush to be admitted was that our names would then be placed on the seniority list, and our respective positions on that list would be secured.

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Seniority List continued from page 5

This list was maintained by the Prothonotary’s Office for the Court of Common Pleas in a 12” x 3” booklet called the Trial List, which was published for the trial attorneys each trial term. This booklet was the trial lawyers’ bible for it contained all of the civil cases slated for trial that term, the prospective jurors’ names listed alphabetically for each week of the term, the court calendar for the year and last, but not least, the seniority list of resident attorneys who were either admitted or allowed to practice before the Courts of Westmoreland County.

Seniority had its privileges. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, civil motions were heard on Thursdays and Fridays at 10 a.m. The call of the list for civil trials was usually conducted on each Wednesday preceding a week of scheduled jury trials. At the call, the long-standing custom in Westmoreland County was to defer to any attorney who had been admitted to practice before you. An attorney was very careful not to report on his civil cases at the call until it was his turn, according to the seniority list. Additionally,

The judges and lawyers adhered to the seniority list when presenting motions to the Court. I assume that this custom evolved from the idea that older lawyers were to be respected, or perhaps, that senior lawyers presumably were busier lawyers and should not have to wait.

The Register of Wills, as Clerk of the Orphans’ Court, maintained a separate seniority list. The two lists were not necessarily identical, for the dates of admission could vary if the attorney were not admitted to both courts on the same date. The Clerk of Courts did not keep a separate list for criminal matters, but the judge who decided those matters and all other matters, always took the senior attorney’s motions first.

In the 1970s, with the advent of statewide admission, the seniority list became obsolete. Sadly, with the loss of the local seniority list came a decline in respectfulness generally, at times creating distrust and making us practice and deal with each other more defensively. We should work toward regaining this lost civility, that deferential politeness that comes with treating each other courteously. Our word must be our bond; we must respond to our messages timely and politely; we must assist younger attorneys, for if we don’t do our part, our profession will not be a profession.

As a postscript, Patty Hall, who assisted her mother, Virginia Sperber, the Deputy Prothonotary for many years, gave me her copy of a typed seniority list, which was maintained from April 8, 1884, to its last entry of May 15, 1972. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy should call the bar office. Interestingly, there were only six women on the list of 340 total admittees. And for those of you old enough to remember Virginia Sperber, I’m pleased to report she is still living at the age of 96 in a nursing home.
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from coast to coast, Man’s laws, not God’s! And if you cut them down, and you’re just the man to do it, do you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I’d give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety’s sake!

The worry about the criticism of our jurists should, in no way, be a partisan concern, as no one wants any party to demand the ouster of judges whose decisions don’t jibe with that party’s current “feelings.” In fact, it’s incumbent on us never to miss an opportunity to defend the independence of our legal system and courts. Lecture finished.

(I will be busy when the next President’s Message is due, so I’ve asked Larry King to write one of those amusing short columns that he used to write for USA Today.)

Walthour Inducted into Pitt’s Cathedral of Learning Society

Christopher C. Walthour, Jr., was posthumously inducted into the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning Society on June 24, 2005. The Society was established in 1997 to recognize individuals who have given $1 million or more to Pitt.

According to Pitt’s Vice Chancellor Albert J. Novak, Jr., this leadership support inspires others to share in the joy of meeting the academic, cultural, and social needs of students, making the University a better place to live, work, and study. “Mr. Walthour is very deserving of this unique form of recognition because he serves as a tremendous inspiration to all of our friends, alumni and donors,” says Novak. “His exceptional bequest to create the Christopher C. Walthour, Jr., Endowment in the School of Law demonstrates the powerful impact that philanthropy can have on the School’s educational, research and service initiatives. The fact that Mr. Walthour earned his own law degree from Pitt makes this commitment even more influential.”

A founding partner of Walthour & Garland in Greensburg, Christopher C. Walthour, Jr., was a member of the Westmoreland Bar Association from October 1942 until his death in August 2003.

WBA Members Honored  continued from page 3

individuals who have made invaluable contributions to the University and the community.

According to UPG’s Blue & Gold newsletter, Judge Driscoll’s commitment to public service is demonstrated by his long judicial career and military service as an officer in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. He has served as a judge in the Court of Common Pleas of Westmoreland County since 1995. He was Westmoreland County’s District Attorney from 1982 to 1994, and practiced as a lawyer from 1970 to 1982.

Judge Driscoll is chairman of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Criminal Procedural Rules Committee and a past president of the Pennsylvania District Attorney’s Association. He has been a member of the UPG Advisory Board for more than 20 years, and serves on the University Relations and Institutional Advancement Committee.

President’s Message  continued from page 2

from coast to coast, Man’s laws, not God’s! And if you cut them down, and you’re just the man to do it, do you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I’d give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety’s sake!

The worry about the criticism of our jurists should, in no way, be a partisan concern, as no one wants any party to demand the ouster of judges whose decisions don’t jibe with that party’s current “feelings.” In fact, it’s incumbent on us never to miss an opportunity to defend the independence of our legal system and courts. Lecture finished.

(I will be busy when the next President’s Message is due, so I’ve asked Larry King to write one of those amusing short columns that he used to write for USA Today.)
Spotlight on Denis Zuzik

Q What jobs have you held prior to becoming an attorney?
A Tractor-trailer/tri-axle truck driver, brewery worker, mechanic, farmhand.

Q Which was your favorite and why?
A Truck driver—The pay was good and you could not beat the independence.

Q What is the funniest thing that has happened to you as an attorney?
A Rushing to Judge Loughran's home late on a Saturday afternoon in shorts and a T-shirt to get an order signed reducing bail for a young client who was having serious emotional problems in jail. After signing the order Judge Loughran insisted I come in and meet his dinner guests, all of whom were dressed to the nines. Despite Judge Loughran's assurance that I was a "fine lawyer," I suspect my appearance belied the same.

Q What is the quality you most like in an attorney?
A Honesty, and fortunately most of the lawyers I know possess this quality.

Q What is your favorite journey?
A A week's vacation with my brother, his wife, some members of his family and several of his friends at a villa in Tuscany. Stimulating conversation, great food and drink, and an opportunity to visit some great places, i.e., Rome, Florence, Siena and the Ferrari factory in Maranello.

Q What is your greatest regret?
A Not phoning my father on his 59th birthday thinking I would do it the next evening. He unexpectedly died the following morning.

Q Who are your heroes in real life?
A My father, The Founding Brothers, Pope John Paul II, Sam Ervin and A.C. Scales.

Q What advice would you give attorneys new to the practice of law?
A Don't be a sole practitioner—we are dinosaurs. Avoid the temptation to take anything that walks through having serious emotional problems in jail. After signing the order Judge Loughran insisted I come in and meet his dinner guests, all of whom were dressed to the nines. Despite Judge Loughran's assurance that I was a "fine lawyer," I suspect my appearance belied the same.

Q What is your favorite journey?
A Rushing to Judge Loughran's home late on a Saturday afternoon in shorts and a T-shirt to get an order signed reducing bail for a young client who was having serious emotional problems in jail. After signing the order Judge Loughran insisted I come in and meet his dinner guests, all of whom were dressed to the nines. Despite Judge Loughran's assurance that I was a "fine lawyer," I suspect my appearance belied the same.

Q What advice would you give attorneys new to the practice of law?
A Don't be a sole practitioner—we are dinosaurs. Avoid the temptation to take anything that walks through...
the door. For women, avoid being pigeonholed in Domestic Law unless that is where you want to practice.

Q WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?
A Keeping the best woman I know, my wife, for 37 years and with her raising and educating three children.

Q WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF PERFECT HAPPINESS?
A Doing what you want when you want.

Q WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?
A The tie pin my mother gave my father as a wedding present.

Q WHAT DO YOU MOST DISLIKE?
A Left-wing socialists, Muslim extremists, taxes, big and unresponsive government, federal deficits and death taxes, federal judges who erroneously believe they have a right to rewrite the Constitution in their image.

Q WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?
A Buying an S-Class Mercedes.

Q WHAT TALENT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE?
A An even temperament.

Q WHAT DO YOU MOST VALUE IN YOUR FRIENDS?
A That despite my shortcomings they are my friends.

Q WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?
A Lech Walesa. Along with Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan, he is one of the three individuals most responsible for the freeing of Eastern Europe from the grip of the Soviet Union, thereby hastening its demise and changing the course of European history.

Q DO YOU HAVE A MOTTO?
A None.

Q WHAT IS YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS AND WHY DO YOU GUARD IT SO DILIGENTLY?
A What makes you think I have an e-mail address? And who needs another method of communication anyway?
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Well actually, it was only the worst of times, there was nothing best about it.

There I was, the very me who goes for the rough and tumble of the courtroom the way a bulldog goes for hamburger, the selfsame me who chose “eviscerate” as my private, personal mantra, there I was, facing one of the most important personal injury cases of my career, and I was helpless.

It wasn’t by choice, I assure you. Rather it was by force majeure, and I couldn’t do a thing about it. The case in question was a medical malpractice case, a big one, and the trial date had been specially set. Unfortunately it had been set for a time when I had not sufficiently recovered from surgery to feel strong enough to endure the rigors of litigation.

It had already been continued once on that account, and I just didn’t think I would be doing the client any service by continuing it again. So instead I had asked a long-time colleague and friend if he would try the case for me, and he agreed. I would take second chair and assist. Well, third chair really; my partner had prepared the case for trial and she knew it far better than I did.

For the first two days of trial or so, I did nothing. I just sat there. Oh, occasionally I would be consulted on a point or two, but basically I just sat. Fortunately there wasn’t much for me to do. The presentation of Plaintiff’s case went quite well. All the questions on direct examination were fair, appropriate and well reasoned, all objections were overruled, and Judge seemed to be smiling at us.

With little else to occupy my time, I devised an ingenious trial strategy. Every time opposing counsel stood up to object I whispered to him that he was a baboon and that he should shut up and sit down. Not very professional, yeah, I know, but he was getting irked and that’s all that mattered.

However when the defense started its case, the “troubles” started. Every question defense counsel asked I found objectionable, every piece of evidence irrelevant. I wanted to object, I really did, but I couldn’t, it wasn’t my place. Unable to respond, I soon began to shake, then sweat. Once or twice I actually started to rise to object, only to be yanked down by my partner. “You are not trying this case,” she said, “so just sit there and be quiet.”

continued on page 12
But you might as well try to restrain a thoroughbred stallion (oooh, I like this analogy) at the starting gate when the bell sounds, you might as well try to shoo off a buzzard from carrion, you might as well try to keep me from drooling for Gwyneth Paltrow than to keep me quiescent in a courtroom.

A moment later, counsel asked a question of the primary defense expert witness that was irrelevant and without foundation. More importantly it was unquestionably intended to elicit testimony harmful to my case. I could no longer contain myself.

“I object,” I said, rising to my feet. Those were the first words I had spoken out loud since the case began, and they were greeted with a stunned silence. For a moment no one said a word. Even Judge, usually the model of composure, was taken aback.

“I wanted to object, I really did, but I couldn’t, it wasn’t my place. Unable to respond, I soon began to shake, then sweat.”

“I do want me to rule on the objection,” asked Judge, more amused than anything else.

“Uh, no,” I said somewhat sheepishly, “I’ll withdraw it.”

“Then I’ll make it,” said opposing counsel. “It’s a really good objection.”

“Objection overruled,” Judge quickly decided.

“How about it?” opposing counsel whined petulantly.

“The lack of originality,” Judge replied, and the trial went on to its ultimate conclusion without further input from me.

I have promised my partner I would do better. I apologized to my co-counsel profusely. In all respects I have been the very essence of contriteness about the whole thing. But still at night, when I turn out the lights, my thoughts turn to trials yet to come. My heart starts to beat a bit faster, I hear far off in the distance the howling of wolves and I fall asleep to the dream of a feeding frenzy of sharks. When I awake in the morning, I am rested and refreshed, ready to start another day.

Of forty-six cases listed for the March/April 2005 Civil Jury Trial Term, thirteen settled, nineteen were continued, one was transferred to non-jury, summary judgment was granted in one, one was a summary jury trial, one was a non-jury verdict, one verdict was from last term, four verdicts were rendered this term and five were held to the next term. The jury trial verdicts are summarized below.

LAKE PROPERTIES, INC.,
A PENNSYLVANIA CORPORATION

v.

JAMES M. BRANT AND JOHN MACPHAIL

NO. 4914 OF 2002

Cause of Action: Breach of Contract

Plaintiff commenced this action as a result of Defendants’ alleged breach of an agreement of sale for the purchase of Indian Lake Lodge, which included the lodge, hotel, golf course and business assets, located in Somerset, Pa. The parties entered into the agreement on April 11, 2001, for sale of property in the amount of $2,750,000. Although the agreement provided for a closing date of May 15, 2001, Plaintiff alleged an oral contract for Defendants to take possession of the premises and operate the business prior to closing. In the event the transaction did not close, the property was to be returned to the Plaintiff free of debts and obligations. A closing never took place, Defendants operated the business for eight months, and, in January of 2002, Defendants notified Plaintiff that they did not intend to go through with the purchase. Due to Defendants’ breach of contract, Plaintiff sought to retain Defendants’ $50,000 deposit, fair rental value for use of the property, loss of business profits and income, and reimbursement for payment of bills left unpaid when the business was returned to Plaintiff. Plaintiff also sought reimbursement for additional costs incurred to correct unauthorized repairs and alterations made by Defendants to the property.

Defendants averred they attempted to secure financing for a number of months following the original closing date, and that they remained in possession of the property and operated the business with the consent of the Plaintiff. Defendants maintained that the contract was terminated by mutual consent of the parties. Defendants denied that Plaintiff was permitted to retain the deposit under the agreement and denied any amounts due for lost profits. In their counterclaim, Defendants sought reimbursement for unauthorized capital improvements made to the property in the amount of $194,000, which enhanced the value of the premises.

Plaintiffs’ Counsel: Christopher R. Opalinski, Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, Pgh; William C. Stillwagon, Gbg.

Defendants’ Counsel: Timothy J. McCormick, Gbg.

Trial Judge: The Hon. Daniel J. Ackerman, President Judge


continued on page 14
Plaintiff was involved in two separate and unrelated motor vehicle accidents within less than one month of each other. Plaintiff sued both Defendants separately, but during the course of the litigation, the cases were consolidated at this number and term. On April 3, 1998, at about 10:39 a.m., Plaintiff was operating her motor vehicle on Fifth Avenue in an easterly direction in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County. Plaintiff was stopped for a red light at the intersection between Fifth and Shady Avenues and was rear ended by Defendant Towe, who failed to stop at the red light. On April 27, 1998, at about 2:30 p.m., Plaintiff was operating her automobile in a southwesterly direction on the Branthoover Cutoff approaching Route 22 West in Murrysville. Plaintiff was stopped at the stop sign at the intersection of Branthoover Cutoff and Route 22 West when she was rear ended by Defendant Cloud who failed to stop at the stop sign. Plaintiff claimed injuries to the bones, muscles, tissues and ligaments of the head, neck, upper extremities, lower extremities, back and hips; internal injuries, shock and injury to the nerves and nervous system. Plaintiff selected the full tort option of automobile insurance coverage.

Both Defendants denied Plaintiff’s allegations of negligence and also contested causation at trial. Defendants argued that Plaintiff had numerous pre-existing conditions as well as a significant history of prior chiropractic treatment for injuries she claimed as a result of the accidents that were the subject matter of this lawsuit.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: Melissa B. Catello, Evans, Portnoy, Quinn & O’Connor, Pgh.

Defendant Towe’s Counsel: Gregg A. Guthrie, Summers, McDonnell, Hudock, Guthrie & Skeel, Pgh.

Defendant Cloud’s Counsel: Kenneth Ficerai, Mears, Smith, Houser & Boyle, P.C., Gbg.

Trial Judge: The Hon. Gary P. Caruso

Result: Molded verdict in favor of Defendants. Jury found Defendant Towe was not negligent and that Defendant Cloud was negligent, but that his negligence was not a factual cause of the injuries complained of by the Plaintiff.

ROGER DEAN CICHETTI
V.
CATHERINE B. KUHNS
NO. 6188 OF 2003

Cause of Action: Negligence—Motor Vehicle Accident—Arbitration Appeal

This motor vehicle accident occurred on May 10, 2002, at approximately 2:15 p.m., on State Route 66 in Washington Township, Westmoreland County. While traveling northbound on Route 66, Plaintiff was waiting for a vehicle in front of him to make a left turn across oncoming traffic. Defendant, who was operating her vehicle behind Plaintiff, failed to stop and collided with the rear of Plaintiff’s vehicle. Both vehicles were driveable after the accident, and Plaintiff drove his vehicle from the accident scene. Plaintiff alleged that the accident caused various injuries to his neck and upper back, which required medical and chiropractic care.

Defendant admitted liability and the parties litigated the issue of whether Plaintiff was entitled to recover damages. Defendant contended that the accident was not the factual cause of Plaintiff’s neck and back complaints. The defense also focused on the history and frequency of Plaintiff’s chiropractic care, and the minimal amount of damage to Plaintiff’s vehicle.


Defendant’s Counsel: Scott O. Mears, Jr., Mears, Smith, Houser & Boyle, Gbg.

Trial Judge: The Hon. William J. Ober

Result: Verdict in favor of Defendant. The jury found that Defendant’s negligence was not the factual cause of Plaintiff’s injuries.
Twelve members of the Westmoreland Bar Association travelled to Washington, D.C., on Monday, March 7, 2005, to be admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court.

In order to be admitted before the U.S. Supreme Court, the applicants must have been admitted to practice in Pennsylvania’s highest court for a period of at least three years immediately before the date of application, must not have been the subject of any adverse disciplinary action during that three-year period, must have appeared to the court to be of good moral and professional character, and must have submitted two written endorsements from attorneys or judges.

Former WBA member Robert P. Boyer, Jr., who now works for the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., moved for the group’s admission before the Court.

As Americans, we are free to speak, free to think, free to be ... free. That was the message delivered to students in Westmoreland County during the month of May by more than 30 Law Day volunteers: we are “Free to Make a Difference.”

Law Day is a month-long campaign sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association and county bar associations across the state that sends judges and lawyers back to school for classroom visits in an effort to teach students about the law. This year’s program focused on letting students know that by voting, going to school, volunteering and working, we all have the ability, opportunity and freedom to make a difference in this world.

Once again, the WBA’s Law Day activities were coordinated by Kate Wiatrowski, Paralegal for the Pro Bono Program. More than 2,100 students in 21 schools were reached by the judges, attorneys, district justices and paralegals who volunteered this year.


“Attorney [Mike] Stewart was absolutely fabulous with our students. He came down to their age level and used so many appropriate examples for them to understand. Everyone had a great time, we will definitely sign up for next year.”
— Mrs. McKenna, 2nd grade teacher, East Hempfield Elementary

The Hon. Rita D. Hathaway visited students at Harrold Middle School in the Hempfield Area School District.

Kenneth M. Baldonieri has been admitted as a participating member of the WBA. A graduate of Greater Latrobe, Seton Hill and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Ken is an associate with the Shire Law Firm in Monessen.

Sherry Magretti Hamilton was admitted to the WBA as a participating member. A graduate of Hempfield, the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Sherry works with with Harry F. Smail, Jr., in Greensburg.

Glenn E. Klepac has joined the WBA as a participating member. A native of Chicago, Ill., Glenn is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and earned his juris doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He maintains a solo practice in New Kensington.

Elizabeth J. McCall has been admitted as a participating member of the WBA. A graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan College and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Elizabeth is an associate with Bononi & Bononi in Greensburg.
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"I love visiting the classroom. The kids are great and the teachers are really appreciative of the visit. I have a great time every year."
— Alisha Chapman, Law Day volunteer for past three years

"The program was excellent ... [Alisha Chapman] discussed different ways to solve a problem. The children had a great time coming up with solutions and different ways to accomplish them."
— Christina Scifo, 5th grade teacher, Mamont Elementary School


ATTORNEY AVAILABLE for court appearances, per project, temporary or permanent. Will take work in any county. Résumé and references available upon request. Contact the Bar office at 724-834-6730 for additional information.

SOLE PRACTITIONER IN NEED OF A LEGAL SECRETARY for a position in the Westmoreland County area. Experience in Workers’ Compensation and Domestic Relations matters a plus. To apply, please forward your résumé to Debra L. Henry via fax 724-379-9168 or via e-mail debrahlenry@hotmail.com.


AVAILABLE SPACE in Suite 201 of National City Bank Building, 125 S. Main Street, Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Contact 724-837-0221.

FOR SALE Classic Victorian three-story office building three blocks from Courthouse. Why pay rent when you can own? 724-593-3570.

The Law Day program informs the students of the importance of the Constitution, the State Constitution, and everyday proceedings that will affect their lives on a practical daily basis.”
— Harry Smail, annual Law Day volunteer, at Wendover Junior High

Michele Bononi spoke to 5th graders at the James H. Metzgar Elementary School.

“What an honor it is to have someone like Judge Ober to come and visit our students. This just adds to the curriculum we encourage through our classroom. This kind of program makes the student think and possibly spark an interest (law-related or career-related) that they may not have had before.”
— Jeff Mansfield, Principal, Hutchinson Elementary

The Law Day program was excellent . . . [Alisha Chapman] discussed different ways to solve a problem. The children had a great time coming up with solutions and different ways to accomplish them.”
— Christina Scifo, 5th grade teacher, Mamont Elementary School
Actions of the Board

APRIL BOARD RETREAT

• Approved free CLE on the topic of Crisis Management/Practice Management for the July Quarterly Meeting.
• Agreed to have By-Laws Committee continue to work on by-laws changes, including executive committee and membership concerns.
• Agreed to have staff input on what should and should not be “members only” access on bar website.
• Agreed to assign Past Presidents' Senate with determining the role of past presidents in the WBA.
• Decided to charge Mr. Johnston and Mr. Geary with working on a plan to involve senior lawyers.
• Agreed to run lawyers’ admit dates in order of seniority in the next issue of the sidebar.
• Agreed to honor WBA’s WWII veterans at Holiday Dinner Dance and invite all veterans to attend.
• Decided that Executive Committee will meet once a month.
• Agreed that board should continue to work informally with Medical Society and that Mr. Antoniono and Mr. Johnston will be the designees from the WBA.
• Agreed to continue to provide community outreach programs—advanced directives, living trust, school violence, employment law—with focus on education.
• Agreed to charge committees with additional outreach programs.
• Decided to schedule a CLE media day as soon as possible.
• Discussed possible name change for Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee to reflect its role as a consumer-protection committee.
• Agreed to have Don Snyder, Jim Whelton, Aaron Kress serve on the UPL Committee and make recommendations for handling UPL in Westmoreland.
• Agreed to alert members that “Cease and Desist” letters will be generated by the UPL Committee.
• Agreed that Planning Committee agenda include topic about public image, consumer protection.
• Decided that Investment Advisory Committee should have more permanent makeup with three to five members and allow committee members to serve for longer terms.
• Accepted Investment Advisory Committee’s recommendation for changes in bar investments.
• Agreed to work closely with PBA to be in contact with local legislators.
• Agreed to try to get more schools (Norwin, Latrobe, Mt. Pleasant, Ligonier) involved in Mock Trial Program.
• Discussed recognizing attorney coaches for their community service with press releases.
• Learned Young Lawyers Committee chair assignments are:
  – Social Coordinator: Sherry Magretti Hamilton
  – Educational Program: Brian Bronson. Agreed to schedule six Lunch ‘n Learns for the year.
  – Bench/Bar: Matt Prather
  – Public Service: DeAnn McCoy
• Agreed that Board/YL liaison would be Bob Johnston.
• Decided to install panic bar on front door for easy exit for after-office-hour meetings.
• Agreed to refer building concerns to the Building Committee: carpet in upstairs room, creating an attorney lounge, completing the kitchen.
• Agreed to have LRS Advisory Committee meet to consider issues with new program, e.g., how to handle attorneys who do not return paperwork.
• Learned that First Commonwealth has agreed to refer all customers involved in closings without lawyer representation to Lawyers Abstract.
• Learned that conflicts occur during our Bench/Bar Conference that impact attendance (Lawyers Abstract, PBA board) and agreed to check with other organizations in the future for scheduling purposes.
• Learned that Milt Munk will be receiving the prestigious PBF Goffman Award at the PBA Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh on May 4, recognizing Mr. Munk for his outstanding pro bono service to Westmoreland County.
• Congratulated Mr. Munk for the Goffman Award and thanked him for his service to the WBF Pro Bono Committee.
Living Trust Seminar Held in New Kensington

The Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office and the Westmoreland Bar Association presented a seminar on “How to Avoid Living Trust Scams: The Truth About Living Trusts” on Tuesday, May 31, 2005, at the Clarion Hotel in New Kensington. Approximately 50 attendees heard how Pennsylvanians can protect themselves and their families through proper estate planning.

Topics of discussion included: “Avoiding Scams,” by Agent Darlene Westfall from the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s office; “A Banker’s Perspective on the Uses for Living Trusts” by Trust Officer Peter M. Saxman; and “Facts About Estate Planning” by WBA member James R. Antoniono. The Hon. Gilbert M. Mihalich, Senior Judge of the Westmoreland County Court of Common Pleas, provided opening comments, and attendees were able to speak individually to panelists at the conclusion of the program.

Copies of the WBA-developed brochure on “The Truth About Living Trusts” are available for your use. Call the WBA office at 724.834.6730 for details.

On The Move...

PATSY A. IEZZI, JR., has moved to 140 South Main Street, Suite 201, Greensburg, PA 15601. His phone and fax numbers remain the same.

GREGORY T. NICHOLS has a new mailing address per 911 emergency services changes. All correspondence should go to 215 McKeon Way, Greensburg, PA 15601. His phone and fax numbers remain the same.

LawSpeak

“I was married by a judge. I should have asked for a jury.”
— Groucho Marx

MAY 15, 2005

• Accepted Membership Committee recommendations as presented: Sean Griffith, participating; Richard Thiele, associate.
• Added Wayne Whitehead and Bob Lightcap to the Investment Advisory Committee.
• Agreed that Investment Advisory Committee should meet at least quarterly, should rotate one member off committee each year and that Jim Antoniono would be named Chair.
• Agreed to encourage Young Lawyers to hold a mini-retreat.
• Approved expenditure of up to $1,000 for a 2005 membership photo composite.
• Reviewed current structure of WBA website: local rules, back issues of the sidebar and all published jury verdicts are located on the public side of the website, and the bar membership listing is located behind the members-only page.
• Agreed to publish quarterly numbers for LRS and a mini-report on the operation of the new program in the sidebar.
• Heard YL report which included:
  – Will schedule June Lunch ‘n Learn.
  – Plan to participate in YMCA croquet match.
  – Decided not to have mini-retreat this year as sub-committee chairs were in place with assignments and plans underway.
• Decided to drop the road cleanup with the PA clean roadways.
• Planning CLE with Colburn sponsorship in July or August at local eatery.
• Learned that LCL Committee would like to rewrite LCL brochures to send to the homes of the bar members.
• Agreed to move LCL ad in the sidebar from page to page to draw attention and to solicit articles from committee members.
• Learned that a solicitation to non-members to attend the Bench/Bar Conference was underway with non-members charged $100 above member registration fee.
• Agreed to move the media CLE to September. Attorneys Nakles and Peck along with Journalist Matt Junker have already agreed to participate.
• Took action to move the summer quarterly meeting to June 15 in conjunction with Ellen Freedman’s CLE “Getting a Grip,” a law practice management seminar, and to offer free CLE credits to all attending WBA members.
• Agreed to work on a master calendar so that conflicts in scheduling can be avoided.

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Got News?

*Do you have news to share with the sidebar? Making Partner? Marriage? Birth? Anniversary? Accomplishments? Send us a fax (724.834.6855), an e-mail (westbar.org@verizon.net), a note by carrier pigeon or any other means and we’ll publish your news in the next available issue.*

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**LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS CORNER**

- The 12-step recovery meeting, exclusively for lawyers and judges, is in downtown Pittsburgh every Thursday at 5:15 p.m. For the exact location, call Pennsylvania Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers at 1-800-335-2572.
- LCL has a new website at [www.lclpa.org](http://www.lclpa.org). Attorneys and judges will find information on how LCL can help them, a member of their family or a colleague who may be in distress. It is confidential and easy to navigate. Visit it today.
- Lawyers Confidential Help Line: 1-888-999-1941. Operates 24 hours a day.