



NEWS Letter

Billsburg...VWAA Style: Conference Wrap-up

KingsMill Resort, Williamsburg: We started off, as we always do with a little pre-conference fun at Kathy Holmes' room. Kate Reese stopped at the Williamsburg Premium Outlets to pick up the coupon book vouchers for the conference bag, and had to wait about ten minutes, which was just enough time to go to Harry & David's for some treats for the evening. This coupled with the wine and assorted cheeses Kathy brought made for the perfect Bag Stuffing Party. Throughout the evening, sponsors and members stopped by to drop off materials and help stuff conference bags before the Vice Presidential Debate.

In the morning, we had a statewide board meeting, accompanied by a great buffet of luscious fresh fruit, granola, bagels, Danish, yogurt, juice and coffee. What a great way to start the day! After a very productive meeting addressing the needs of the chapters around the state, we opened the 2008 Conference. In the Exhibitors Hall, we had some excellent companies advising us on the products that are available to help us do our jobs well and advance our interests. We had a vast array of sandwiches, snacks and beverages for lunch before sitting down to a CLE on Professional

Responsibility presented by **Kathryn Montgomery** of the Virginia State Bar. An afternoon snack of chocolate desserts including chocolate covered strawberries preceded more CLEs: T-Minus 90: Trial Preparation presented by **Jonnie Speight**, Understanding the Law of Damages with guest speaker **Emily Hargrove**, and Collateral Consequences of Juvenile Adjudications presented by **Margaret Nelson**. Everyone left the main building to freshen up for our traditional cocktail party, which started at 6:00 p.m.

For the evening, we were in the same area of the resort, but moved outside to enjoy a glorious sunset evening over the James River (see group photo), with the wall of glass doors undraped and open for us. The bar was open, of course. Joining us were members of the local judiciary, include Judge Fenton of the Court of Appeals and Judge Barry Logsdon from the Juvenile & Domestic Relations court in Williamsburg. The cheese, crackers, eggrolls, "shots" of bisque, and phenomenal turkey (infused with beer: KingsMill is a

Anheuser-Busch company) were sharing the tables with a cantaloupe shaped like a pig. Yes, there was lipstick on that pig! (picture).

AWARD/PRESENTATION – The VWAA inaugurated a new award at the conference – the "VWAA Citizen Lawyer Award." **Kai Memmer**, past president of the VWAA, introduced the Honorable **Diane M. Strickland**, retired jurist from the 23rd Judicial Circuit Court, Roanoke County and the cities of Roanoke and Salem. Kai's remarks came in part from Judge Strickland's daughter, who is presently working in Central American with a nonprofit. Judge Strickland presented the VWAA Citizen Lawyer Award to **Renaë Patrick**. Renaë, in addition to being a former VWAA president and major domo of organizing the VWAA conference CLEs, has dedicated her career to the service of disadvantaged Virginians. She has worked at Legal Aid offices throughout the Shenandoah region (cont. page 2)

Tech Tips for Ladies of the Law: GPS Systems

by Sharon D. Nelson, President, Sensei Enterprises, Inc.

I hate maps. With a passion. I've been known to turn them around patiently, 90 degrees at a time, to see if they will then make more sense. They never do. I was perpetually lost . . . until GPS. Surely the greatest invention of our time, I now listen to a nice lady with the British accent that I selected, and she gets me to my destination. I can remain happily clueless and navigationally-challenged – I just need to obey her precisely spoken commands.

With the holidays coming, you may be looking for a GPS as a gift or for yourself. There are two models I'd recommend.

The top rated basic system by Consumer Reports is the Garmin nuvi 260w. It has a street price of around \$240. It has text to speech so that it announces

road names and exits. It is a wide screen format and has a hefty number of POIs (Points of Interest) installed as well as the ability to add custom POIs. This is my #1 choice for a gift – several of my adult children have been given this model and they love it.

If you want a really high end unit (and who should we spoil if not ourselves?), then I would go with the Garmin nuvi 880. It's also a wide screen format and has a street price around \$700. Consumer Reports rates it number one of the Traffic Ready models. . It speaks the street names and exits like the 260w and also has speech recognition, which means you can "talk" to the device. You can keep

your hands on the wheel while you speak commands to the unit. "Scotty, beam me up" is finally here. It supports MSN Direct (subscription) so you can get weather, traffic delays, local gas prices, etc. There are millions of POIs and the ability to define custom POIs too. It has Bluetooth support so you can make hands free calls with a Bluetooth compatible phone. If you're not using a hands free cell phone in your car, shame on you! It plays MP3s too and has a picture viewer. You can subscribe to Audible.com and "read" audio books. . It has an FM transmitter so that the audio can be played through the car radio system. In short, this is a gem of a device. (cont.)

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If I Knew Then What I Know Now...

I would not just have concentrated on acquiring technical skills, but would have learned to read body language and nonverbal communication. Developing empathy and good interpersonal skills builds confidence and is useful in both business and personal relationships.

I would have memorized the Rules of Evidence before ever going to court. Having command of these Rules and being able to follow an objection with a specific citation gives the judge confidence in your position and should result in favorable rulings more often.

I would have learned to say "no" more often so that when I said "yes" I could be more enthusiastic about whatever I was agreeing to do.

I would have invested in a great looking wig and avoided all those "bad hair" days.

I would have heeded the advice to go ahead and dance as if no one was watching.

...Darrel Tillar Mason Esq.

Whoever learned in law school that the practice of law would provide a myriad of personal and professional choices and limitless opportunities for personal and professional growth? Eight years ago, I exited law school with the perception that I was ready to take on the practice of law. Soon, I found that my three years enduring the Socratic Method, hours of cramming for exams and then studying for the bar were scant preparation for the trials and tribulations of everyday practice. I don't recall taking courses about how to handle an irrational client bent on making poor choices; the nuances of navigating a jail; or how to effectively help individuals make life shaping decisions in the most difficult circumstances.

As a brand new attorney, I found that I constantly longed for the day when I would know -all the answers: what question to ask, what law to apply, when to act and/or when to wait patiently. With the modicum of experience I have gained to date, I now realize and, more importantly, have come to take comfort in the fact that I will never know all the answers. Instead, I have learned where and how I can look to find the answers to even the most vexing problems. I have come to learn that those who practice law truly wear many hats: counselor, advisor, consultant, and advocate. Each of those roles permeates their relationships not only with clients, but with colleagues, family and friends as well.

Most importantly, I have learned through my own experience that the practice of law extends well beyond simply representing a client capably and competently and finding the answers to the most challenging legal questions. The practice of law includes forging relationships with peers, reaching out to help members of the community and positively affecting the lives of individuals who seek the guidance and assistance of a competent practitioner. Upon graduating from law school and passing the bar, I would have never thought that I had unlocked such a kaleidoscope of choices and opportunities. Now, eight years later, I marvel at the paths which lie before me. As a young attorney, I have learned that my professional development will emerge from consistently seek new opportunities for professional growth and diligently working toward striking the ever-important work-life balance. I look forward to the knowledge; adventure and development which only experience will bring and wonder what I will say in another eight years.

...Christie A. Leary, Esq.



Our keynote speaker at Kingsmill.

Sharon Chickering, Renae Patrick and Sandra Wells-Brown pose for a keepsake photo.



Billsburg cont. in addition to her work with the Black Lung project and her volunteer work for the state bar.

The next day, Saturday, we start with a huge hot breakfast of eggs, meats, danishes, bagels, and a number of CLE's to start the day: Representing Non-Profits and Educational Institutions presented by **Patricia Gurne**, Gurne Porter, PLLC, Washington D.C., **Mary Kennard**, Vice President and General Counsel, American University, Washington D.C. and **Kay Heidebreder**, General Counsel, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. This was followed by our judges' panel: Service as Officers of the Court. "Presiding" panelists were The Honorable **Lydia Taylor**, The Honorable **Margaret Spencer** and The Honorable **Jacqueline Talevi**. We finished off the morning with a sumptuous break hosted by the Richmond Chapter.

The Exhibitors Hall was open, and photo ops with cardboard cutouts of you and one or both of the presidential nominees were available from one of our Exhibitors. The KingsMill sports complex offered some great classes, including Pilates. There were running and walking trails all around us, bikes were available for a ride.

Before lunch, we had a choice of CLEs: Using Vocational Experts in Spousal Support Cases, presented by **Sharon Chickering** and A Primer for Lawyers asked to serve as a director of a non-profit board, presented by **Gerry Stegmeier**. This was followed by lunch which was a flurry of flavors: an Asian steak stir fry, salmon, salad, fabulous sides, and of course a substantial dessert table. The Apple Crisp Bread Pudding was awesome if you'd had enough chocolate for the day. Our lunch presenter was: ReDecorate Today.

After lunch, players gathered for the Susan G. Koman for the Cure Golf Tournament. The winning team was Jim Baker, Randy Hite and Lauren Hutcheson. The Golf Tournament, in conjunction with an auction held during the banquet, raised almost \$5,000 for the fight against breast cancer. Congratulations to all who contributed and to the organizers, **Marni Byrum** and **Kai Memmer**. Others went to the gym, went for walks, enjoyed the Spa, found a sunny spot to read or went over to the Outlets to shop. With the coupon books from the Conference Bags and the sales going on, there were some definite savings to be had at Ann Taylor and Brooks Brothers, just to name a few.

At 7:00 p.m. we started our gala with another pleasant early fall evening of cocktails, including a martini specialty bar: lemon, chocolate, dirty, traditional and cosmo and an assortment of cheeses and crackers. The Bleu was wonderful and the Brie better! We sat down to salad, and either a luscious steak, ravioli or Chilean Sea Bass with capers before the winners of the Susan G. Koman Benefit Silent Auction were announced and each table played a game to win a bottle of Cirrius Vodka, complements of Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen.

After hearing from **Manny Capsalis**, President of the Virginia State Bar, **Marie Wilson** took the podium by storm. Marie is the President of The White House Project (a group dedicated to increasing the number of women in elective office) and co-founder of Take Your Daughters to Work Day. Her stories were engaging and meaningful and really put a spotlight on how women, working together and supporting one another – even if they have disagreements on worldviews, politics, or skirt lengths – really do bring positive change to the process. Ms. Wilson took the liberty of bestowing the title of "honorary woman" on VSB President Capsalis, an honor he still was speaking about two weeks later at the VSB Council!

President's Message ••• Kathleen Holmes

The first quarter of the 2008-09 VWAA year sped by as we prepared for the VWAA biennial conference – “A Lifetime of Service.” The conference took place October 3-4, 2008 in Williamsburg at the Kingsmill Resort.

The conference location was beautiful, the weather delightful, and the presentations top-rate. Those 8 hours of CLE slid down nice and easy! A few choice photos have been posted on www.vwaa.org.

The website, for those of you who have not visited recently, is “new and improved.” We have contracted with an association management software company to run our database over the web. This means that members can keep contact information up to date over the web. As we get additional training on the system and more savvy with its capabilities, you should see additional improvements, including the ability to pay dues online, register for events, download materials, and a searchable (members only) directory. If you have ideas for the website, please let me hear from you.

Multiple judicial vacancies kept the Judiciary Committee busy. The VWAA and its Chapters conducted

screenings and provided recommendations for multiple openings since last April, including recommendations on interim appointments. The Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area was particularly busy. Keep an eye on the Assembly to watch the final outcome on pro tempore appointments to the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals made by the Governor this Fall.

The Virginia State Bar is focusing its attention this year on the issue of diversity. I met with VSB President Manny Capsalis in September to discuss how best to open up leadership positions in the Bar to women and minorities. While it is important to get women in the “pipeline,” it is equally important to make sure that there are seats for those women to fill. I encourage you to read the October issue of the Virginia Lawyer, which is dedicated to diversity issues. I also ask you to keep an eye out for announcements of committee openings within the Bar when they occur. Members of the VWAA have agreed to make themselves available if you have any questions about committee and Bar service. So, if you are interested in a position, let me know. I will do what I can to connect you with the right folks.

Looking forward, there is a strategic planning committee forming to look at “next steps” for the VWAA. This effort is being coordinated by VWAA President-elect Chandra

Lantz. If you have input for the committee, or would like to serve on it, please contact Chandra.

Now that I have caught you up to date on what has been happening, I have a request to ask of each one of you to help to improve the VWAA. Between now and January 1, I ask that each of you contact your Chapter or a Board member and join a committee that interests you or sign up to attend an event. The way to improve the VWAA is to become more involved with the VWAA.

Kathleen J.L. Holmes

kholmes@williamsmullen.com

GPS Systems cont.

Your GPS can go with you on the road in rental cars. Since I have a built in GPS, this is what the Garmin is chiefly used for. Whatever you do, never get a rental car with “Neverlost.” John and I aptly refer to these devices as “Everlost.”

And . . . for a long road trip, take the portable Garmin. You'd be shocked how often it has more current data than your car's built-in GPS.

Safe travels and happy trails.

Preview of Legislation of Interest to VWAA in the 2009 General Assembly

Although the 2009 legislative session has not yet begun as this issue goes to press, some information is available about prospective legislation that falls within the VWAA's legislative agenda.

Reproductive Rights.

For the 2009 legislative session, Virginia's Pro-Choice Coalition has decided to move forward on two bills that are supported by a broad consensus of its constituent members. The first is the Birth Control Protection Act (“BCPA”), defining birth control as FDA-approved methods of contraception. The bill would protect birth control measures from the scope of Virginia Code §18.2-76, which requires state-scripted counseling for women seeking abortions and a mandatory 24-hour waiting period before an abortion can be performed after a woman receives written information about the procedure.

The BCPA has been introduced in several recent legislative sessions by Delegate Kristin Amundson (D-Mount Vernon) but has usually been tabled in House committees. In 2005,

Senator Mary Margaret Whipple (D-Arlington) introduced this bill in the Senate, it was reported out of its committee that year, only to be eviscerated by an amendment made on the Senate floor, leading Senator Whipple to withdraw it by asking that it be stricken from the calendar.

The Coalition also expects to see a Parents' Right to Know Act introduced—legislation that would require school districts to notify parents and distribute a summary of Family Life Education program before instruction begins. If curriculum is abstinence-only, the notice must indicate that the Board of Education's Family Life Education Guidelines will not be met.

Delegate Bob Marshall (R-Manassas) has again filed a bill, HB 1639, stating that life begins at the moment of fertilization and guaranteeing the right to enjoyment of life for all “preborn” human beings from the moment of fertilization. This bill is a repeat and is unlikely to make it out of committee.

Domestic violence.

Delegate Jim Scott (D Fairfax) has introduced a bill requiring that notice be given to the person on

whose behalf a protective order has been entered when there is service by law enforcement authorities upon the person who is subject to the protective order. The Victim Information and Notification Everyday (“VINE”) would be used to provide the notice. This legislation addresses problems with the current system, where the victims of family abuse may not even know whether the other party is aware that the protective order was entered.

There will undoubtedly be more legislation of interest to VWAA as the 2009 session gets underway. Members who are interested in the work of the Legislative Committee should contact me at laurie.forbes@verizon.net to find out how to get involved.

Laurie Forbes

Legislative Chair – VWAA

- SAVE THE DATE -

Our 2009
VWAA Webweavers
Conference is
scheduled for
September 25th – 26th
at Lansdowne Resort
in Leesburg

See you there!

**We're on the web at
www.vwaa.org**

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Virginia Women Attorneys Association

The mission of the VWAA is to assist women attorneys in developing their professional practice and in achieving their potential, to bring about changes in the law and to affect public policy for the benefit of the women of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

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The VWAA was formed in 1981 to advance the interests of women attorneys in Virginia, to encourage their mutual improvement and social interaction, and to promote the interests of women under law.

The VWAA remains the only statewide bar association dedicated to the needs of women attorneys in Virginia as professionals and as women.



Group shot at Kingsmill...

Judge Strickland and Recipient of the VWAA Citizen Lawyer Award, Renaee Patrick.

