



ILLINOIS STATE  
BAR ASSOCIATION

# THE CATALYST

The newsletter of the ISBA's Standing Committee on Women and the Law

## Co-Editor's notes

By Sandra Crawford\*

One of the goals of the Women and the Law Committee is to promote women in all aspects of the profession. One of the tangible ways we have done this is by nominating and supporting eligible and qualified women for the many professional awards given annually by this bar and other organizations which recognize excellence in the legal profession.

Recently this committee joined in supporting the nomination of our current chair, Claire Manning, for the prestigious Laureate Award. Claire's nomination was successful and she received her award, together with five other attorneys, in a ceremony held on March 23, 2007.

Claire is pictured above with: Jewel Klein, this year's other female recipient of the award; committee member and 2004 recipient of the award, Sharon Eiseman; and Irene Bahr, ISBA President and the founding member of this committee.



The Laureate Award has been given annually since 2000 by the Academy of Illinois Lawyers, founded in 1999. Its purpose is to enhance the dignity of the bar in Illinois. The Award is the supreme honor bestowed by the Academy. Of the 73 awards given since 2000 only 13 have gone to women, including this year's recipients Jewel and Claire. We congratulate Jewel and Claire and acknowledge the previous female recipients, namely:

- Marta A. Mills (2000)
- Esther Rothsten (2000)
- Mary Lee Leahy (2001)
- Esther O. Kegan (2002)
- Theordora Gordon (2003)
- Dolores Hanna (2003)
- Madalyn Maxwell (2003)
- Sharon Eiseman (2004)
- Diane C. Gerahty (2005)
- Carol Hans Posegate (2005)
- Lois J. Woods (2006)

This Committee looks forward to hearing about and having more oppor-

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See page 8 for details

tunities to support the nominations of other women for prestigious awards and career acknowledgments. Through these opportunities we will further the goal of promoting women in the law.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandra Crawford \*



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# The “Women of the West” Outreach Reception

On March 30, 2007, the Marshall Gallery of the Northern Illinois University College of Law in De Kalb, Illinois, played host to over 100 women judges, attorneys, law students and guests. For several years now, each spring the Standing Committee on Women and the Law has hosted an outreach reception in various locals around the state. This social event provides women in the legal profession opportunities to meet and network with each other. This year's event was co-hosted with the ISBA's Women and Minority Participation Committee.

The reception was affectionately referred to as the “Women of the West” event and attempted to honor female legal practitioners who live and practice in the western counties of: De Kalb, Kane, Kendall, McHenry, Boone, Winnebago, Will, Lee, Ogle and LaSalle. In attendance were many female NIU law students. The Committee is confident that the evening will lead to mentoring relationships between those young women law students and the local attorneys in attendance.

ISBA President Irene Bahr briefly addressed the gathering, stressing the importance of involvement, not only in the Illinois State Bar Association, but also in one's local bar group. David Sosin, President of the Illinois Bar Foundation, also addressed the gathering on the issues of bar service and giving back to the profession. Among the many guests gathered were: Kane County Judge Patricia Piper Golden and her husband, former ISBA President Loren Golden; ISBA Board of Governors Secretary Michele Jochner; James Davidson and Richard Schmack, President and Vice President of the De Kalb County Bar Association; Victoria Chuffo, the recently appointed first female Public Defender for Kendall County; and, representatives from the Kane and Will Country Bar Associations.

ISBA members: Howard Feldman, Mark Hassakis, John Locallo, and J. Brick Van der Snick co-sponsored the event with monetary contributions. Katie Johnson, attorney with the National Bank and Trust of Sycamore, raffled ten boxes of locally handcrafted chocolates donated by the Bank. Red, the color of power, was prevalent. Red votive candles flickered on the tables.

Women and the Law Committee's Annual Networking and Outreach Event 2007: Another of the goals of the Women and the Law Committee is to build a strong network of women judges, women lawyers, and women law students around Illinois. We furthered this goal annually by hosting social events in connection with our Spring business meeting. Over the years we have taken this event to places like Waukegan, Bloomington/Normal, Springfield. Below are photos of many of the attendees at the 2007 Networking Event, held in March at Northern Illinois University, School of Law, in DeKalb, Illinois.



Claire Manning, the Women and the Law Committee Chair, was presented with a red crystal cowgirl hat, representing the “women of the west” as a keepsake of the event.

All the members of the Committee join in gratefully acknowledging the

hard work and contribution of Greg Anderson and Melody Mitchell of the NIU College of Law, who coordinated this event. Next year the Women and the Law Committee hopes to continue its outreach to other women in the law in other parts of the state.

# Surviving (and thriving) as a young attorney

By Amanda C. Jones

According to the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, in 2006, women comprised approximately 30 percent of the profession.<sup>1</sup> In private practice, women accounted for approximately 47 percent of summer associates, 44 percent of associates, and only 17 percent of partners. Numbers in the corporate and business world are similar to that for female partners, and are only slightly less abysmal among academic professionals and the judiciary. While we must be encouraged by the near-equalization in recent years of men and women in law school, maintaining successful and rewarding legal careers appears to be the most significant challenge currently facing women attorneys.

Firms are starting to recognize the special challenges of improving retention of women associates and partners, and are beginning to provide support for the development of all of the skills necessary to be successful. Most significantly, firms recognize that flexibility is key. "The successful firm will work with women to provide opportunities to remain connected with the firm, stay engaged in the law and manage other demands on their lives," according to Theresa Cropper, National Director of Diversity for DLA Piper US LLP. "If the firm can be flexible with the ebbs and flows of work-life balance, the net yield should be the successful retention of women who can stay connected and/or reconnect and transition back into a successful career track at the law firm."

In addition to developing an arsenal of legal skills and abilities, establishing and protecting a good reputation, and being "good at what you do," there are other skills important for a young attorney to cultivate, and there are steps that we can each take individually that can help our own careers to thrive and can also encourage the continued success of other women attorneys.

## 1. Networking

Many law schools are beginning

to recognize the advantages of teaching students not only the basic legal skills necessary to become practicing attorneys, but also the intangible skills necessary to become successful attorneys. Networking skills must be practiced, which make relationships between law schools and legal associations an important resource for both students and practicing attorneys. Law firms and the corporate world are also beginning to recognize that women may utilize and practice these networking skills differently from men, and are beginning to tailor networking events towards women, focusing on bonding over events other than golf or other sports.

Practical Tips: Networking successfully, particularly for those of us who are not naturally gifted in that arena, requires careful thought and planning. If possible, try to understand as much as you can about the people you will be talking with in advance. If you have something in common, find a way to bring that up. Be an active listener, maintain good eye contact, and pay attention to the person with whom you are talking at any given time. If you are particularly shy or nervous in networking settings, develop a few topics of discussion that can be used to break the ice or fill awkward silences. Stay knowledgeable regarding current events and noteworthy news items.

## 2. Mentoring

We have all heard about the importance of mentoring, which has significant benefits for both mentors and those who learn from them. Mentoring is particularly important for women attorneys, who often are not automatically welcomed into the informal "system" along with their male counterparts. As one young female associate I spoke with noted, "At first, I was frustrated because what is just handed to or assumed for a male associate—credibility, intelligence, talent, trustworthiness, work ethic—I had to work for every step of the way. In the end, I

## The Catalyst

Published at least four times per year.

Annual subscription rate for ISBA members: \$20.

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will be a better attorney and a better person, because I earned everything I have." Establishing mentoring relationships can be a valuable resource to help you in that process.

Practical tips: Seek out mentors, both male and female, at different stages of their careers and who can contribute varying perspectives on the challenges that you will face. Take the first step and recognize that mentors are (most likely) busy people with busy lives of their own. Respect their time, and make sure you express your appreciation. It is important to understand each other's expectations. Communication is key.

### 3. Group Associations

Involvement in a national, state or local bar association can provide significant benefits, not only related to your particular area of practice, but also related to (surprise!) networking and mentoring opportunities. The ISBA offers a vast array of opportunities to get involved, depending on your interest and time commitment. Join an ISBA Committee or Section, run for an elected leadership position or just attend sponsored events. The ISBA MentorCenter is a great way to get involved in a mentoring relationship, and also has additional information on how to build a successful relationship

with a mentor. Information on all of these opportunities can be found on the ISBA Web site, <[www.isba.org](http://www.isba.org)>.

Defining and finding success is a challenge each of us must face individually, but learning from others can help make that task less daunting—whether that is learning which strategies will work for you, or recognizing which strategies will not. We must each take ownership for our careers, and learn to build a successful practice in a way that is rewarding, in our own way.

1. A Current Glance at Women in the Law 2006, available at <http://www.abanet.org/women/womenstatistics.html> (last visited April 8, 2007).

## Committee member spotlight: Patrice Ball-Reed, former committee member

Patrice Ball-Reed, former long-time member of the Women and the Law Committee, was recently honored by the Chicago Defender as a member of the newspaper's inaugural Class of Women of Excellence. Established in 1905, this highly respected publication has served as a voice of the African-American community, taking stands against racism and segregation and courageously raising political and social issues of importance to its constituency, to Chicago, and to the nation. In honoring the 2007 class of fifty Women of Excellence, the Chicago Defender has drawn attention to an impressive group of African-American women from every segment of the business, entrepreneurial, medical, non-profit, and arts communities, and from government, the media, the entertainment field, industry, and the financial sector, among other professions.

As a member of this inaugural class, Patrice is in good company, but so are all of the other 49 women selected with her—because she is their partner. Patrice currently serves as a Deputy Attorney General of Child Support Enforcement for the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. During her long

career, she has held numerous positions of importance in governmental agencies, including the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, and has been the founder and/or president of an impressive list of bar group and committees. Peers at John Marshall Law School demonstrated their respect for Patrice by electing her as the President of the John Marshall Law School Board of Trustees. In June, she will be sworn in as the Second Vice President of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois which puts her in line for the presidency, and she is a past president of the Black Women Lawyers Association. While devoting time and energy to her profession and to her volunteer activities, Patrice also contributes her insights and guidance to a variety of ISBA committees and projects.

Patrice has been a role model and mentor to scores of young women lawyers, particularly women of color, who have learned about taking charge and taking the lead from her example and from her supportive and encouraging personality. We are proud of Patrice for earning this recent recognition from the Chicago Defender, and we applaud and thank this grand publication for choosing to shine the light on

her and her colleagues in excellence. Their individual awards and the communal acknowledgment makes us more conscious of the wealth of talent in the women of color among us and the value of diversity in our communities.

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# Mastectomy Hospital Bill in Congress

A mastectomy is when a woman's breast is removed in order to remove cancerous breast cells/tissue. If you know anyone who has had a mastectomy, you may know that there is a lot of discomfort and pain afterwards. Insurance companies are trying to make mastectomies an outpatient procedure. Let's give women the chance to recover properly in the hospital for two days after surgery.

There's a bill called the Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act, which

will require insurance companies to cover a minimum 48-hour hospital stay for patients undergoing a mastectomy. Its about eliminating the "drive-through" mastectomy where women are forced to go home just a few hours after surgery, against the wishes of their doctor, still groggy from anesthesia and sometimes with drainage tubes still attached. Lifetime Television has put this bill on their web page with a petition drive to show your support. Last year over half the House signed on. You can partici-

pate by writing your Congressperson or by signing the Petition on line at <[www.lifetime.com/breastcancer/petition/signpetition.php](http://www.lifetime.com/breastcancer/petition/signpetition.php)>.

Like with all legislation there may be reasons which are not readily apparent for not supporting any particular pending Bill. If any of our readers know of such reason not to support the Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act, please feel free to contact the editor, at [lawcawford@comcast.net](mailto:lawcawford@comcast.net) and your input will be reported.

## Ground yourself

By Heather M. Fritsch, The Law Office of Heather M. Fritsch, Sycamore, Illinois

ground:

1. the solid surface of the earth; firm or dry land
2. often, grounds, the foundation or basis upon which a belief or action rests
3. rational or factual support for one's position or attitude
4. to place on foundation; fix firmly; settle or establish; found
5. to instruct in elements or first principles
6. something that serves as a foundation or means of attachment

- definitions from Dictionary.com

As some of you may know, my dad is a farmer. I grew up on a farm just south of the very small town of Shabbona, Illinois. Shabbona?! Where the heck is Shabbona? It is located about 20 minutes south of DeKalb, Illinois, the home of Northern Illinois University. (Now...some of you are probably still thinking: DeKalb?! Where the heck is DeKalb? Well...it's about 1½ hours west of Chicago and about 45 minutes southeast of Rockford.) Now you're probably thinking: "So what, Heather? What do I care?" Well, I'll get there. Just stay with me.

Anyway...I've now been in private practice as a general practitioner for six years. My first position out of law school was at an excellent general practice firm in Aurora, Illinois. After about

two and one-half years at this firm, I returned home, so to speak, and began working in a general practice firm in DeKalb, Illinois. At both firms, I gained a great deal of experience—with regard to many specific areas of law, the practice of law in general, and, perhaps most importantly, the kind of lawyer that I am and the kind of lawyer and person that I want to be.

In 2005, the stress and long hours that are necessarily a part of being an attorney began to get to me. The financial strain from the outrageous amount of law school debt also continuously weighed me down. I became very unhappy in my practice and even considered leaving the profession. I met with the Director of the English Graduate Program at Northern Illinois University and considered going back to school to get a Ph.D. in English. But it just didn't feel quite right to leave the profession, at least not yet. It had been too long of an educational road to just dump it so quickly and I had wanted to be a lawyer for as long as I can remember. Further, I just didn't want to waste all of the time, money and energy that it took to get through law school and the bar exam without putting up a fight.

So I did a lot of soul searching and what I finally realized was that I actually really enjoy being a lawyer. I enjoy

the higher-level of thinking and the analysis that must be done on a daily basis. I love taking on a big case that has spun out of control and working through the issues to reach a positive result for my clients. I love having a pile of work on my desk and checking things off my to do list as they are accomplished. I love the competition and the challenge of it. And, although this might sound corny, I really enjoy helping people on a daily basis. We, as attorneys, are in an excellent position to be able to help the less-fortunate in a variety of very important ways and I think we have an obligation to do so.

So why was I so unhappy with my chosen career? During this soul searching, I realized that the answer to this question actually came in two parts. First, it was clear that, although I loved being an attorney (at least on most days), I really disliked the attorney that I was at that time. I was practicing as an Associate in a firm and forced to practice in a way that wasn't right for me. I was unable to spend the time that I believe necessary on volunteer activities, pro bono work and other things, such as active participation in the ISBA. It just wasn't a good fit for me.

Second, I had allowed myself to get to a point where I had lost myself into the profession which, added to the long

hours and stress of being a lawyer, was the perfect recipe for burn-out. I was completely burnt-out to the point that I was ready to give it all up. I kept thinking—there has to be more to life than this daily grind. Do I really want to live the rest of my life like this? Absolutely not.

Right around the same time that I was going through this identity crisis, the Fates intervened to give me the answer to this second problem. It was harvest time in 2005 (i.e. roughly around late September through November, depending on the weather) and circumstances arose that made it necessary for me to lend a hand to my dad in harvesting his crops. (See...I told you I'd get back around to why I mentioned growing up on a farm.) Although I couldn't take off work at the firm to help, I spent my weekends helping my dad harvest his crops. (Yes...I did drive the big ol' combines all by myself.)

Now, I had grown up on the farm and, like a typical self-involved youth, had never taken much interest in what my dad did as a farmer. I would drive the tractors on occasion and bailed hay every summer and helped with the piglets and bottle-fed calves and had a horse named Apples, but I really never paid much attention to the actual crops that my dad farmed. After all, I was going to be a lawyer, not a farmer. But, when I was sitting up in that huge combine during harvest of 2005, watching it pull in the corn stalks and learning how it all worked, it hit me. This is exactly what I needed. I was outside, away from a desk, away from the phones. I was getting back to my roots. It was liberating. It was, quite simply, an escape from the day-to-day grind.

When the spring of 2006 came around, my dad had just had rotator cuff surgery and he could not plant his crops. I took my two week vacation from the firm and planted my dad's corn (with his constant and direct supervision, of course). Once again, I felt the same peaceful feeling that I had felt during harvest the year before. (Don't get me wrong, farming is back-breaking physical work, especially when your muscles are used to sitting at a desk all day long. It's also quite stressful and the hours are long because you're always rushing to beat the weather. Think of it as a jury trial that lasts two weeks in the Spring and then is continued for two weeks in the Fall. This one case is your only income for the year and you don't get paid until it's all done.) It was very hard

work, but it was almost like meditation for me, probably because it is so different from what we do as lawyers on a daily basis. I realized then and there, while sitting in the tractor and concentrating on making sure that the rows I was planting were as straight as could be (that's very important, by the way), that I needed to make some major changes if I was going to be happy in this profession that I had chosen for myself.

First, I decided that I needed to find a way to open my own firm so I could practice law in my way - in a way that makes me happy and in a way that I feel is right. I opened my own firm in August of 2006. I am crazy busy all of the time and there is still quite a bit of pressure and stress, but it's a different type of stress. Now I'm doing it on my terms and my time is my own. I have never minded high-pressure and hard work; in fact, I actually thrive on them. But I needed to be able to practice law in the way that fits me and works for me. Now I take the cases that I want to take and handle them in the way that I think is best. I am able to become more involved in the ISBA through the Young Lawyers Division and the Committee on Women and the Law. Being active in the ISBA is very important to me and to my practice and now I am allowed to put the time into it that is needed. I am a Board Member for the Kishwaukee United Way and for Opportunity House. I have started to take pro bono cases and I still have a thriving practice. I have never looked back or regretted my decision to open The Law Office of Heather M. Fritsch. In fact, I have never been happier.

Second, I decided that I am going to begin farming with my dad on a regular basis, and perhaps take over the farm when he retires. When I was sitting in that tractor that day last Spring, it just hit me that this is what I needed to do for me. And then I was immediately horrified when I realized that I had been thinking my whole life: "Poor Dad. He has no sons to take over the farm." Well...so what? Why can't I do it? So I decided I would. At first my dad laughed at me when I told him this and thought I was crazy. In his mind, he was thinking: "Why would she want to do this when she's a lawyer?" But I think he realizes now that I am serious and that this something that I really want to do. He has started to teach me more about the process of farming and the machinery. I'm learning more than just the "how" of things—I'm starting to learn the "why" of things. It is extremely fulfilling.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not going to give up my practice. I'm simply going to do both. This may sound strange to some people, but I really truly think that farming with my dad helps me be a better lawyer. It allows me to get back to the basics and unwind my mind from constant analysis and critical thinking. It gives me a fresh outlook and renewed energy. Basically, farming grounds me.

In a profession in which so many lawyers suffer constant burn-out, I think it is important to remember to ground yourself. Think of yourself as if you are a house (no...I'm not saying you're fat...just listen...). When a house is built, a considerable amount of time is spent on the foundation. Without a strong foundation, very few buildings can withstand the elements. Similarly, if we as individuals forget to nurture ourselves and ground ourselves (i.e. build a strong foundation or base), we may not be able to withstand the stresses and pressures of being a lawyer. I made this mistake. I lost myself in the process of becoming a lawyer and this led to physical and mental/emotional burn-out. I was one step away from leaving a profession that I had wanted to be in since I was in third grade.

Although my personal experience contains great literary symbolism—i.e. finding a way to ground myself by working the ground—I am not suggesting that you need to go buy a farm to ground yourself and find balance. But if you are feeling disconnected or uprooted, you do need to find a way to ground yourself. I think how you ground yourself is something that is unique to each individual. Just find what makes you happy, what gives you inner peace, and then give yourself the permission to do it on a regular basis. Actually, go beyond that—schedule yourself to do it on a regular basis. If you have been doing a lot of mental work, which we do for many hours at a time as lawyers, and you feel burnt-out and unable to concentrate, then it makes sense to re-ground yourself. Take a walk. Work out. Play with your cat or dog. Go for a swim. Meditate. Do yoga or t'ai chi. Work in a garden. Basically, find a way to balance yourself. Don't let yourself get lost in the law because it is truly a fulfilling and wonderful career. Just remember to find your place within the profession and then remember not to lose yourself in the process. If you're anything like me, everything will become a bit clearer once you are grounded and connected once again.

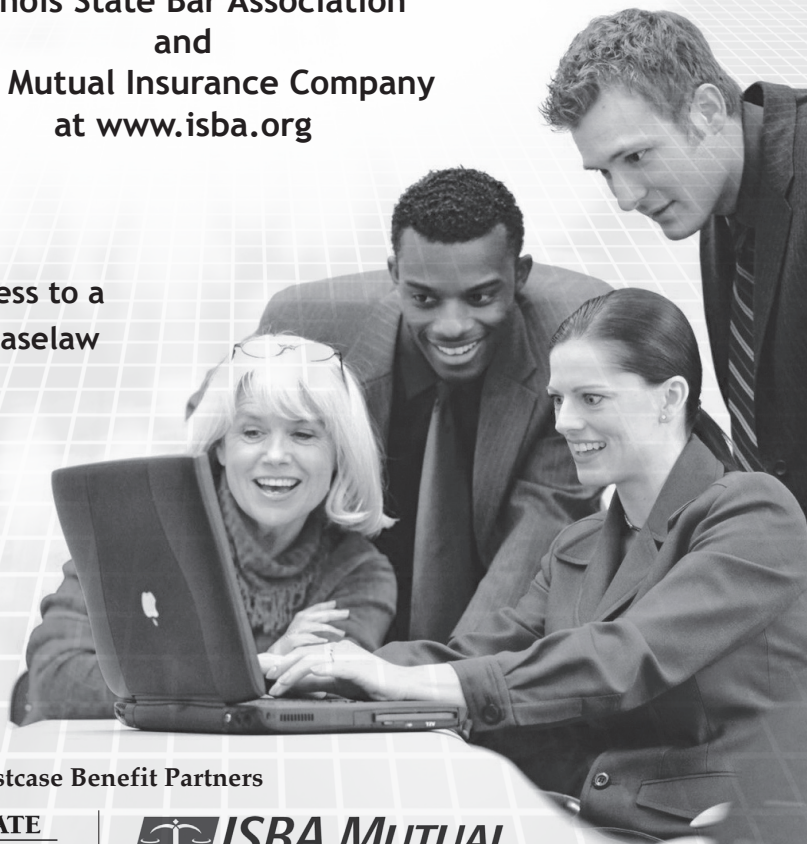
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Illinois Bar Center  
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**May 2007**  
Vol. 12 No. 4