

# HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL DIVISION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

## 1983 - 1984

The Board met in conjunction with the Legal Assistants Committee of the Bar at Texas Forum II to continue the dialogue initiated at Texas Forum I held in San Antonio in 1982. The joint meeting focused on sharing ideas on how to improve the formal education and training being offered for legal assistants by various institutions in Texas. The Division offered to assist the Committee in compiling a list of paralegal functions planned for inclusion in a manual for attorneys working with legal assistants.

A "Questionnaire on Voluntary Certification for Legal Assistants in Texas" and an accompanying letter were drafted and mailed to 1,744 legal assistants in the State; fifty-seven (57%) percent were returned. On the question of whether certification should be voluntary, 86.4 percent voted yes, and 72.8 percent responded that voluntary certification would enhance the development of the profession in Texas. The survey indicated that 65.8 percent of the respondents would be interested in pursuing voluntary certification if such a plan were implemented in Texas, and 76.1 percent said they would like to see the Division take steps to develop such a plan.

At the direction of the Board, the Professional Development Committee prepared a second questionnaire to determine preference for type, content, and administration of a voluntary certification program.

After contacting each college, university and school in Texas which offered an educational program for legal assistants, the Professional Development Committee compiled the data pertaining to each program in chart form. This information was made available to legal assistants and attorneys requesting a copy.

The first issue of the Division newsletter was published by the Publications Committee in April as an effort to solve communication problems with the general membership as the deadlines and space availability of the *Texas Bar Journal* were not conducive to the dissemination of current news. The Public Relations Committee published a brochure to answer inquiries about the Division.

In May, the Division had a membership of 1,469, including 27 associate members.

At the Annual Meeting in San Antonio, the Bylaws were amended to provide for an additional directorship in the event membership in a district exceeds 250 members and this amendment was later approved by the Bar Board. The program included an open forum for questions, answers, and comments by members. Jane A. Macon, an attorney with Fulbright & Jaworski in San Antonio, was the luncheon speaker and Donald S. Akins, a law firm consultant, with Hildebrandt, Inc., conducted the seminar. An Award of Excellence was presented to Kathryn King Richards in recognition of her service as the Board's first chair. The Division, with the assistance of participating local/national legal assistant associations, sponsored an exhibit booth at the convention.

The Board entered into a contract with the Bar for payment to the Bar for bookkeeping and accounting services provided to the Division. Certain functions previously performed by the Bar for the Division were assumed by Division committees. Gary McNeil with the Bar was appointed by the Bar as the Division's staff attorney.

Membership dues were increased from \$25 to \$40, effective for the fiscal year beginning June 1, 1985. Beginning a fund for the costs of developing a certification examination was, in part, consideration for the dues increase.

## Legal Assistants Division Board of Directors 1983 - 1984

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