

HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL DIVISION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS 1997 - 1998

The incoming Board met on June 27, 1997, at the Downtown Hyatt Hotel in Houston.

The following Directors were appointed to serve as Board Advisors or Liaisons:

- Annual Meeting – Leigh Burton
- Elections – Barbara Howell
- Membership – Rhonda Brashears
- Professional Development – Kristine Farmer
- Professional Ethics – Marjorie McGuire
- Publications – Lisa Sprinkle
- Public Relations – Shannon Hyde
- Continuing Education Committee – Jim Buchanan
- NALA – Lisa Sprinkle
- NFPA – Kristine Farmer
- LAC – Wendi Rogers
- TAPA – Wendi Rogers
- Long Range Planning Task Force – Jim Buchanan
- NALS/TALS – Shannon Hyde
- Legal Administrators – Connie Lawrence
- TYLA – Jim Buchanan

Executive Director Hackler advised new Board members about the process of approving membership applications, and Wendi Rogers addressed the duties of Directors with regard to newsletters, absences, and meetings.

Past President Sally Andress proposed that the Board keep the immediate Past President on the Board in an advisory capacity for one year to insure continuity and assistance.

President Rogers appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Relations brochure consisting of Mandy Smithers, Rhonda Brashears, Kristine Farmer and Sharon Wagner. It was reported that *Legally Speaking* has taped 20 shows at a cost of \$300 for two 30-minute shows.

On June 27, 1997, the Annual Meeting was held at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Welcoming remarks were given by Sharon Wagner, Chair of the Annual Meeting Committee and Sheila Shore, President of Houston Legal Assistants Association. Special guests Mike Wise, Chair of the LAC, Gary McNeil of TBLS, and Justice Greg Abbott were introduced. President Rogers recognized the 1996-1997 Directors and Committee Chairs and the incoming 1997-1998 Board and Committee Chairs. Director Sherman introduced the first Exceptional Pro Bono Service Award and its recipient, Patricia Hammer, CLA, of Fort Worth. Wendi Rogers presented plaques of recognition to several 1996-1997 volunteers. Outstanding Committee Chair was presented to Kristine Farmer. All members of the Annual Meeting Committee were recognized and a bouquet was presented to Sharon Wagner. An Award of Excellence was given to Lisa Sprinkle for her efforts in starting and continuing the *Legally Speaking* series. A special award was presented to Norma Hackler for her loyal service to the Division. Special awards were also given to Adele Hernandez and Martha Jones for their years of service as Elections and Continuing Education Chairs, respectively. Plaques to outgoing Directors were presented to Virginia Gil, Ellen Lockwood, and Diane Sharer. After President Rogers State of the Division address, the Honorable Greg Abbott spoke on making a positive impact on everything we encounter. Gary McNeil presented a short report on the activities of the Legal Assistant Certification Board and then presented certificates to newly certified legal assistants who were present at the luncheon. Immediate Past President Andress installed the 1997-1998 Directors and Officers of the Board before the Annual Meeting was adjourned.

The 1997-1998 Board then met on June 28 at the Downtown Hyatt Hotel. The Annual Meeting Chair, Sharon Wagner, recommended evaluation forms for LAD events at future conventions.

Treasurer Crider recommended to the Board that one meeting of the Board be eliminated each year at a savings of approximately \$6,200.

Chair Turner, Chair of the Continuing Education Committee. The Committee will continue to apply for CLE credit from TBLS, the Bar, and NALA. Seminars will follow the TBLS guidelines. Lunches will be eliminated unless an additional fee is paid. Non-member registration fees will be increased from \$250 to \$269 and member registration fees will be decreased from \$225 to \$189. Both categories will incur a \$25 late fee. Course directors will no longer obtain videographers.

The Board of Directors met with the Standing Committee of the Legal Assistants on Friday, September 26 in conjunction with Texas Forum XVI. Following that meeting, the Board met at Vintage Villas in Austin on September 26-27, 1997. Johnny Lacy, CPA, provided the audit report which showed the Division's annual loss was \$10,700.

MCLE accreditation and communications with Justice Abbott were discussed, as well as the concerns of the Board about the TEXLEX Article in the September 1, 1997 issue of the *Texas Lawyer*. The 1998 Texas Forum (XI) was also discussed and the Board will propose a 2-hour forum on how to educate attorneys and the public on the use of legal assistants. The afternoon of Texas Forum will be spent in a joint LAC/LAD meeting.

President Rogers appointed Deborah Worthington to the Joint Committee on the Pro Bono Partners Program, a joint pro bono project for attorney/legal assistant teams. The LAC has applied for funding for this project. An article in *TPJ, Etc.* will request that legal assistants turn in their pro bono hours. It was announced that the Civil Trial Seminar has been reset to April 1998, that the Criminal Law seminar has no course director, and that the pre-registration for the Estate Planning and Real Estate seminars is extremely low.

Annual Meeting Chair Schwemmer reported on various problems concerning the Division's participation in the Annual Meeting. It is hoped that some compromises will be reached with the Bar.

Publications Chair Chris Levy announced her resignation because of her husband's transfer to Scotland and recommended Nancy McLaughlin of District 4 to take her position as Publications Chair, which was approved by the Board. The Board thanked Chris Levy for all her hard work in developing the Division's publications. The Board approved entering into an agreement with Williams & Associates to solicit advertising for the *Texas Paralegal Journal*.

It was reported that resolutions of local bar associations concerning recognition of legal assistants as legal professionals have been passed by the Travis County Bar, the Bexar County Women's Bar, and the San Antonio Bar. Resolutions have been presented to the Houston Bar, the Amarillo Bar, the Dallas County Bar, 13 Tarrant County Bar associations, and the McLennan County Bar.

NFFPA will be holding a national convention in Ft. Worth in October 1998. Participation of the Division at the convention is being investigated by Director Farmer, the Board's liaison.

The Public Relations Ad Hoc Committee is reviewing brochures of other associations. The ad hoc committee for Executive Committee procedures was disbanded after approval of their Executive Committee procedures and Presidential Guidelines.

A statement regarding the specialization exam offered by the Texas Institute for Specialty Certification was approved by consensus of the Board for inclusion in the Director's newsletter.

Director Lisa Sprinkle will proceed with the project regarding production of tapes for law school students which will define legal assistants, explain their utilization and credentials, etc. When completed, the Division will seek the endorsement of the Bar, but with or without Bar endorsement, the Division will make the tape available to third year law students as an introduction to legal assistants.

It was reported that District 1 and HLAA are co-sponsoring a Gala on October 24, 1997. A discussion of funding resulted in a consensus that any District uses of PR Committee funds must be approved by the LAD Board.

An Ad Hoc Committee of Marjorie McGuire (Chair), Barbara Howell, Melinda Hicks, Shannon Hyde, and Connie Lawrence was appointed by President Rogers to develop guidelines and procedures for utilization of PR and Membership budgets.

Marjorie McGuire, Board Advisor for Professional Ethics, brought to the attention of the Board the fact that a LAD member has been convicted of a felony. The Bar should mark that particular file to disallow renewal membership in LAD. The motion to that effect was, however, withdrawn.

The Chair position for the Membership Committee is vacant, but Vicki Westbrook is considering the position. Mandy Smithers was appointed by President Rogers to chair the Nominating Committee. Various changes to the Procedures Manual were discussed including adding the Code of Ethics to the Procedures Manual as an appendix. The Procedures Manual Committee will review the Bylaws and make proposals for revisions at the February meeting.

Dawn Crider, District 4 Director, will be the 1998 Texas Forum Liaison. LAD wants to foster relations with the educators within the State Bar of Texas Legal Assistants Committee (LAC) and spend less time in the Forum.

The proposal regarding the immediate Past President being on the Board was rejected by consensus in that person is always an ex-officio member of the Board and available as a resource person when needed. Norma Hackler is to look into the possibility of getting a used laptop computer to allow access to past minutes at Board meetings. Other matters of business included passing: (a) a motion to charge the Ethics Committee to notify the PDC chair of the name and bar number of LAD members expelled or former members not eligible for re-application; and (b) charging the PDC Chair with maintaining a database of LAD members not eligible for re-application. The meeting was adjourned.

The Winter meeting of the Board was held on February 20-21, 1998 at Vintage Villas in Austin. New Director, Monica Flores,

was welcomed from District 15. By mail vote, the Board appointed Javan Johnson as District 14 Director and Monica Flores as District 15 Director. A motion was made and passed that ED Norma Hackler and Publications Chair Nancy McLaughlin pursue an agreement with an appropriate person or entity to secure advertisers for TPJ and that the Board be allowed to vote by mail on such a proposal.

President Rogers pointed out that her written report on TAPA will be addressed in the Long Range Task Force report and that TAPA is looking to LAD for leadership. President Rogers is seeking clarification from the Council Chairs of the impact on LAD, if any, regarding streamlining the sections. Dawn Crider, District 4, attended the last meeting of the Council of Chairs. Justice Abbott will be the NFPA convention speaker in Ft. Worth in October 1998.

No report was given regarding LAD membership numbers, but Norma Hackler reported computer problems with the Bar's membership database. Following the Treasurer's report, the Executive Committee report addressed director and officer absences from the February Board meeting, missing Director' reports and matters concerning the contract of the Executive Director. The Elections Committee reported that "even numbered" Districts will hold elections this year.

Lisa Sprinkle reported that the *Legally Speaking* videos are being aired four times a week in El Paso. The Board approved getting a sponsor for the tapes so that free videos can be distributed to 20 other cities. Nueces County and SETALA have purchased tapes. Director Sprinkle also reported that the informational tape for law schools was recorded, and she distributed one to each Director. President Rogers will seek the endorsement of Bar President Newton.

After some discussion regarding the database for membership information and new applications, a report was then given regarding the upcoming Annual Meeting by Chair Schwemmer.

1998-1999 Officer Nominees were announced as follows:

Secretary – Rhonda Brashears, Melissa Sherman
Treasurer – Barbara Howell, Melinda Hicks
Parliamentarian – Mandy Smithers, Kristine Farmer

The Publications Committee has put a hold on the solicitation of ads due to the website issues and the hope of increasing revenues through that avenue. Chair Nancy McLaughlin is working on a procedures manual for the Publications Committee and was congratulated, in absentia, for her excellent work. The Committee will meet in March in Dallas.

President Rogers announced the results of the 1998-1999 officer elections as follows: Melissa Sherman, Secretary; Barbara Howell, Treasurer; and Kristine Farmer, Parliamentarian.

The Continuing Education Committee reported on seminars, including financial losses for the Real Estate and Estate Planning Seminars and a profit from the Personal Injury Seminar. Family Law Seminar will be held in March and the Civil Trial Law Seminar will be held in April, and Criminal and Corporate Law Seminars will be held May 15, 1998. MCLE denials continue to be a problem. Jim Buchanan will be in Austin for the Council of Chairs meeting and will discuss the problem with Justice Abbott. The Board continues to document the MCLE denials. A motion was made and passed to authorize the 1997-1998 Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Committee to appoint a nine-member Seminar Planning Committee. Chair Turner also announced that NFPA credits will be applied for LAD seminars.

Discussion of the Executive Director's contract followed. The Board went into executive session with ED Norma Hackler at which time Wendi Rogers gave a historical review of the ED contract issues.

The Independent Contractor Agreement with Hackler & Associates was approved. President-Elect Buchanan was asked to review the necessary procedures for mail voting for President-Elect and for processing motions voted on by mail ballots so that they will be reflected in the minutes. Director Sprinkle will discuss those matters with Jim Buchanan.

The Task Force will set meetings for focus groups, possibly at the Annual Meeting in Corpus, at NFPA in Ft. Worth, Amarillo, Lubbock, and the Valley. The Task Force would like to see LAD finance certain portions of the focus groups. This is being studied.

The PDC recommended presenting the Pro Bono Merit Award to Stephanie Seuser, which the Board approved by consensus. The PDC would like to publicize Pro Bono opportunities in *TPJ, etc.* The Board went into executive session to discuss awards, including the presentation of Special Awards to Ignacio Acosta and Daniel Matta for their assistance in the *Legally Speaking* series. Business card holders with the Division seal will be sold to the membership during the Annual Meeting.

At the Annual Meeting, the Outgoing Board meeting was held June 11-12 at the Omni Bayfront Hotel.

President Rogers reported that Dean Newton, Bar President, signed a letter supporting the Division's pursuit of MCLE accreditation for its seminars. Director Crider reported that she had addressed the MCLE committee at the appeals hearing for denial of credit for the annual meeting seminars, and stated that the MCLE committee may revise their accreditation standards.

Director Johnson presented the Division with a check in excess of \$1,000 for the Division's share of the profits of a seminar held in Longview.

The Board, while in executive session, determined that the bylaws needed to be revised make them compatible with Robert's Rules of Order.

The CEC Committee reported that it will contact the Bar PDP regarding online CLE for legal assistants.

The Annual Meeting was held on June 12, 1998, at the Omni Bayfront Hotel in Corpus Christi. Welcoming remarks were made by Karla Schwemmer, Annual Meeting Chair, and Pam McGonnigal, President of the Nueces County Legal Assistants Association. Special guests included Miguel Wise, LAC Chair, Michele Boerder, Debra Crosby, and Kay Redburn, LAC members.

Michele Boerder introduced the ProBono Partners program, a joint project of the LAC and LAD, held in conjunction with Texas Lawyers Care. Bar President, Dean Frank Newton, addressed the membership regarding pro bono work and his support of the Division. The keynote speaker was Jane Wyatt, whose topic was "Juggling the Tightrope of Life."

Legal Assistants Division Board of Directors 1997 - 1998

Officers:

President:	Wendi Rogers, CLA
President-Elect:	Ronald J. (Jim) Buchanan
Treasurer:	Dawn Crider, CLA
Secretary:	Melissa Sherman, CLA
Parliamentarian:	Melinda Hicks

Directors:

Barbara Jacoby Howell, HPLA	District 1
S. Kristine Farmer	District 2
Melissa D. Sherman, CLA	District 3
Dawn Crider, CLA	District 4
Marjorie McGuire	District 5*
Connie Lawrence	District 6
Rhonda J. Brashears, CLA	District 7
Leigh Burton, CLA	District 8
Sherry Dockery French	District 9
Shannon Hyde, CLA	District 10
Robin Glass Miller	District 11**
Jo Mandy Smithers	District 12
Melinda Hicks	District 13
Javan Johnson, CLAS	District 14***
Monica Salazar Flores	District 15****
Lisa Sprinkle, CLAS	District 16

*Resigned March, 1998; Debra Crosby appointed May, 1998

**Resigned February, 1998; Kim Mosley appointed May, 1998

***Appointed March, 1997

****Appointed January, 1998 (Rose Duncan served from June, 1997-October 1997)