



Happy Trails

Reflections on My Year as CBA President

BY DICK GAST

Our Colorado Bar Association is one resilient organization. How else can you explain the fact that it's emerged relatively unscathed from my term as president? And, along the way the CBA has advanced the mission of helping you, our members, thrive as lawyers while also supporting our justice system and enriching our communities. Allow me to touch on just a few of the many highlights from the past year.

Helping Our Members Be Better Lawyers

Early this year, the CBA launched its innovative new membership benefit, MGMT HQ. Offered in conjunction with Affinity Consulting Group, this program is a major upgrade in providing law practice management tools for our members. The centerpiece web portal¹ provides top-notch content about legal technologies, practice management, marketing, billing, and other relevant topics—content not otherwise

accessible through your typical Google search. The portal delivers quick and easy access to information on the latest in technological and management developments and best practices, including recommendation lists for notebook and desktop computer configurations as well as software and hardware providers. In addition to the web portal, members have access to Affinity University, an online, on-demand training center for popular legal software applications. Particularly popular with our members have been the monthly 30- to 60-minute Affinity webinars covering current topics of interest to those practicing throughout Colorado. The MGMT HQ resources are abundant and varied, offering something for lawyers of all types and experience levels.

Helping Our Members in Need

Under the capable leadership of LaMar Jost, a partner with Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell in Denver, the CBA launched the SOLACE program.²

This program allows members of the legal community to help colleagues in need—whether they’ve experienced a death, catastrophic event, illness, injury, or some other personal crisis—by providing support in a compassionate way through assistance and donations in kind. If you or someone in our legal community needs help, simply email SOLACE@cobar.org and describe the crisis and the need. If the need fits within the program parameters, an email with the pertinent information is sent to CBA members who have chosen to be part of the SOLACE listserv. Those wishing to help reply to the email are then linked to the person in need. All SOLACE requests are handled as discreetly as possible; the only parties who know the identity of the person requesting help are the SOLACE coordinators and the individuals offering to help. Likewise, if you are helping out with a SOLACE request, the only parties who know your identity are the SOLACE coordinators and the individual seeking help. There is no cost to participate in the SOLACE program. As lawyers, our primary focus is on helping our clients. SOLACE allows us to also help our fellow legal community members.

Empowering Local Bar Leaders

As a dirt lawyer up on the northern frontier (Fort Collins being barely 30 miles south of the Wyoming border), I’m keen on the CBA providing tangible benefits to our members outside the metro area and to our local bar associations around the state. The local bars are a key source of networking and professional development for lawyers. Recognizing that, and assisted by an energetic cadre of local bar leaders (including Courtney Holm and Chris Bryan), the CBA is spearheading the Local Bar Leaders Summit, to be held on June 23. The Summit will be a gathering of local bar leaders in Denver with a variety of sessions designed to strengthen local bars and sharpen the skills of their leaders. In addition, there will be break-out sessions giving local leaders the opportunity to share success stories (for example, a successful CLE program put on by a local bar in one corner of Colorado may be a terrific fit for a local bar in another corner without that bar having to reinvent the wheel).

The CBA is also publishing (again, under the leadership of Courtney Holm) a Local Bar Resource Guide containing a treasure trove of practical information and guidance for local bar leaders. The Resource Guide will debut at the upcoming Summit.

Access to Justice

As you’ve probably figured out by now, access to justice occupies a warm spot in my heart. The CBA has been front and center on a number of access to justice initiatives this past year:

- Colorado (with the CBA acting as fiscal agent) received a \$96,650 grant from the National Center for State Courts for a comprehensive strategic planning process. The process assessed our current statewide access to justice resources; identified service gaps; and, with the able assistance of working groups and input from some 115 stakeholders at the Access to Justice Summit, crafted recommendations for enhancing and coordinating statewide access to justice efforts. Out of those efforts came the Justice for All Colorado Strategic Action Plan, which provides a blueprint for strengthening access to justice throughout Colorado.³
- This month the CBA will be opening a pro se clinic in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado. This clinic will be staffed by attorney Sabra Janko, who will provide limited scope representation (including consultations and brief advice about pleadings) to non-prisoner pro se litigants in federal court.
- The CBA continues to advocate for increased federal funding for the Legal Services Corporation, which provides 40% of the funding for the hardworking lawyers at Colorado Legal Services. CLS annually serves over 10,000 Coloradans across the state who could not otherwise afford a lawyer.

Collaboration with Diversity Bars

The CBA continues to strengthen its collaboration with our good friends in the numerous diversity bars, including the Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Colorado Hispanic

Bar Association, Colorado LGBT Bar Association, Colorado Women’s Bar Association, Sam Cary Bar Association, and South Asian Bar Association of Colorado. The President’s Diversity Council, which comprises CBA and DBA presidents and representatives of the diversity bars, meets every other month and provides a forum for exchanging ideas and information while also creating synergy for common projects. Under the tutelage of DBA President Franz Hardy, the Council sponsored a very well-attended program on the state of diversity in the Colorado legal profession, held last January in the Byron White U.S. Courthouse. Expect the energy of the Diversity Council to spawn great projects in the years ahead.

Local Bar Visits

One of the great privileges of serving as CBA president is the opportunity to visit all 26 of our local bar associations. From Fort Collins, I drove over 5,500 miles covering the state from Cortez to La Junta, and Sterling to Steamboat. Those visits opened my eyes to the truly gifted lawyers we have in the most far flung regions—lawyers who in the course of a single day may handle matters ranging from family law and criminal law to real estate and estate planning. Now that’s heavy lifting.

Without exception I received warm welcomes across the state, even in Sterling where I awarded a Starbucks gift card to a local lawyer who had the correct answer to one of my local historical trivia questions. As the lawyer gently informed me, the nearest place he could use that Starbucks card was clear over in Sidney, Nebraska.

There is no better way to experience that which is truly Colorado than driving our state. Settling in behind the wheel I was treated to the names of various roadside gems such as those encountered on the highway to La Junta: Alma’s Attic gift shop in Rocky Ford, Bushy’s Motel in Fowler, and the Twisted Twig gift shop in Swink. And while the population along the Front Range chokes our highways, I can testify that there are still places in Colorado where you feel like you are the only person around. Driving back from Steamboat on a Monday afternoon in January, I didn’t encounter another eastbound car from

Muddy Pass through North Park over Cameron Pass and down the Poudre Canyon until just west of Fort Collins.

At times, I got the feeling that our outstate lawyers were charged with helping me recapture my youth. The Durango and Cortez lawyers turned me on to mountain bike rides that were nothing short of remarkable. I found myself whooping and hollering riding the slickrock and arroyos of Phil's World outside of Cortez and the pretty much vertical flume-like downhill of the Star Wars trail right there in Durango. Not to be outdone, the officers of the Continental Divide Bar Association (youngspeed demons all) practically turned me into a human cannonball hurtling down the lightning fast front side rollers of Vail Mountain.

Thanks


What really makes the CBA engine run? It's a wonderful elixir of dedicated volunteers and staff. On the volunteer side, I've been blessed to work with talented lawyers who have given of their time to reinvigorate the CBA. They include the 154 governors serving on our Board of Governors, the 22 members of our Executive Council, the officers and council members guiding our 29 substantive sections, and those serving on our 20 different committees (including the 13 members of our Legislative Policy Committee who meet every Friday at 7:30 a.m. when the legislature is in session).

The CBA staff members are the ones in the trenches working day in and day out to deliver the value to our members. Each and every one of them makes a meaningful contribution to our members, our broader legal profession, and our justice system as a whole. Our Executive Director, Patrick Flaherty, captains the ship with a steady, enthusiastic, and visionary hand. My heartfelt thanks go out to them all. Believe me, they had their hands full trying to make me look good.

Also deserving of special mention are the lawyers in my firm. The CBA presidency certainly has taken a toll on my billable hours, not to mention my time in the office. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Jeff Johnson, Dan Muffly, Pete Dauster, Ryan Thorson, Ben Kramer, Anda Stephenson, and Dan St. John for supporting me through this journey. I can't tell you how

many client emails I've forwarded to them with a plea for help and, without exception, they have answered the call.

Lastly, a kiss of thanks for my wife of almost 37 years, Bev. Throughout the travels and banquets, the trials and tribulations, she's been fast by my side, a bastion of calm support whenever the waters were rising.

I am honored (nay I say delighted) to have served as your president. Going forward, you will be in great hands with incoming CBA President John Vaught. Happy trails, and remember what a privilege it is for us to practice law in Colorado. 

NOTES

1. www.cobar.org/MGMTHQ.
2. See www.cobar.org/SOLACE.
3. See the President's Message in the April 2018 *Colorado Lawyer* for more detailed information about the Strategic Action Plan.

COLORADO NUGGETS



As I gaze westward from the front porch of our home east of Fort Collins, the most prominent landmark is Horsetooth Rock. Located just a stone's throw west of town, it offers an invigorating hiking opportunity (I fondly remember a New Year's Eve jaunt up the Rock with our sons in their elementary school

days). It also provides commanding views of Longs Peak and Mount Meeker to the west, along with the expansive plains stretching out to the east.

But what's really cool about the Rock is its shape. For those settling the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it conjured up images of a horse's molar, and it's been commonly referred to as Horsetooth Rock since that time.

Local Native American legend gives us a far more interesting description of the Rock and its origins. As the story goes, long ago a sleeping giant guarded the Valley of Contentment (the valley lying just east of the Rock and now occupied by Horsetooth Reservoir) and kept the wildlife in the valley off limits to the Arapaho tribe. A drought struck the land outside the valley, driving the buffalo, deer, and elk from the area. Meanwhile, the wildlife in the valley continued to thrive. With his tribe facing starvation, Chief Maunomoku led his warriors to the valley. At night, as the giant slept under a full moon, the Chief clasped his star-studded tomahawk and cleaved the giant's heart with two swift strokes. The giant turned to stone. The tribe was now able to hunt in the Valley of Contentment, saving them from starvation. However, to this day some believe that the afternoon lightning-laden thunderstorms rolling in from the west carry the spirit of the slain giant expressing anger over losing his precious valley.

Whether it be during a morning sunrise, an afternoon shower, or an evening sunset, Horsetooth Rock is a beautiful sight to behold.