

Greg Martin Retires after 23 Years of Steadfast Leadership

BY BRENDAN BAKER

In today's world of lightning-fast job leaps and career changes, it is rare to encounter institutional knowledge. The days when businesses could regularly expect to hand out gold watches and pensions to loyal employees of 20 or 30 years are nearly gone, and have been on their way out for a while. That's why it is especially remarkable that Greg Martin, deputy executive director of the CBA, is leaving us after 23 years of dedicated service. Greg had an interesting and varied career even before coming to the Bar. But he has been with us since the first dot-com bubble burst, through thick and thin, overseeing a period of huge changes to the practice of law and business in general. Greg's departure truly marks the end of an era for the Bar—and the start of an exciting new period for Greg and the organization he has done so much to build.

Greg was born in Nebraska, where the agricultural industry was a way of life for his family and neighbors. Greg pursued the subject academically, earning an undergraduate degree in Animal Science from the University of Nebraska, an MA in Muscle Biology from Purdue, and finally a Ph.D. in Animal Genetics from U. Missouri.

In 1978, Greg and his wife moved to Denver, where Greg worked for the North American Limousin Beef Cattle Foundation. He was there for 11 years. He next went to the Morris Animal Foundation, then the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Afterward he took a brief

break from association work, spending time as an operations manager for a paint supply company.

Finally, in 1995, Executive Director Chuck Turner hired Greg to serve as assistant director of the CBA. He remained in that role for the rest of his career (the title was eventually changed to deputy director). Greg remembers Chuck asserting a philosophy that served him throughout his time at the CBA: "An interesting focus of my job was that Chuck Turner always told our members that this is *their* association—we're there just to help the members."

When Greg joined the Bar, it was a growing organization with a staff of about 25 people. Today it has a 40-person staff and serves a membership of nearly 20,000 attorneys. Greg anticipates that the CBA will continue to change in interesting ways: "Associations in general serve a purpose because they focus on things people can band together to do that they couldn't do on their own."

Greg cites some other unique aspects of his job:

We get to work with really great people who are volunteering their time to give back to their profession and community. They just happen to all be lawyers. The people we work with are interesting, and it is fun and exciting to learn something new every day—especially for someone who did not come from a legal background.

Greg sees the restructuring of the Bar over

the past few years as making it more nimble and adaptable. The practice of law is changing, which will inevitably change the Bar association. The challenge that Greg underscores is how to change effectively to continue providing support to attorneys and facilitating access to justice for all Coloradans. Of particular interest to Greg is how the practice of law in Colorado will develop as the legal community here grows in number and influence. How will the unique features of the Colorado professional community, such as a sincere focus on maintaining a work/life balance, affect the further development of Colorado as a major legal center? Can the coastal Big Law model survive here, or will Colorado develop its own way of doing business? As Greg puts it,

It's impossible to predict what will happen, but we can predict that change will come, and we can put ourselves in the best position to deal with change. The only constant is change itself. . . . Our basic premise should always be that we are here to help lawyers practice law; that first, then all the other considerations that follow from that.

Associations such as this are typically either very staff-driven, or very volunteer-driven. The CBA is an unusual example of an organization that is both. Greg sees that as one of our greatest strengths. "We need a strong staff in order to get member visions actualized; we also need active members who are able to form a good vision for the org."

Greg is especially proud of the Bar staff, because he hired nearly everyone who works here, and likes them all on a personal level. Several staff that Greg brought on board have been with the Bar for more than 10 years; Greg is happy that this means there will still be strong institutional memory after he leaves. And he believes that the regular influx of recent graduates and younger people also brings a lot of healthy new ideas and energy to the organization. "It's a good mix," he says. According to Greg, our focus on helping lawyers to practice law makes some of the new initiatives we are pursuing particularly exciting, like our new "Community" engagement platform and our developing social media landscapes.

As anyone who has worked with him for long


knows, Greg's trademark phrase is "Another day in paradise." He says this as a reminder of how lucky we are to have the jobs we have, to work with who we work with, and to live where we live. It is a reminder that people's focus and mind-set is important and should include a heaping portion of gratitude. "Somebody taught me that life divides itself into two piles: things you have no control over (weather, a bad boss, etc.), and things you do have control over (values, personal effort, presentation, intimate associations). The most important thing is developing the ability to control your attitude toward the first pile, of things you have no control over; that is the key to success."

Greg's next phase: his wife retired a couple of years ago, and he is ready to join her in retirement. They have two adult children and five grandkids, ages 4 to 12, who all live within 10 miles of each other here in Colorado. Greg and his wife are retiring to a property in Falcon, east of Colorado Springs, conveniently situated in the middle of where their kids and grandkids live.

The new property has a car shop, where Greg plans to indulge his love for working on cars. He is looking forward to working in the garage with his son and son-in-law. He still enjoys racing his 84 Nova at the drag strip, and attending his grandchildren's sports games and activities will be high on the list. "Kids and cars" will fill his days from here on out, he says.

It is hard to overstate just how profound an impact Greg has had on the Bar over the last 23 years. At his retirement ceremony in July, members and staff from across the decades spoke to Greg's character, knowledge, wisdom, and insight into all aspects of the Bar's mission and operations. Perhaps Chuck Turner, former executive director of the CBA, said it best:

Greg's loyalty—and competence—benefited me personally, but more importantly, it benefited the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations. He leaves a great legacy, many loyal employees, both current and former, and my sincere gratitude.

All of us here at the CBA are likewise sincerely grateful for Greg's years of service and friendship, and we wish him the best in his well-earned retirement and all future endeavors. 



- 1** Greg and Pat with the kids and grandkids.
- 2** Greg's '64 Nova drag car.
- 3** CBA staff at convention.
- 4** Chuck Turner and Greg.
- 5** Bar officers and staff.