

Georgia Defense Lawyers Association
Spring Board of Directors Meeting Highlights

Ponte Vedra, Florida

May 1, 2004

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. In attendance were: Rick Rominger, Steve Milano, Jim Elliott, Lynn Roberson, George Duncan, Bruce Welch, Salty Forbes, Mel Haas, Gary Seacrest, Clay Ratterree, Bob Travis, Grant Smith, Ted Freeman, Staten Bitting, Jimmy Singer, Luanne Clarke, and Johnny Foster.

2. Recognition of Board Members – All board members and past presidents in attendance were recognized.

3. Approval of Minutes – Minutes of the February 6, 2004 board meeting were previously distributed by mail and were again distributed to all those present. A motion was made, seconded and passed to dispense with the reading of the minutes and for approval of the minutes.

4. Treasurer's Report – Johnny Foster reported the current balance as of April 30, 2004. Major expenses since the winter meeting were Callaway Gardens for the Trial Academy, the Commerce Club for the winter judicial reception, and the newsletter. Johnny Foster reported that we could expect sponsorship money to come in in the next couple of months. Jimmy Singer reported the approximate estimated cost of the upcoming Law Journal.

Johnny Foster reported that the Dick Richardson Award for Excellence in the Study of Practice and Procedure was awarded and presented to Stacy Carroll of DeFuniak Springs, Florida in Athens on April 9, 2004. Mr. Carroll has been employed with Love, Willingham, Peters, Gilleland & Monyak in Atlanta. It was noted that the recipient of the award is selected by the Georgia Practice and Procedure Professor. This year, Salty Forbes attended the ceremony and, on behalf of the GDLA, presented the award to Mr. Carroll. Salty noted that, in the future, it should be the responsibility of the GDLA president to attend the ceremony and to present the award.

5. Amicus Committee Report – Jimmy Singer and Ted Freeman reported that there have been no inquiries.

6. Membership Report – Salty Forbes reported that there have been four applications for membership. They are: Franklin P. Brannen, Jr., with King & Spalding in Atlanta; Lewis Sandford Fine of Savell & Williams in Atlanta; John A. Harris of Tisinger, Tisinger, Vance & Greer in Carrollton; and Christopher L. Ray of Oliver, Maner & Gray in Savannah. A motion was made, seconded, and passed that all four be approved for membership.

Steve Milano suggested that, in the future, dues notices go out June 1 and if they are unpaid after sixty days, to terminate access to the list serve and to the members only portion of the website and that, at the fall meeting, arrearages be discussed by the board.

There was a consensus in favor of this suggestion.

7. Membership Recruitment and Retention Report – Steve Milano circulated a proposal for an annual mailing to potential GDLA members which would include a cover letter from the president; a one-page list of GDLA member benefits and services; a copy of the GDLA annual calendar of events; a copy of the GDLA newsletter; a copy of the GDLA's health, medical and disability insurance program; contents page from the GDLA Law Journal; copies of the annual meeting, trial academy and workers' compensation seminar brochures; membership fact sheet and membership application; a self-addressed stamped envelope; and contents of discovery tools and brief bank.

Steve Milano raised a question as to where he could obtain names of potential members.

At the suggestion of Steve Milano, we will also send a copy of this mailing to those whose membership is being terminated due to arrearage.

Also, due to the fact that we have a membership incentive program, which provides that a member who recruits a new member receives a \$50.00 discount on the registration cost of any GDLA event, the membership application form will be immediately amended so as to include a question asking the new member whether they have been referred to the GDLA by any existing member. At the suggestion of Salty Forbes, the membership recruitment program, however, will be put on the winter meeting agenda for further discussion.

The discussion of the annual mailing to potential new members also led to a discussion of the health, medical and disability insurance program offered by our original sponsor, ISI, exclusively to GDLA members. ISI will be invited to have a representative give a 5 or 10 minute presentation at the annual meeting explaining the benefits of this exclusive program.

Steve Milano also circulated the results of a member survey which he conducted during the week of April 26, 2004. There were 75 responses. This led into a discussion of a number of items, including the expert witness database, brief and discovery bank, and the status of our substantive law committees. A decision was made that future dues notices will provide members a space in which to select a substantive law committee in which they will participate. Then, once all of those committees are up and running again, perhaps they can provide material for the brief and discovery bank. Lynn Roberson was commended for keeping the Premises Liability Committee active.

There was also discussion of whether the annual meeting should fall at the same time each year and also as to what is the best time of year for the annual meeting to be held. There was no resolution of these issues.

Steve Milano, Clay Ratterree and Lynn Roberson will head-up an effort to rejuvenate the Substantive Law Committee program.

8. Sponsorships and Exhibitors – Steve Milano passed out sponsorship program packets containing information on the sponsorship program.

There was a consensus in favor of a suggestion that sponsors be given demographic information concerning the Trial Academy so that they might make an educated decision

as to whether to host or sponsor some portion of that event.

9. Workers' Compensation Academy – Luanne Clarke and Staten Bitting reported that we are shooting for a January 2005 date for this program. The program will be open to GDLA members and non-members as well. There was a discussion about whether to solicit third-year law students to attend this program as well. The decision was that Luanne and Staten will look into this and might possibly get input from certain firms regarding whether they would encourage their recruits to participate.

10. Trial Academy – A discussion was held which began as a discussion of the issue of whether to attempt to hold the Trial Academy and the Workers' Compensation Academy at the same time and venue. This evolved into a discussion of whether to attempt to hold a board meeting or judicial reception in conjunction as well. The consensus was that any attempt to hold the Trial Academy in conjunction with any other event was a bad idea. The holding of the other events in conjunction with each other is discussed in more detail below.

Jim Elliott reported that the Trial Academy works best when there are approximately 40 to 45 students.

11. Annual Meeting – Grant Smith reported that the speakers will be James W. McElhaney and Scot Pool will give a short law update Saturday morning. Brochures will be mailed to members' offices, to their homes, and will be posted on the website.

12. Law Journal – Luanne Clarke reported that she has all the articles. She needs only to burn the compact discs. There will be six articles. Steve Milano will do the layout. Target date is June 1, 2004 so that these can go in the annual mailing.

13. Website Committees – Steve Milano encouraged everyone to visit the website to see the recent changes that have been made.

Steve also distributed a proposal for updating and keeping up-to-date the website. A website company would be employed and we would receive the following benefits: Each member would have a unique user name and password and there would be a quick and easy system in place for forgotten passwords. Every six months, members would be prompted to update their membership record or verify that the information is correct. This on-line directory would be searchable by the public who wish to find a lawyer in a certain field of practice in a certain geographic area. The on-line directory would also serve as the Association's membership directory. The Association would be able to use this tool to keep track of dues paid, delinquent members, personal information, etc. This program could be exportable allowing the GDLA to run its mailing labels for the newsletter, dues notices, etc. The program would continue to allow for blast emails. The system, once it is up and running and paid for, would belong to us and would be considered proprietary. We do not have to maintain it with the same company that gets it up and running to start with. In addition, the company proposed to do the start-up work would host our website at no extra charge. Finally, the program can be developed and launched in about 2 weeks. A motion was made by Jimmy Singer and seconded by practically everyone in attendance to go forward with Steve Milano's proposal. The motion passed.

14. Y.L.S. Membership Recruitment – George Duncan suggested that board

members volunteer a younger lawyer in their firm to solicit other younger lawyers to attend our annual meeting. It was noted that the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association has a Y.L.S. and that it is a successful program for them. Luanne Clarke indicated that a member of her firm, Jason Willcox, may be interested in working with this committee to try to get a younger lawyer section up and running.

15. Y.L.S. of GDLA – See Item 14 above.

16. Legislative Liaison – It was noted that Barry Fleming is available to address questions regarding legislative issues.

17. Annual Meeting Committee – We had previously envisioned a three year rotation including Ponte Vedra, Sandestin, and Amelia Island. It was suggested that the Westin at Hilton Head be put into the rotation in place of Amelia Island. The consensus was in favor of Hilton Head over Amelia Island.

18. Newsletter – Johnny Foster reported that he and President Rominger made a decision to exceed the budget for this edition slightly due to the fact that we had skipped the fall edition. The additional cost in this edition was attributable to color photographs from the 2003 annual meeting.

19. Old Business – Clay Ratterree commented that there had been a lengthy discussion of the need for an executive director at the spring 2003 meeting and that a committee had been appointed, and that committee had accomplished its mission of selecting and employing an executive director. Steve Milano was commended with a round of applause from all those present for a job well done. The committee was commended as well.

20. New Business – A decision was made that the by-laws will be updated by Salty Forbes and will be posted on the website.

It was noted that, at this year's winter meeting, a decision was made that the judge's reception would be held the evening of February 10, 2005, that Walter McClelland would tie this date down with the Capital City Club, and that the winter board meeting would be held in conjunction therewith. It was now further decided that the winter board meeting would be February 10 beginning at 12:00 noon and could take place either at the Capital City Club or at Grant Smith's office. The judicial reception would be held the evening of February 10 at the Capital City Club. The workers' compensation seminar will be held beginning on the morning of February 11, 2005 and we are targeting the Hyatt (which is across the street from the Capital City Club) as the venue for this event. It was suggested that the Hyatt would be a convenient location for out-of-town board members to stay.

The fall board meeting will be held October 15 and 16, 2004 at Lake Oconee.

Steve Milano reported that DRI is currently considering using the GDLA as a pilot organization to examine how to help SLDO's create a PR/Marketing/Communications Committee. A discussion was held as to what advantages, if any, would ensue from having such a committee. Salty Forbes' motion to table this discussion to the fall board meeting so that it could first be discussed at the Southeast DRI meeting was seconded and passed.

There was a discussion also of having a toll-free number for the GDLA. The consensus was to table this issue and revisit it at the fall meeting as well.

21. Adjourned – The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.