

GDLA Spring 2007 Board Meeting Highlights
The Westin, Hilton Head Island, SC
April 21, 2007

The meeting began at 9:00 a.m., and adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

In attendance: Craig Avery, Jamie Weston, Ted Freeman, Hall McKinley, Jimmy Singer, Bubba Hughes, Clay Ratterree, Peter Muller, Mel Haas, Warner Fox, Jo Jager, Bob Travis, Salty Forbes, Bruce Welch, Johnny Foster, David Whitworth, Joe Chambless, Sally Akins.

Special guests were Valerie Shea, DRI Regional Director from Fort Lauderdale; Kathy Mauss, Florida Association of Defense Lawyers from Tampa; and Elizabeth O'Neill, Hawkins & Parnell, Chair of the Mass Tort Substantive Law Committee.

Minutes were approved. Jimmy Singer provided the treasurer's report, including an overview of the current financial status. All outstanding invoices have been paid with substantial balance in the bank. We anticipate expenses associated with the law journal and incidental operating expenses between now and year end, and expenses associated with the Board Meeting, but also anticipate substantial income in the form of dues renewals and income from sponsors. Because the date we pay expenses associated with the annual meeting varies from year to year, , and because the date of receipts of registration fees, dues payments, and sponsor contribution likewise varies, a direct month by month or year by year comparison is not necessarily informational; however, we do anticipate, as in prior years, beginning the year with a bank balance greater than the preceding year.

Discussion was also held on necessity of a worker's compensation insurance policy since Executive Director, Steve Milano, is an independent contractor and the Association has no paid employees. The Executive Committee agreed previously because of errands and work associated with various functions of the Association, we do need to continue our worker's compensation insurance to protect the Association, and the decision had already been made to do so, but a report was provided to the Board to that effect.

Salty Forbes gave the membership report. We have 536 members currently on role, but 39 are delinquent in their dues payments. Salty reported that each of the prior two years we have received over 100 new members. However, this fiscal year, we accepted 22 new members at the fall meeting, 24 at the winter meeting, and nine were proposed for membership at this spring meeting. It was agreed that all of the Board members would contact individuals, both in and outside their firms, in an effort to discuss the benefits of the Association, and in an attempt to sponsor at least one new member for each Board member for acceptance at the spring meeting.

The following individuals were proposed for membership, and unanimously accepted:

HILL, JR., WILLIAM B.

Ashe, Rafuse & Hill, LLP

HINSON, NICHOLAS

Mabry & McClelland, LLP

JORDAN, MATTHEW

Carlock, Copeland, Semler & Stair, LLP

MOWBRAY, BRYCE

Gray, Rust, St. Amand, Moffett & Brieske, LLP

PORCH, IV, D. SCOTT

Callaway, Braun, Riddle & Hughes, P.C.

TILLER, ELLIOT DUSTIN

Goodman, McGuffey, Lindsey & Johnson, LLP

TUCKER, DANIEL T.

Callway, Braun, Riddle & Hughes, P.C.

URBAN, AMY JONES

Carlock, Copeland, Semler & Stair, LLP

WERDESHEIM, PETER

Carlock, Copeland, Semler & Stair, LLP

Bob Travis and Warner Fox reported on their efforts to meet with large firms. Due to the misconception of the makeup of the Association, as well as its goal, purpose, and function, an effort will be made by Bob and Warner to meet with the managing partner, and/or the litigation partners, of each firm with over 500 members, prior to the annual meeting. They recently met with Troutman Sanders, and the meeting was well received. It is Bob's plan to continue over the next year with firm's between 250 and 500 members, and then meeting with those between 100 and 250.

Jo Jager reported on the status of the younger lawyers section. On Friday, DRI's Southeast Regional Meeting was held also at the Westin Resort in Hilton Head. At that meeting the Alabama defense lawyers discussed numerous programs they have for their younger lawyers, and particularly deposition boot camp. Jamie Weston agreed to assist Jo Jager in evaluating and researching the possibility of approaching law students as members, and also approaching law schools to utilize the facilities at law schools, such as Georgia State, for seminars and training of younger lawyers, with programs such as deposition boot camp. Elizabeth O'Neill, guest as Chair of the Mass Tort Substantive Law Committee also agreed to help Jo with evaluating what type of specific functions the Association can plan for younger lawyers. A suggestion was made that, since we will be in Ponte Vedra and not traveling extensively at the 2008 annual meeting, we may consider a specific function, or separate part of the program at the 2008 annual meeting, for younger lawyers.

Staten Bitting was unable to be present and therefore Steve Milano reported on the Worker's Compensation Academy. Unfortunately only 18 members attended and the report reflected some criticism from at least one attendee, that the seminar was perhaps too basic, even though it was certainly advertised as very introductory. Discussion was held over whether the Worker's Compensation Academy should continue, and whether it was of any benefit to our Association or its members. It appears that part of the reason for the low turnout may have been that the date was scheduled and then due to conflict, had to be rescheduled. The Board agreed that the Worker's Compensation Academy would continue at least one more year, if the Chair of the Worker's Compensation Substantive Law Committee felt it appropriate. We will re-evaluate in 2008.

Johnny Foster and David Whitwerth reported on the Substantive Law Committees. Elizabeth O'Neill was also present as Chair of the Mass Tort Substantive Law Committee. The Association currently has 189 members registered on one or more Substantive Law Committee. Only ten of those committees agreed to write articles for the law journal, but unfortunately, only five actually prepared articles in a timely fashion for the journal. Likewise, the fall newsletter contained good input from the Substantive Law Committees; but only two committees provided information for the winter newsletter. It was reported the Premises Liability Committee will meet, but no other Committee has yet notified President Fox or Johnny Foster whether they will be meeting. It was agreed that the Committee Chairs will be advised of all deadlines, as well as what is requested of the Committee Chairs. It was further agreed that rather than simply containing the quarterly updates online, if submitted in a timely fashion, the Substantive Law Committee law updates will be published in the newsletter.

Neither Kirby Mason nor David Nelson were present, so the report on the web-site was given by Steve Milano. Everyone by now should have seen the newly redesigned webpage. Very importantly, the blast e-mail even just "to sender" system has also changed so that now replies go to a database. Discussion was held concerning warning or other instructional language to the effect that when replying to one of these e-mails, they will be saved and produced.

On Judicial Relations, Steve Milano reported that the Association was present at the Magistrate Judge's Conference and someone from the Association will be invited back when the Magistrate Judges meet again. There was no other news to report from a judicial relationship standpoint other than concerning Augusta. Jamie Weston reported that though a date had been set and a place reserved for the Augusta Judicial Reception, it was learned that the date is only one week from a previously scheduled Augusta Bar Association Reception for a new Federal Judge, Judge Wood. It was therefore agreed to move the GDLA Judicial Reception for Augusta Judges to some time mid-summer. The likely date is some time after July 4th.

Bob Travis then reported on the upcoming meetings. The 2007 annual meeting will be at Amelia Island. Anticipating an increase in attendance over the past two years, the Association reserved 75 rooms. However, because of the number of speakers, and number of sponsors, the rooms appear to be going very quickly. All Board members were encouraged to immediately reserve their rooms if they had not previously done so. Also, Board Members were requested not to cancel if an emergency arises, but to coordinate with Steve Milano or Steve Kyle so that the room can be assigned to another member who may need it, and so that the Association does not lose that room night from its reserved block.

The fall Board Meeting has been scheduled for Barnsley Gardens the last weekend of October. The Board had previously discussed at the winter meeting, and now as a result of motion, passed unanimously, has determined that rather than doing a winter Board Meeting in Atlanta, and a Judicial Reception, that meeting will now be moved to the spring. The spring Board Meeting, rather than a travel meeting, so close in time to the annual meeting, will therefore be local in Atlanta, and the winter meeting will be a travel meeting with an effort to evaluate possible sites for future annual meetings. Steve Milano will do research on "warm" locations and will report at the fall Board Meeting. The winter meeting will be in late February, 2008.

Mel Haas reported that the law journal articles are in and though he is disappointed that more of the Substantive Law Committees did not write, the journal is essentially ready to go to the printer. President Fox will prepare letters to the Judges and an "in memoriam" page. It is anticipated that the journal should be ready to send to the Judges and the Members of the Association by May 15, 2007.

In Staten Bitting's absence, Steve Milano reported on the newsletter. Salty Forbes reminded the Board that the first newsletter was published at the spring meeting 15 years ago, by David Whitworth. A copy of that newsletter will be placed on the webpage so that members can see the strides the Association has made in the past 15 years. No one had negative comments about the newsletter, and all the comments anyone has received are very positive.

Steve Milano reported on the Trial Academy. At the fall meeting the Board voted to donate \$1000.00 to a charity chosen by Tom Magill, in honor of his work on behalf of the Association. Tom is recovering from cancer. A donation has now been made to the American Cancer Society.

More than 40 attended the Trial Academy, and a special lunch dealing with marketing was provided by Al Parnell this year. The Trial Academy continues to be one of the shining examples of the benefit of the Association as it breaks even financially, but provides a tremendous benefit and something we hope will be a benefit to the larger firms. Due to a push with the larger firms, as well as a specific effort to vitalize a younger lawyers section, discussion was held that the faculty may need to increase next year. Decision will be made on that in June. Discussion was also held concerning the time of year, whether younger lawyers should be at the Academy in December rather than attempting to work on year end billable hour requirements, or year end work. The Trial Academy Committee had previously agreed to leave the Trial Academy in early December, where it has always been, and that was unanimously agreed by the Board.

Clay Ratterree and Steve Milano reported on sponsorships. It is anticipated that the sponsorships will increase and we may receive as much as \$30,000.00 this year. The Board was reminded to make every effort they can, when possible, to utilize the services of those sponsors who provide such support for our Association.

Ted Freeman reported on the Amicus Committee. The Amicus Committee recently wrote an amicus brief on a petition for certiorari to the Supreme Court on the issue of the admissibility of a statement when mention was made in the statement of settlement. The Supreme Court has not yet decided whether certiorari will be granted.

There was no report from the legislative liaison. However, the Association has circulated information which comes to one or more officers of this Association, simply advising of new legislation or proposed legislation. The Association does not take a formal position on this legislation, but will continue to circulate that to its members for informational purposes.