

letter from the president

BY TRENTON J. OUBRE

Thank you for the honor

Wow! My first president's page. I would first like to thank you for your very humbling vote of confidence in allowing me the honor to lead our most prestigious Bar Association. It is with great pride and gratitude that I look forward to carrying on the long and distinguished line of outstanding leadership that our Association has had since its inception. If you have not had the chance to look at the past presidents' photograph wall at the BRBA office, I invite you to do so. It is truly impressive.

I would also like to thank and congratulate my friend and our outgoing president C. Kevin Hayes for his extensive time, dedication and leadership that he has given to the Bar. He has done an outstanding job.

I would also like to congratulate our newly elected officers — Fred Crifasi as president-elect, Preston Castille as treasurer, Gail Stephenson as secretary, and the directors-at-large: Robert "Bubby" Burns, Linda Law Clark, Jeanne Comeaux, Darrel Papillion, Michael Walsh and our "newbie" Karli Glascock Wilson. Congratulations to the Young Lawyers Section Council: Kyle Ferachi, chair; Catherine Saba Giering, chair-elect; Alesia Mottle Ardoin, secretary; Karli Glascock Wilson, past chair; and to council members Jennifer Gaubert Aertker, Molly Balfour, Lyla Neelis DeBlieux, Brian W. Hightower and Jamie Hurst Watts.

We have an outstanding board. I would also like to congratulate the candidates who ran for office — Lisa Prater, Robert Graves and John Fenner. I commend you for your initiative. Please remain involved with the Bar as we need you.

As I reflect on how I became initially involved with the Bar long ago, I am taken back to the year 1991 when I graduated from law school and first became a member of our Bar. (Yes, I guess that makes me old now.) I admit that while I was in law school, I didn't know much about the BRBA until my first day of orientation at Breazeale Sachse & Wilson. My firm has always supported and had an active role in the Bar and strongly encouraged me to get involved. As most new lawyers can attest,

free time is a precious commodity, probably more so now than in 1991. Being originally from New Iberia, I didn't know many of the judges in Baton Rouge and only knew a few Baton Rouge lawyers from my clerkships and classmates at LSU. Accordingly, I was drawn to the opportunity to meet other lawyers, judges and others in the legal profession in the Baton Rouge community. I figured that the Baton Rouge Bar Association provided the best bet.

I can recall the first time that I entered the small, cramped quarters of the circa 1991 Baton Rouge Bar office located upstairs in an old building on North Boulevard. There was one tiny meeting room, crowded offices and a small but growing budget. We did have Ann Scarle though. As always, she was hard at work developing and growing the Association. I can recall my first time meeting Ann Scarle, and being so impressed with her kindness, professionalism and excitement that she had for the Association. It was then that I knew I was hooked. I can also recall the very early stages of the Young Lawyers Section and our very informal meetings with a group of young attorneys "talking about the old ones" and our various experiences in court and with clients. I specifically remember talking about the "old folks on the big Bar."

Now, 17 years later, I am one of those "old folks" with the honor of serving as president of the best local Bar in the country. Through the efforts of many, that small upstairs office on North Boulevard has been developed into an Association with its own building, a dynamic



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Continued on page 11

Oct. 15, 2008 – p.m. – Combine a final pre-trip mediation with repeated Blackberry glances at weather.com and AA.com. Omar is now almost a Cat 3, and it's on a beeline toward that needle in the haystack. Later reports say it's a tiny little thing, with hurricane winds extending a mere 15 miles from the eye. What are the chances? AA.com helps my confidence. Flight 775 remains "on time" for tomorrow a.m. I also check website for our resort hotel on the island. Wonder why the only remaining activity is "wind surfing"? Should I upgrade to a room with inline generator??

Oct. 16, 2008 (D-day) 3:00 a.m. – Our three different alarm clocks go off on cue and I groggily make my way to home computer, where AA.com says – yes! Flight 775 still on time. Wife asks why I don't check the weather before we invest in drive to N.O. I mock her pessimism. For Pete's sake, the airline hasn't even delayed our flight. Omar's radius is a mere 15 miles. We're in, I tell you. Goodbye, dogs. Hello, house sitter. Paradise (yawn), here we come. Omar, schmomar. Off we drive in the middle of the night to catch our N.O. flight.

Oct. 16, 2008 – 4:22 a.m. – Cell phone rings. Maybe it's Daughters I or II wishing us bon voyage. But why

are they calling from American Airlines number? The recording simply says "Flight 775 has been canceled. Check with American Airlines on its toll-free number to make other arrangements." While driving, I call the number and am placed on hold roughly between Sorrento and Laplace. I suspect I'm driving in the wrong direction, but don't dare risk missing my N.O. flight. At least I'm in St. John parish. Finally, an American person comes on the line and says the next available flight to VI on any airline is...8 days later. I call our VI resort. It is a recording. It is closed. The terrorists have won. Decisively. Fifteen freaking-mile radius.

Oct. 16, 2008 – 4:56 a.m. – Time for Plan B ("B" stands for busted flat in Laplace). Maybe we should just get off here or Destrehan. Or Lutchet. But would our cabana wear clash with the locals? We ultimately drive on to Destin where our wardrobe is more compatible and the annual coven of Louisiana lawyers is noticeably absent this time of year. And on our return to B.R., we will dutifully apply to FEMA for suitable compensation as displaced victims of Hurricane Omar. Next year? Maybe Antarctica. Or Port Allen.

Continued from page 5 — Letter from the president

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event calendar, an impressive budget, a superb staff, and of course our constant, Ann Scarle, as our executive director. We should all be proud that our Bar is well recognized across the country as one of the most dynamic and innovative Associations at any level. When Ann and I traveled to the ABA Conference in Chicago earlier this year, it was evident in speaking with other directors and other incoming presidents that the Baton Rouge Bar Association was a model for professionalism, member services and community involvement. So, how can we improve on what we have?

When Ann and I recently sat down to discuss initiatives and ideas for 2009, we both came to the conclusion that to continue with our standard of excellence, we need to continue to attract outstanding members and leaders. Accordingly, throughout 2009 you will continue to hear our theme of a "youth movement" to recruit and attract the plethora of talent that we have in our area. I offer my personal invitation to each of you who has not either been a member of the Bar, or has not been involved in an active leadership role, to please do so. We need you. I can assure you that there is no better opportunity to get to know the attorneys and judges that you have the privilege of practicing with and before. From a personal and professional standpoint, your time cannot be better spent.

As I conclude my inaugural president's letter, I imagine that 17 years from now, our incoming president will also reflect on the wonderful experiences that he or she has had with the Bar and the great pride and privilege that will be theirs in serving in this most distinguished role.

Again, thank you for your trust and confidence and I look forward to a great year and our "youth movement" in 2009.