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Louisiana State Bar Association Members, Martinet Society Receive Awards at Annual Meeting

NEW ORLEANS—Eleven Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) members and the Greater Baton Rouge Chapter of the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc. received awards during the Association's Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla. The awards were presented during ceremonies June 6.

• President's Awards

Six LSBA members (one recognized posthumously) received 2013 President's Awards. All recipients were chosen by 2012-13 LSBA President John H. Musser IV of New Orleans and were recognized for various services to the Association. Recognized were **Donald R. Abaunza**, New Orleans; **Robert A. Kutcher**, Metairie; **Winfield E. Little, Jr.**, Lake Charles; **Clyde Darrow Merritt** (posthumously), New Orleans; **Judge Harry F. Randow**, Alexandria; and **Judge Lisa Woodruff-White**, Baton Rouge.

Donald R. Abaunza of New Orleans was recognized for his overall contributions to the LSBA and specifically for his work with the LSBA's Committee on the Profession and the Legislation Committee.

Abaunza, an attorney for 44 years, served as president and managing partner of Liskow & Lewis, P.L.C., in New Orleans from 1996-2003. He has been the leader of the firm's offshore and maritime practice group for most of his career. He received his undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and his Juris Doctor degree in 1969 from Tulane Law School. From 1981-89, he taught trial advocacy as an adjunct professor at Tulane Law School. He served for many years on the Tulane Admiralty Law Institute Planning Committee and the Board of Advisors for the Tulane Maritime Law Center. He is a Master in the Tulane Inn of Court. He received the New Orleans Bar Association's Distinguished Maritime Attorney Award in 2008.

He has been active in the LSBA's House of Delegates for many years and has served several terms on the LSBA's Legislation Committee. He is the LSBA representative to the Legislature's Louisiana Judicial Compensation Commission. He is currently an elected member of the LSBA's Nominating Committee and is the past chair of the LSBA's Committee on Federal Uniform Rules. He received the LSBA President's Award in 1988. He is a Fellow and a former board member of the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF). He served on the LBF's Grants Committee and several other LBF committees. He is a longtime member and active participant in the Maritime Law Association and the Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute. He serves on the board of

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trustees of the Center for American and International Studies. He presented the general eulogy for deceased Louisiana judges and attorneys at the LSBA's 2012 Memorial Exercises conducted at the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Robert A. Kutcher of Metairie was recognized for his many contributions as chair of the LSBA's Audit Committee and as a member of the Continuing Legal Education Program Committee and the Legislation Committee.

Kutcher is a partner in the law firm of Chopin, Wagar, Richard & Kutcher, L.L.P., in Metairie. His practice is divided between business litigation and real estate work. He writes and speaks extensively on business entities, litigation issues, federal jurisdiction and ethics. He received his undergraduate degree in 1972 from Cornell University and his Juris Doctor degree, *cum laude*, in 1975 from Loyola University Law School.

He is a past chair of the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board, the New Orleans Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and the Louisiana Advisory Committee, U.S. Civil Rights Commission. He is a member of the LSBA's House of Delegates and has served several terms as House liaison to the Board of Governors. He also is active in several LSBA committees and is a Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. He has been listed in *Best Lawyers' 2013 New Orleans Litigation-Real Estate Lawyer of the Year*; *Best Lawyers in United States* in the practice areas of closely held companies and family business law, commercial litigation and litigation-real estate, 2012; *Louisiana Super Lawyers*, 2008-12; and *New Orleans CityBusiness Leadership in Law*, 2007.

Winfield E. Little, Jr. of Lake Charles was recognized for his overall contributions to the LSBA and specifically for his work to assist lawyers battling depression.

Little received a bachelor of science degree in physics from Louisiana Tech University. After serving in the U.S Air Force as a captain, he attended Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center, graduating with his Juris Doctor degree in 1974. He has practiced in Lake Charles since being admitted to the practice of law in 1974. He has been admitted to practice in all Louisiana courts, the Western District of Louisiana, the Middle District of Louisiana, the Eastern District of Louisiana, the 5th Circuit and the U.S. Tax Court.

He has served as an assistant bar examiner since 1980 and in the LSBA's House of Delegates for a number of terms representing the 14th Judicial District. He has recently completed his second term on the LSBA's Board of Governors, representing the 4th District. In 2000, he served as president of the Southwest Louisiana Bar Association.

He received his formal alternative dispute resolution training at the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine University School of Law.

Clyde Darrow Merritt of New Orleans was recognized, posthumously, for his lifetime of work providing criminal defense services to indigent defendants.

Mr. Merritt died on Dec. 11, 2012, at the age of 82. He served the New Orleans legal community for 49 years, as a longtime Orleans Parish public defender and before that as a prosecutor under ex-New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. He served in the United States Army and was a Korean War veteran.

In an earlier newspaper interview, Mr. Merritt said he took an early liking to criminal defense work. He credited his gravitation toward criminal defense to his Irish heritage and growing up "a poor man's son" to a father who lost his farm in the Great Depression.

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Judge Harry F. Randow of Alexandria was recognized for his considerable efforts to assist self-represented litigants in Louisiana.

Judge Randow is serving his 16th year as judge with the 9th Judicial District Court, currently serving as chief judge. During his service on the bench, he has presided over civil, criminal and juvenile dockets. He has served as the presiding judge for the Adult Drug Court Program for the past eight years. He received a bachelor of arts degree in 1965 from Louisiana State University and his Juris Doctor degree in 1971 from Loyola University Law School in New Orleans.

He is president of the Louisiana District Judges Association and chairs the Louisiana Supreme Court's Task Force on Pro Se Litigants. He is a member of the Louisiana Judicial College's Board of Governors and the Red River Delta Law Enforcement Planning Council's board of directors. He chaired the Louisiana District Judges Association/DOC Liaison Committee from 2008-12. He previously served as a member of the LSBA's Ethics 2000 Committee. He is a 2013 inductee into the Louisiana Judicial Hall of Fame and is a graduate of the Louisiana Judicial Leadership Institute.

Judge Lisa Woodruff-White of Baton Rouge was recognized for her considerable efforts to assist self-represented litigants in Louisiana as chair of the District Judges Association's Self-Represented Litigants Committee.

Judge White presides over the East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court, Division B. She worked for 10 years as a staff attorney, senior attorney and attorney supervisor for Support Enforcement Services. She was deputy secretary of the Louisiana Department of Social Services. She also served as statewide director of the Louisiana Child Support Program from 2001-04.

She chaired the Child Support Committee of the Louisiana State Law Institute. She authored a 1999 review of Louisiana Child Support Guidelines for the Louisiana Legislature that led to significant positive changes in Louisiana's child-support laws. She also chaired the Louisiana Child Support Guidelines Review Committee in 1999 and 2004. She initiated statewide public hearings and statewide surveys of judges, family law section lawyers, parents, and the general public on issues related to child-support guidelines.

She is an active board member of Habitat for Humanity of Louisiana and the Child and Youth Protection Advisory group. She is a former commissioner on Louisiana's Housing Finance Agency's board of directors, a former member of Louisiana's Interagency Council for the Homeless, a former vice president of the National Child Support Enforcement Association, a former executive board member of the National Council of Child Support board of directors, and a former president of the Southwest Regional Child Support Association.

• **Catherine D. Kimball Award for Advancement of the Administration of Justice**

James T. (Jay) Dixon, Jr. of Lake Charles received the 2013 Catherine D. Kimball Award for Advancement of the Administration of Justice. The award, named for former Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Catherine D. Kimball, is presented annually to an individual who has done exemplary work in advancing the administration of justice in Louisiana.

Dixon was born at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY, into an Army family. He moved throughout his childhood and graduated from high school in Madrid, Spain. After graduating from Bucknell University, he enrolled at Loyola University Law School in New Orleans to pursue a law degree.

Dixon's legal experience has been diverse. He served as a law clerk for Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Pike Hall. He had a private practice in New Orleans, while serving as contract counsel for the Jefferson

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Parish Public Defender's Office. He was a full-time line defender for the St. John the Baptist Parish Public Defender's Office. His next adventure was to serve as Attorney General for the Republic of Palau, a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean. Upon his return to the United States, he was the judicial administrator for the 12th Circuit Court for Virginia. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, he and his wife returned to Louisiana. He worked as a contract defender for the Lafayette Parish Public Defender's Office. He next accepted the position of chief public defender for Calcasieu and Cameron parishes (14th Judicial District), where he has served since 2011.

Dixon is credited with greatly improving the working relationships between Public Defender's Office (PDO) staff and 14th JDC judges and the district attorney's office. He has addressed his legislative delegation and strongly advocated for increased PDO funding. He instituted a PDO think tank for attorneys to strategize for trial. He began in-house training with attorneys teaching others courses in their skill strengths. He instituted an office policy that another attorney would always second-chair the trial. As such, the PDO's office has not lost a jury trial in a year and a half. The 14th JDC Public Defender's Office is now recognized as "the premier criminal defense firm in this district."

Chief Justice Kimball was sworn in as chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court in January 2009, becoming the first woman chief justice in Louisiana. Elected in November 1992 from the Fifth Supreme Court District, she also was the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court. She retired from the court in January 2013.

• **Stephen T. Victory Memorial Award**

David H. Ogwyn of Baton Rouge received the 2013 Stephen T. Victory Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, the LSBA's bimonthly magazine. He was recognized for his article, "Digital Asset Planning and Protection: Inventory, Provide Access and Leave Instructions," October/November 2012, Volume 60, Number 3.

Ogwyn, attorney and owner of Ogwyn Law Firm, L.L.C., in Baton Rouge, received his bachelor of science degree in 1997 from Louisiana State University and his Juris Doctor degree in 2001 from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center. His practice primarily focuses in the areas of business representation and litigation, oil and gas, and estate planning.

He is an active member of the Baton Rouge Bar Association, serving on the Volunteer Committee. He is a member of the American Bar Association and its Solo/Small Firm Group, as well as the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy.

In his community, he is chair of the board of directors for the West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce. He volunteers in the local public schools' reading programs and serves on the board of directors for the West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence.

The award's namesake, Stephen T. Victory, was a partner in the firm of Liskow & Lewis, P.L.C., in New Orleans. He served as LSBA secretary-treasurer and editor of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* from 1983-85. He died on Dec. 6, 1985.

• **Leah Hipple McKay Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteerism**

Catherine E. Lasky of New Orleans received the 2013 Leah Hipple McKay Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteerism. The award is in memory of Leah Hipple McKay, LSBA member and wife of former

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LSBA President Michael W. McKay of Baton Rouge. The award recognizes Louisiana attorneys and judges who have made significant long-term contributions in volunteerism.

Lasky, an attorney with the firm Jones, Swanson, Huddell & Garrison, L.L.C., has been practicing law since 2003 in the fields of complex commercial and bankruptcy litigation. She received her undergraduate degree, *magna cum laude*, in 1998 from Cornell University and her Juris Doctor degree, *cum laude*, in 2003 from Georgetown University Law Center.

Lasky chairs the board of directors of the New Orleans Pro Bono Project. From 2007-11, she was a 100-plus-hour volunteer with the New Orleans Pro Bono Project. She received the LSBA's 2006 Pro Bono Publico Award for her pro bono service to Louisiana's indigent.

She has routinely for 10 years served lunch at Ozanam Inn, a New Orleans homeless shelter, and has regularly volunteered to provide notarial services at homeless outreach centers in New Orleans. She took on a three-year volunteer commitment (2003-06) through the Boys Hope Girls Hope program. She built chicken coops for community gardens as part of her work with Hands On New Orleans in the recovery effort after Hurricane Katrina. Following the hurricane, she spent nearly two years providing weekly legal intake interviews and services for the Common Ground organization. She also was instrumental in starting the "Food from the Bar" program in New Orleans, designed to help lawyers support local food banks in their efforts to feed children during the summer months.

• Human Rights Awards

New Orleans attorney **J. Dalton Courson** and the **Greater Baton Rouge Chapter of the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc.** were 2013 recipients of the Human Rights Award.

J. Dalton Courson of New Orleans, a member of the firm Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann, L.L.C., in New Orleans, maintains a litigation practice focused on business litigation and insurance coverage disputes. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Since 2011, he has served as co-chair for the LGBT Litigator Committee of the American Bar Association Section of Litigation, which supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lawyers and offers a forum for discussion on the unique issues LGBT attorneys face in their practices. He authored "Reality Check: Combating Implicit Bias," an article on unconscious bias and its impact on LGBT lawyers, published this year in the LSBA's publication *Bar Briefs* and by the Section of Litigation in *Litigation News*. He also presented a discussion on the issue of schools, bullying and the law for the New Orleans Bar Association, and he co-authored "Title IX Liability for Anti-Gay Bullying," published in *LGBT Litigator*. He is a former member of the Litigation Section's Diversity Committee.

In 2012, the National LGBT Bar Association named Courson as one of the "Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40." From 2006-11, he served on the board of directors for AIDS Law of Louisiana, Inc., a nonprofit organization formed to meet the legal needs of low-income Louisianans living with HIV. He was selected as AIDS Law co-chair for 2010-11.

The **Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc.** was founded in 1957 by several African-American lawyers in the New Orleans area. The organization's current mission is to encourage the exchange of ideas that transcend the African-American community, promote the administration of justice, advance the science of jurisprudence, and uphold and maintain the order and ethics of the courts and the legal profession.

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The Society's Greater Baton Rouge Chapter has and continues to fulfill this mission through its Pro Bono Project, collaborations with other organizations and law schools, and through affiliation with the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project operated with Southern University Law Center. The Chapter also awards annual scholarships to high school, college and law students, and touches the lives of pre-school children in the East Baton Rouge Parish school system through its "Reading from the Start" program.

The Chapter has sponsored and/or hosted meetings, seminars and Diversity Conclaves with the LSBA. In 2012, the Chapter co-sponsored a panel presentation with the American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession. In January 2013, the Chapter partnered with the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Defender's Office to present "Expungement Day." This event served more than 400 citizens, returning convicted felons and individuals burdened by arrest records back to the workforce. The Chapter supported minority attorneys of Baton Rouge as they fought to have an additional minority judgeship added to the Louisiana 1st Circuit Court of Appeal. The Chapter also worked with the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus and local Council members to educate minorities in low-income areas on the various movements taking place with respect to Louisiana voter redistricting.

• **John Ashby Hernandez III Memorial Award for Francophone Leadership**

John A. Hernandez, Jr. of Lafayette, a partner in the Lafayette law firm of Hernandez and Hernandez, A.P.L.C., is the first recipient of the award which bears his son's name. His son, John A. Hernandez III, known by many as "T-Jean," died on Sept. 3, 2012, at the age of 44.

Both father and son were strong supporters of the French language, culture and civil law and often traveled abroad to French-speaking countries to support the mission. Both father and son were charter members of the LSBA's Francophone Section, with T-Jean serving as chair at the time of his death. His father is currently serving as a member of the Executive Committee in honorarium.

Both father and son co-chaired the Judge Allen M. Babineaux International Civil Law Symposium, which established international relationships for Louisiana with Francophone countries such as Canada, France, Haiti and Belgium.

High-resolution photos of award recipients are available for download at:

<http://www.lsba.org/GoTo/2013PhotosAwards>.

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 21,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state's residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.