



By Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr.

A Few Last Words as President

"We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."

—John F. Kennedy

In the last few weeks, I have thought more and more about being in the home-stretch of my presidency. With that in mind, it was my initial intention to write about what the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) has accomplished over this year. I was going to start off by writing about the LSBA's increased efforts at outreach to our members throughout the state. As one of those rare presidents from north Louisiana, outreach was a major objective and I believe we have made great strides in furthering that objective. With our new Outreach Committee and Regional Panels, we are pursuing innovative ways to involve more of our members in what the LSBA does.

I was going to impress upon you the LSBA's recognition of the increasing diversity of our lawyer population in Louisiana, and the LSBA's commitment to removing barriers that restrict persons of diverse backgrounds from participating in the profession and seeking to achieve greater inclusion. I was going to commend our staff



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. with Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson at the 2014 Annual Meeting Louisiana Supreme Court Reception in Destin, Fla. Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

on the excellent Conclave on Diversity in the Legal Profession in March. I was going to emphasize the advancements we have made in the area of access to justice with our support of pro bono programs, our work with legal services, and our innovations in court self-help resource centers and other self-represented litigant assistance. I was going to discuss the Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP), our new program working with libraries across the state, and the continued expansion of our self-represented litigant efforts with district courts. I was going to note that we just received reports indicating that literally thousands of people have been assisted through these self-help undertakings.

I was going to remind you that the LSBA has increased its support for the Lawyers Assistance Program (LAP) by expanding the resources it has available to help our

membership in times of trouble. I was going to make sure that you were aware that the LSBA has served its members well over the last year through the continuance and improvement of such important services as Fastcase and free CLE programs, the Ethics Advisory Service and the Client Assistance Fund, our Lawyer Fee Dispute Resolution Program and our Diversion Program, just to name a few.

I then began reflecting upon what it has meant to serve as LSBA president and what I will remember most about that year. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new." I immediately knew that my few last words as president would have to be words of thanks. I want to begin by thanking *you* for allowing me the privilege of serving as president. It has been a humbling experience. Sure, it has been a

lot of hard work, but it has accorded me the opportunity to visit legal communities across the state and elsewhere and to meet, work with, and sometimes just observe and admire an untold number of attorneys who devote considerable time and effort to the betterment of our profession. Most of them are unsung heroes. They do good things just to have done good things and do not look for credit.

I also want to express my gratitude to the many judges with whom I have had the distinct pleasure of working — judges who tirelessly spend hours upon hours in service of the public and the profession. Few know how hard each and every one of the Justices of our Supreme Court work behind the scenes to advance important initiatives. If you think that all the justices do is review writs, read records and write opinions, you are wrong. In that regard, I must extend a special thanks to Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson for the work that she does, how devoted she is to the profession, and the assistance she has provided in furtherance of the objectives of the LSBA.

I also would be remiss in not mentioning two judges who I have admired for their hard work and devotion. The first is Judge C. Wendell Manning from Monroe. I have had the chance to work with Judge Manning, who is currently the president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, not only on Foundation matters but also in connection with other activities and committees. He is truly committed to the citizens of our state and providing them with access to justice. The second judge I must recognize is Judge Jay C. Zainey of New Orleans. He is devoted to the wellness of our profession. Judge Zainey's work with SOLACE is an inspiration for all of us. And, with all that he does, he was still willing to help with the restructuring of LAP when I called upon him.

Further, I want to thank the many volunteers who I have worked with at the LSBA. There are numerous lawyers statewide who serve in our House of Delegates, on our Board of Governors, and as chairs or members of the Bar's committees who are working hard every day for you. In particular, I want to thank the Immediate Past President Richard Leefe for his guidance, for filling in whenever we have needed him, and for his friendship. He provided me with



Presidents Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr., John H. Musser IV, Richard K. Leefe, James (Jimmy) J. Davidson III and Michael A. Patterson at the 2013 Annual Meeting. *Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.*

a great example of how it should be done. I also want to thank the many past presidents of the Bar who have helped me along the way (from this old guy's perspective, there is much to be said for the advice of old guys), especially John Musser, Jimmy Davidson and Guy deLaup who, along with Richard and their better halves (Barat, Stephanie, Kay and Mickey), have made Jane and I feel welcome. I want to thank our President-Elect Mark Cunningham for his leadership in the improvements that have been made with LAP and his assistance and input on many other important activities of the Bar. I am confident that he is well prepared to assume leadership of the LSBA and I ask that all of you help him in any way you are able.

I want to add another couple of special thanks to Barry Grodsky and LSBA Past President Marta-Ann Schnabel. If I did not already know it before I became president, it did not take long for me to confirm that Barry and Marta are always there if you need them. Barry's contributions in furtherance of the Supreme Court-ordered mentoring program, as Secretary of the Bar, as Editor of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* and on other projects too numerous to mention cannot be understated. The same can be said for Marta. Her leadership and hard work are incredibly important to LSBA efforts to advance access to justice, and she has willingly assisted me with the improvements made in LAP and on other important issues during the last year.

A much deserved thanks goes to the staff of the LSBA. These "guys" work really hard. The Bar is under the expert leadership of our Executive Director Loretta Larsen who has been employed in that capacity for more than 20 years and who is recognized by her peers as being one of the best. It would have been nearly impossible to effectively

serve as president of the Bar without input, advice, direction and counsel from Loretta. Moreover, she has assembled a formidable team to assist her. From the Associate Executive Director Cheri Grodsky to the Directors Monte Mollere (Access to Justice), Denise Tingstrom (Administration), Kelly Ponder (Communications), Tony LaVerde (Information Technology) and Tricia Pierre (Outreach and Diversity) to the support personnel in each department, I have found every one of them to be knowledgeable and always ready to help.

Finally, and last but not least, I want to thank my family, friends and partners. Being LSBA president brings with it a substantial commitment of time. It is not something I could have done (or even considered doing) without the support and encouragement of my wife of 41 years, Jane, and my daughters, Shawn and Shannon. They have seen considerably less of me over the last few years (something which Jane has not complained of as much as I thought she would) and had to do more in my absence. I also must thank my partners at Bradley Murchison Kelly & Shea. They have worked harder so that I could serve, and I truly appreciate it.

So there are the words of thanks. As you can see, what I will remember the most from my experience of being president of the Louisiana State Bar Association are the people — the people who made it possible for me to serve, the people who inspired me to serve, and the people who helped me to serve — "my friends, the old and the new." It has been a rewarding journey, indeed. Thank you.