



By Robert A. Kutcher

What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been

As I end my term as Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) President, I think back to our theme from last year's Annual Meeting, "Evolution of the Profession: What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been." The past year has certainly been a long, strange trip. It also has been one of the most enjoyable, satisfying, fun and challenging years of my life.

Unfortunately, as I write this, I am home practicing social distancing. Certainly, we could have done without the COVID-19 crisis. In less than a week, our world was turned upside down, and we were all forced to face the new realities of schools, restaurants, bars, movie theatres and gyms closing. I'm reminded of one of the lines from *My Cousin Vinny*, one of the great lawyer movies of all time. When Vinny shows up in court in his maroon circus outfit, his answer to the judge was that the whole store got the flu. Well, our entire world is closed for the flu, but we will get through it. We are resilient and the Bar is here to help. Please check our website for updates and advice.

Over the course of the year, I have had the opportunity to travel the state and meet with local and specialty Bar leaders and members. Much like Johnny Cash, "I've been everywhere, man."

My thanks go to all the local Bars — including the Alexandria Bar Association, the Southwest Louisiana Bar Association, the Lafayette Bar Association, the Shreveport Bar Association, the Baton Rouge Bar Association, the 22nd Judicial District Court Bar Association and the 4th Judicial District Court Bar Association

— for their kind invitations to attend their court opening and memorial exercises. Those events exemplify what this profession should be. We honor those who preceded us and welcome the new lawyers who will follow us. I enjoyed every event I attended and thank the officers and directors of each Bar Association for inviting me. For those who have not attended these events, I strongly encourage you to not only join your local Bar Association but to attend a court opening next year. It will make you feel good about our profession.

Overall, however, our Bar has had a very productive year. With the help of the Bar staff, we are well on our way to implementing our Strategic Plan. The world is an ever-changing place, and it is vital that we are prepared to face the challenges of the future. Like the world, our profession is not static. We either evolve or face irrelevance and extinction. Our Strategic Plan will help us evolve and be better prepared to handle the demands of the future. The practice of law is ever-changing, and we need to be prepared.

Despite the shifting landscape, there is one constant. Our profession is based on an unwavering commitment to the rule of law, which is simply a set of principles for ensuring an orderly and just society. The same law should be applied to everyone. Everyone should have access to the court system. The law is the cornerstone of a society. We should all be proud to be lawyers because we protect rights and vindicate wrongdoing. It is up to us to guard our system of justice. Civility is important. We can disagree without being disagreeable. Yelling and screaming are not the same as zealous

advocacy. Civility and professionalism are the bedrock of our profession. That is the foundation upon which our profession rests. Especially in these chaotic times of tribalism and polarization, all of us, lawyers and judges, should strive to uphold the ideals of our profession and uphold the rule of law.

Our predecessors have always been in the forefront of social policy and justice. It is up to us to follow suit. We all swore an oath to uphold the Constitution and should do so.

We, as lawyers, must commit to the impartial administration of justice for all. We must commit to the rule of law. The simple reality is that we are an integral part of our society. Despite the changing times, that will not change.

We also have a duty to address unwarranted attacks on our judiciary. It is the foundation of the system upon which the law sits. It is up to us to safeguard the integrity of the judicial system. If we don't, who will?

It is customary in the President's last message to thank everyone for their help and assistance, and far be it from me to do otherwise. This is a time-consuming and demanding job, and it could not be done without the help of so many people.

First and foremost, we are fortunate to have as our partners in the profession the Supreme Court which is so supportive of the Bar and its goal. Our success is a direct result of the Court's support. Until you speak with Bar leaders in other states, you don't recognize how valuable it is to have a working relationship with the Court. Our Bar is very fortunate.

I also thank the Board of Governors

and executive officers for their commitment and input. Our Board is diverse and truly represents the membership of the Bar. Although we have different practices and different political views, all of us on the Board care very deeply about our profession.

As any former President will tell you, this job could not be done without the support of the Bar staff, led by Loretta Larsen and Cheri Grodsky. They make our jobs easy. I literally could not have done this without their advice and counsel.

This job also could not be done without the support of my partners, especially Nicole Tygier, and our assistants, Julie Wisecarver and Celeste Pfeifferle.

I am very pleased to leave the Bar in good hands. I know our next President, Alainna Mire, and President-Elect, Minor Pipes, will do a great job. This is not an easy job, and it does take a village. I look forward to their leadership.

The reality of a one-year term is that you can only build on what your predecessor did and lay a foundation for what your successor will do. Over the course of the year, I have also been fortunate to have an excellent relationship not only with Alainna Mire but also with my friend and immediate past President, Barry Grodsky. The Bar is fortunate to have such committed leaders.

So, as I ride off into the sunset, I remember any number of “bye-bye”

songs, some sad, some happy. From an older generation, there is Bob Hope’s “Thanks for the Memories” or “I’ll Be Seeing You” by Billie Holiday and any number of other artists. Peter, Paul and Mary’s version of “Leaving on a Jet Plane” is a classic. From my childhood, there are “Happy Trails to You” and “See You Later, Alligator.” More recently, there is “(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life” or Alicia Keys’ romantic “Goodbye.” There is certainly no shortage of songs. But I choose to end this message and this year by closing, just as I did in opening, with the good old Grateful Dead, so:

“Truckin’, I’m a goin’ home.”

From the Editor

LSBA Response to COVID-19

By the time this issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* goes to press and you receive it in the mail, life in Louisiana will have changed dramatically. This is particularly true with the practice of law. As schools, courts and many businesses are closed, every day brings more changes. As the pandemic escalates, and in the interests of health and welfare of our people and communities, many of our members are now working remotely from home, with one eye on the computer and the other eye on kids or grandkids.

Yes, it’s a different world today, and though what the coming weeks will bring is uncertain, a measure of our excellence will be shown in how we adapt to these complex and changing circumstances. As one managing partner of a leading law firm said, “We are in a unique moment of understandable objective and subjective business and personal anxiety. The situation, and related family and client

environments, is rapidly evolving and we need to be current and agile in making the necessary judgment calls as the need arises.”

Rest assured that your Louisiana State Bar Association is here to help. Please closely monitor the LSBA website for continued updates that may affect your practice, and let us know if you need help in any way.

I don’t know if normalcy will have returned by the time this issue of the *Journal* reaches you, but we will eventually get back to normal. In the meantime, keep each of our members in your thoughts and prayers.

—Patrick A. Talley, Jr.
LSBA Secretary
and *Journal* Editor



COVID-19 Response

Access the LSBA’s Website for Latest Information on COVID-19 Response

For the most up-to-date information on the LSBA’s response to COVID-19, including office closures, Bar program cancellations/postponements, and links to court, state and additional resources, go to: www.lsba.org.

**COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Updates and Information**
www.lsba.org