

President's Page

by Patrick M. Flaherty, KCBA 2007-08 President

Our Anniversary

The practice of law is about passion: passion for principles and ideals; passion for advocacy and debate; passion for critical thinking and intellectual exchange; passion for language and words; and passion for creativity and ideas. But most of all, at its core, it is about passion for helping people.

The KCBA begins in 2008 a celebration of 150 years of helping people. We celebrate this anniversary, not to recognize an organization, but to honor what it represents: the enormous contribution of members to the prosperity and decency of the communities in which they live. It is a celebration of the life work of lawyers and judges who have comprised the KCBA over 29 presidents, 8 (disclosed) wars and profound social and technological change (paraphrasing Attorney Bill Murphy).

Our birth in 1858 very likely makes the KCBA the oldest bar organization in Illinois. We predate the Chicago Bar Association (1874), the Illinois State Bar Association (1877), the DuPage County Bar Association (1879) and the Winnebago County Bar Association (1906). Underscoring the link between law and society, formation of the KCBA followed shortly after settlement of the communities we serve: Aurora in 1834, Batavia in 1833, Geneva in 1833, St. Charles in 1834, Elgin in 1834 and Kane County in 1836. Any lingering debate about the vital role of the legal profession in a democratic society ends with the

recent images of the wholesale arrest of lawyers and judges in Pakistan as the first step to imposing tyranny.

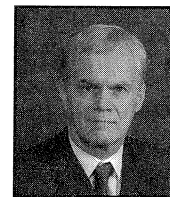
It is impossible to list all of the contributions made by KCBA members over the past fifteen decades. It is not an overstatement to say, however, that every step forward, every advance, in both the public and private arena, has benefitted from contributions by the legal profession. I only have to look down the hall in my office to be reminded of stunning examples.

In 1958, on behalf of fourteen children severely injured in a fiery school bus crash, Lambert Ochsenschlager and Bill Murphy filed the seminal case that led to abolition of sovereign immunity in Illinois and the requirement that public entities state-wide stand accountable for negligent conduct. (*Molitor v Kaneland Community Unit School District 302* (1959) 18 Ill.2d. 11, 163 N.E.2d. 89) In 1994, Pat Kinnally led a pro bono legal challenge to allow homeless children in Hesel House to remain students in the school they attended before becoming homeless, which ultimately led to passage of the Illinois Education for Homeless Children's Act (105 ILCS 45/1).

We have come a long way in 150 years: from quills and parchment and mail by beast to wireless, paperless, 24/7 mobile communication; from racial and gender exclusion to affirmative action. And while progress has been dramatic, problems remain. The diversity of our profession still

does not reflect the diversity of our population. This disparity is clearly not the result of local decisions or policies. It reflects a systemic problem nationally, the consequences of oppressively unequal economic opportunity. It is, nonetheless, an issue we should strive to address. And as Martin Luther King said: "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, it comes only through continuous vigilance and struggle."

The KCBA will be celebrating this sesquicentennial with a variety of events throughout the year. Please look for the announcements and participate in as many as you can. I invite all members to submit other examples of contributions by local lawyers or stories, funny, poignant, educational, uplifting or redemptive, about people, places or events in KCBA history. We can only tell the complete history with your help. Best wishes to you and your families for a happy and healthy New Year.



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**See page 15 for our 150th Anniversary
scheduled events and updates!**