



It's Been A Great Ride

As my time on the State Bar Board of Governors comes to an end, I thought I would take a moment to reflect on where it all began for me, what we have accomplished, and what we can do to improve our profession going forward.

After my admission to the Bar in 1994, I became involved with the Young Lawyers Division. It was easy to do because I was already a member. All lawyers under age 37 or less than five years in practice are members.

They make up approximately one-third of the Bar. YLD got me hooked into State Bar service, and I never looked back.

YLD is considered to be the "public service" arm of the Bar. YLD provided me numerous educational, networking, social, pro bono and public service opportunities. It was through YLD that I ran the Modest Means Project for many years, helping connect lawyers with individuals making too much money to qualify for free legal aid but not enough to afford an attorney.

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These individuals, known as the "working poor," often need legal assistance with basic family, housing and consumer matters. The Project was a joint effort of attorneys, paralegals and law student volunteers who ran a two-hour clinic every week for five years. And it was through the Modest Means Project that I met my wife, who was serving as a volunteer.

I am proud that the Modest Means Project is still going strong as a web-based program and is now run through a joint partnership of the State Bar and the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education. Thousands of Arizonans have received help through this award-winning program, which they would not have received otherwise but for the generous pro bono efforts of many Arizona attorneys who have graciously volunteered their time.

I encourage all "young" lawyers to consider becoming more involved with YLD. You won't be disappointed. In addition to the many pro bono and public service opportunities offered by YLD to its members, it hosts fun social events that are great networking opportunities. And I understand they even let us "older" lawyers join them from time to time.

Shortly after I was elected to the Board of Governors in 2001, I began urging the board to consider other ways that we as attorneys can help increase access to justice. The board shared my desire to help those in need, and through our efforts over the past 10 years we have increased the resources available to the legal aid organizations who help the indigent

with critical legal matters and provided lawyers the ability to give back in many ways.

This would not have been possible without the hard work of the Access to Justice Task Forces assembled by the board in 2003 and 2011, and the many judges, attorneys and public members who volunteered their time to study the system and make recommendations for improvement. The recommendations were largely adopted and put in place by the board and in some instances by the Arizona Supreme Court.

The high point of my service on the board came in 2010 when the board voted unanimously to amend its mission statement to include enhancing "access to justice" as a paramount goal of the organization. I leave the board with the satisfaction of knowing that access to justice will continue to remain a focus of the board long into the future.

We have been granted a great privilege by virtue of being licensed to practice law. Our profession will only thrive if we as attorneys promote the administration of justice through our individual efforts and service to the State Bar. My many years of Bar service have been so personally and professionally rewarding. I hope that you will consider becoming more involved with the State Bar.

It's been a great 11 years serving as one of your elected attorney members of the State Bar Board of Governors and as president this past year. I've decided to step aside at the end of my term to give another Maricopa County lawyer an opportunity to sit in my seat. Although I'm sad to leave, I'm happy that I will be replaced by someone who will bring fresh ideas and perspectives to the board, which is critical to the long-term success of any organization.

The future of the State Bar is in good hands. The Bar's board, officers and staff are as good as it gets. It's been a pleasure and honor to work with all of them these many years, and I thank them as well as all of you for allowing me this opportunity to serve as your elected representative and president. I wish you all continued success. 

