



THINGS I LEARNED AS STATE BAR PRESIDENT

BRUCE BEESLEY, PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

“With a bar association that is 9,000 strong, we have, with very few exceptions, produced competent, hard-working and ethical practitioners for 80 years, who care not only about the profession as a whole, but how it is practiced in the state of Nevada.”

My term as state bar president was fun, time-consuming, sometimes frustrating, tiring and rewarding. I want to share a few things I’ve learned during this last year.

1. Seriously injuring yourself two weeks before being sworn in is not a good way to start a presidency.
2. If you get to be president of the State Bar of Nevada, hope that you are blessed by support executives as talented and hard-working as Kimberly Farmer and Gale Skala. Kimberly is the executive director of the state bar and Gale is her assistant. Kimberly’s connections with the American Bar Association benefit the State Bar of Nevada by identifying issues facing each of us before we read about them. She facilitates discussions where there are diverse points of view, providing our state bar with information from other bar associations. She has done a good job managing transitions within the bar office and among the Board of Governors and she helps the bar association stay relevant with its members by questioning the value of our activities and our traditions. Throughout it all, she has kept her wonderful sense of humor... needed when working for 9,000 attorneys.
3. Be careful in throwing out challenges to your colleagues. I urged all of us to make our law firms more “green.” It is

Gale, Kim’s assistant, is equally talented and hard-working, making travel, lodging and conference arrangements for the Board of Governors, bar staff, committee members and others. In my eight years of working with her, I have always arrived in the right place on the right day. She keeps diligent records on board policies and decisions, since it is difficult to remember what we did yesterday, not to mention eight years ago.

not as easy as I thought it would be. While my firm is committed to having a “green office” and has implemented many of the things recommended in my column, such as using compact fluorescent light bulbs, reducing the use of plastic water bottles and encouraging all employees to turn off their computers when not in use, some identified goals have not been as easily achieved. What can be recycled – cans, plastic, paper, toner cartridges, etc. – varies from city to city. There isn’t a comprehensive recycling program even within one state. Energy Star electronics are not always readily available and people, including me, are not always fully cooperative in the firm’s “greening” efforts.



4. Having a supportive law firm and partners makes for a good year as president. My firm, Beckley Singleton, joined Lewis and Roca about nine months before I became president. Neither they nor I realized that the job would take about a third of my time but they helped with my caseload, tried to schedule firm obligations around my bar activities and took the lead in financially supporting the bar’s annual conventions.
5. Nevada’s unmet legal needs demand the bar’s constant and unceasing attention. Approximately 75 percent of those needing legal help don’t receive it. We can’t all work for legal aid organizations or provide pro bono assistance. We can and should encourage our banks to increase their interest rates on IOLTA accounts or move our accounts to banks that have the highest interest rates. The difference between 2 percent and .00003 percent in interest can go a long way in serving the unmet legal needs in our state.

State Bar of Nevada
MISSION

Our mission is to govern the legal profession, to serve our members, and to protect the public interest.

6. We need to be vocal advocates for the appointment of judges through the Modified Missouri Plan the legislature is now considering. While my long-time friend, the retired Hon. Larry Sage, and others oppose merit selection, I am convinced that it is a better way to choose judges in present-day Nevada. If the proposal is approved by the voters of Nevada, we will still have great judges on the bench but we'll avoid the perception of impropriety and undue influence that hovers over our justice system... and we'll save a lot of campaign contributions and be relieved of judicial campaign ads on television to boot.

7. It is important to pay close attention to your well-being. The office of presidency provides many opportunities for excessive eating, sedentary behavior, high stress and other negative activities. I was fortunate enough to lose about 25 pounds as a result of breaking my neck shortly before becoming president. Not everyone will have this advantage. As I said in one of my columns, life is too short to waste hating anyone; don't take yourself too seriously, no one else does; call your family often.

8. Being a member of the State Bar of Nevada is a privilege that is worth the price of admission. The State Bar of Nevada has existed for 80 years. As I noted in my first column, a surprising number of Nevada's pioneering legal families continue to participate and contribute to the Nevada legal community today. For over 80 years, families such as Guild, Cooke, Foley, Woodburn-Vlautin, Earl, Breen, Brown, Ham, Bilyeu, Cafferata and Morse have contributed Supreme Court justices, state and federal judges, attorneys general, district attorneys and capable lawyers. With a bar association that is 9,000 strong, we have, with very few exceptions, produced competent, hard-working and ethical practitioners for 80 years, who care not only about the profession as a whole, but how it is practiced in the state of Nevada. From Elko to Ely to Carson to Las Vegas to Reno, not to mention Tonopah and Yerington, our bar would do Abraham Lincoln proud. I certainly am.

9. Behind every successful attorney is a wonderful secretary. Roxanne Maples has been my secretary, assistant, paralegal and friend for 25 years. She has kept my calendar, my clients and my legal acumen in good order for all of that period. She didn't run for the Board of Governors but she made the endeavor possible, rescheduling my work to make sure it didn't interfere with bar activities, keeping me on time and on track in responding to pleadings and attending hearings and taking away my e-mail privileges when she recognized that my neck injury was interfering with what I assumed were witty responses.

10. When thanking those who work with you and help you, do not forget to acknowledge your wife, husband or significant other. My wife, Ann Morgan, whom I forgot to mention at last year's swearing-in, has been the reason for any success I've had professionally or with the bar. She has been a constant supporter, cheerleader, proofreader and editor throughout my career and presidency. She is also a great lawyer, hot chick, friend and bar examiner. Thank you, Ann Morgan, for everything.

It has been a privilege to serve as the State Bar of Nevada's 80th president. **NL**

**LEWIS
AND
ROCA**
— LLP —
LAWYERS



RECYCLING SPONSOR

This issue of *Nevada Lawyer* magazine is printed on recycled paper containing a minimum of 10 percent post-consumer fiber. Special thanks to Lewis and Roca LLP for sponsoring the use of recycled paper for this issue.