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Message from the President

Kathleen Jane England, State Bar of Nevada President



A Day in the Life of a Bar President (Actually, A Week!)

"The trail
is the thing,
not the end
of the trail.
Travel too fast
and you miss
all you are
traveling for."

Louis L'Amour

Monday afternoon, November 2, 2009, my excitement builds as I check e-mails before leaving the office. I'm delighted that the Board of Governors' rural representative, Mason Simons, Family Court Master, has arranged many meetings for our excellent Elko adventure. Along with intrepid traveler Kim Farmer, Executive Director of the State Bar of Nevada, we lift off from Las Vegas at 6 p.m., take an hour-long flight to Salt Lake, wait around, then stuff ourselves into a tiny plane to travel back in time to Elko (there's a time change difference). Small world: I am seated next to Leonora Digrazia, whose husband practices in Elko. It is cold and dark upon arrival at 10 p.m., but I tour by driving by the most famous sites in downtown Elko.

A beautiful day dawns on Tuesday, November 3. (OK, admittedly, I am not up that early; I am just speculating.) We breakfast at the Elko Hilton Garden Inn high above the city, enjoying beautiful, sweeping views down the valley and up to snow-capped mountains. We make our way to the Northeastern Nevada Juvenile Center to meet Mason and are treated to a tour. He accompanies us to the Elko courthouse, where we are welcomed by Judge Andrew Puccinelli. For our meeting in his jury room, we are joined by the aforementioned Mason, Judge Al Kacin, and Carlin Justices of the Peace (senior) Barbara Nethery and Teri Feasal. They tell us about their challenges in administering justice, especially issues related to judicial education, lawyer civility and legal requirements attendant to issuing warrants by fax.

Next, we enjoy a true Elko treat: lunch at the famous Basque restaurant, The Star, with the Elko County Bar Association. We even get CLE! President Rob Salyer graciously allows me a few minutes to speak about the state bar. There's a great turnout for Rich Barrows' succinct presentation about legislation passed in the last session, where he occasionally calls upon me to explain how a particular bill is addressing



Bar president,
Kathy England,
on the bench
of the Lovelock
courthouse.

something bad that happened in Las Vegas (and didn't stay there, apparently).

Leaving, we stop in at the Elko Chamber of Commerce housed in the old Sherman Ranch buildings. I learn of the upcoming Cowboy Poetry Festival in January (did they pick that date for the weather?) and purchase watercolors of Lamoille. On the road, we enjoy a picture-perfect northern Nevada afternoon for a two-hour drive to Winnemucca. The beauty of the stark mountains against a beautiful sunset reminds me why I love Nevada.

During Tuesday evening's dinner at the historic Martin Hotel we share lamb, laughter and some serious discussion with Judges Wagner and Montero of Lovelock, Pershing County District Attorney Jim Shirley, Humboldt County District Attorney Russell Smith, the ubiquitous Mason Simons and other local practitioners. They speak of their concerns: economic pressures on counties, funding of court services, scarcity of new practitioners, lawyer civility and CLE for the rurals.

After a drive from Winnemucca to Lovelock, we get another warm welcome by Judge Wagner and his law clerk, Craig Chambers, to the unique round courthouse in Lovelock. It was designed 80 years ago, we are told, to be different than the competing one built at the same time in Humboldt County. We receive a briefing by those putting together a domestic relations mediation program, then Donna Giles, County Clerk, gives us a fascinating tour of her 80-year-old office with its ancient hand-written docket books and an imposing safe. Most impressive is the round courtroom itself, with the jury box in the middle. A proud Judge Wagner beams as he shows us how modern technology has been integrated into the most unusual courtroom I have ever been in and we see the footstools he built for each juror's seat. He explains the architecture, decorations and incredible acoustics. Downstairs, we peek into the round room directly beneath the round courtroom. Judge Wagner insists we be introduced to all the Pershing County Commission during their meeting. Commissioners politely laugh when I say we need to take our leave because we are on our way to Reno to help swear in more lawyers and that I'm certain they are in favor of having more lawyers in Nevada. Now I am on their correspondence list.

Before leaving Lovelock, we lunch at the Cowpoke Café and are delighted to join some of the court personnel we've just met. Then it's on to Reno. We arrive at the Siena Hotel for the new admittee ceremony in time to hang out in the green room (which isn't green) with dignitaries and members of the judiciary. Imagine my surprise to learn that my remarks as state bar president will follow those of Governor Jim Gibbons! Afterward, we attend the Washoe County Bar reception and get back to Las Vegas that night. I have one day (Thursday) in the office for my (real) day job.

Friday morning, November 6, finds me at the Gaming Law Section's Annual Gaming Law seminar at the Rio Hotel. I give a welcome speech, then am off to a State & Federal Judicial Conference meeting in the federal courthouse downtown. I head back to the Rio to catch the end of gaming keynote speaker Frank Fahrenkopf's presentation, then hang out until the Las Vegas new admittee ceremony. A bigger surprise awaits me: my bar president remarks will follow Governor Gibbons and Senator John Ensign. Finally, I wrap up the week by enjoying the Clark County Bar Association's reception for the new admittees and the 'meet your judges' mixer.

Who said being bar president was work? ■