



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael J. Herd

“Are You Willing To Commit?”

It is with pleasure and humility that I write this first of many monthly columns. As president it is my responsibility to both inform and hopefully inspire our membership concerning achievements of the association and opportunities to serve. The WBA has been a vibrant and contributing professional association since 1915. Its institutional legacy is somewhat overwhelming. As all WBA officers and Board of Governors so routinely attest, we are one of the best bar associations in the country for what we offer and deliver to our members and the community at large. It is my goal this year to maintain this legacy of commitment to service and to continually ask our members “Are you willing to commit?”

I have been involved in the WBA for many years. I have served on and chaired various practice and service committees and have held offices on the Executive Board. If I do not have a sense of what the WBA represents by now, we are all in trouble. This past year I have been “practicing” to be president. As Lee Woodard so aptly reminded me, enjoy your president-elect year for you have a great title and no responsibility. Working under the leadership of Bill Townsley has been enjoyable and rewarding. He has the unique ability to use humor to inspire action and diffuse conflict. It is unfair that he has set the bar so high with membership up, revenues exceeding expectation, and all with no controversies or lawsuits. Knowing that there is only opportunity for me to take the association down, I have challenged the officers and Board of Governors to look for controversy and lawsuits. All kidding aside, we owe a great debt of gratitude for Bill’s leadership and accomplishments for our association. I only hope that I can measure up to his legacy.

I have been president of other not-for-profit associations before. The success of such associations is dependent upon the systems established and administered by the executive director and staff. We are so deeply blessed with having Karin Kirk at the helm overseeing an unbelievably qualified staff. It is a well-oiled machine devoted to serving each member and the association’s general responsibilities.

Like many before me, I come to serve derivative of a family legacy to the practice of law and service to the profession. I am a fourth generation lawyer from Coldwater, Kansas. My great-grandfather, Dick H. Rich, read for the law and was admitted to practice in 1903. My grandfather, Horace H. Rich, was a KU grad and admitted in 1921. My father, Justice Harold S. Herd, was a Washburn grad and admitted in 1946. They loved the profession and associating with members of their profession. They did not measure their success by their wealth but by their service. Contained in their

career legacy are many service positions inclusive of city and county attorney, mayor, Kansas Board of Regents, state senator and state Supreme Court justice. (My brother, Skip, is now a three-term county attorney practicing in Coldwater.) They cherished their involvement in professional associations. My father had the deepest respect for the WBA. He was a somewhat frequent speaker and spoke at one Law Day in the 90’s. He would always attend the KBA when in Wichita to see our legendary Bar Show. My father encouraged me to be actively involved in the WBA. As luck would have it, I was in Coldwater the day after my election to the president-elect position and was able to tell him in person. Over a libation, he expressed in no uncertain terms that serving as president of the WBA will be one of the most memorable and rewarding experiences of my professional career. Sadly, that was the last time I had a meaningful conversation with my father, for his health declined rapidly and he passed away a few

weeks later. My commitment to serve is very personal.

Take the time to honestly assess....

Over the next year I plan to host a strategic planning session to better assess how we can serve and reach each member.

It has been more than five years since such a plan has been performed and much has transpired, including the purchase of a building and a greater movement of lawyers outside the downtown core area. We will also explore methods to connect with corporate counsel in our community who are either not WBA members or not actively involved. Teaming with other professional associations to promote, recruit, and retain professionals in our community will also be included in this session.

I fully recognize that some attorneys do not see the relevance of professional associations to their practices or their day-to-day lives. I challenge our members to take the time to honestly assess what the WBA has to offer in terms of education, specific practice services, personal services, social activities, and community involvement. Most activities are scheduled over lunch in order to minimize the impact to everyone’s busy professional and personal lives. If the “grow your own lawyer” program or in the classroom Law Day speeches do not inspire you to become involved, I cannot imagine what would. If the WBA is not meeting expectations, I hope you will feel the obligation to come forward to forge improvements. If we are meeting expectations, I hope you will be inspired to join in further advancing those successes.

We have many of our past and present members to thank for their outstanding service to the WBA. Please join me in honoring our WBA legacy by continuing this level of excellence. Are you willing to commit?