

President's Page

Bob Riter



The face of our Bar is changing. Our challenge is to adapt to that reality and embrace it. Only by that effort will we continue to insure this Association is relevant for all members of our Bar.

I just returned from addressing the first year students at the USD School of Law. Their diversity is quickly evident. After my short presentation I shared a lunch with students from Nebraska, Mississippi, Oregon, Nevada, Pierre and Sioux Falls. They included male and female, and persons of color, as well as those who had previously pursued other endeavors, including a former paralegal and a former semi-professional football player. While they were all in Law School for one purpose, that is to study law to gain the necessary tools to help people, they likely have diverse expectations as to the specific setting within which they will perform that role.

Law firms need to welcome that diversity. Some of the firms in our state are headed by lawyers like those referenced by Virginia Grant and Marci M. Krufka in their article in the March 2005 issue of *GP Solo* as the "command and control management style". Fortunately, current graduates value freedom and versatility in their careers. Many recognize how important it is to maintain the proper balance between family life, career and involvement in professional and community activities.

We need to acknowledge that the values and expectation of newer Law School graduates likely varies from what was previously considered to be the traditional viewpoint. Those who fail to recognize these changes will likely face adjustment problems internally, particularly with recruiting and retention. Also, they may fall behind in their relationships with clients and their acceptance by juries before whom they appear.

Our legal profession needs to be a microcosm of our current society, and the diversity it exhibits and the values it embraces. Society has given us the opportunity to perform important roles in the legal system for it, but in part we must recognize that society is better served if those tasks are completed by individuals who mirror the diversity of ideas and faces society exhibits.

I challenge each of you to be willing to look at your practice, con-

sider whether you are personally and professionally receptive to this need to consider change. Then, be willing to advocate it within your individual practice and within your profession. This will insure these diverse faces and perspectives are acknowledged and appropriate consideration and responses given to them.

Since Fall is almost upon us and I was reminded of my alma mater by my recent trip to Vermillion, I must add one closing thought. Most of our practicing attorneys are USD Law graduates and the school's President is a USD Law graduate, hence, with all due deference to my friends who failed to see the advantages of school in Vermillion until Law School beckoned: "Go Coyotes!"

Sincerely,

Robert C. Riter, Jr.
President