

# BEHIND THE BENCH

A Publication of the Association of Bankruptcy Judicial Assistants  
Volume 16 Issue 3, September 2009

**HAPPY 20th ANNIVERSARY ABJA !!**

## Sales are Up!



**Sales are Up.** When I speak to groups of bankruptcy professionals now, I love to show a graph of the soaring rate of bankruptcy filings across the nation and proclaim that "Sales are Up." As we know, legislation in 2005 had a significant effect, and we began 2006 with substantially reduced filings. We had a fairly steady recovery during 2006 and 2007. In 2008 filings increased at a more rapid pace, and in 2009 the increase has been even greater.

**The Hon. Paul M. Glenn** was appointed to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division, in 1993. In March 2003, he was selected to serve as Chief Bankruptcy Judge for the Middle District of Florida. In June 2008, Judge Glenn transferred to the Jacksonville Division.

He graduated from Duke University School of Law in 1970, where he was President of the Law School student body. He received his undergraduate degree cum laude from FSU, where he was selected to Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Omicron Delta Kappa, and Gold Key, and was also selected as MVP on the Varsity Basketball team.

Judge Glenn practiced corporate, commercial, banking, and insurance law, commercial litigation and bankruptcy law in Jacksonville & Miami, FL. In 1984 he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Association of Domestic Insurance Companies.

Judge Glenn has served as Director of the Endowment for Education and is a member of the Finance Committee of the NCBJ. He has served as President and Director of the Ferguson-White Inn of Court in Tampa, FL. He is a contributing editor for the *Norton Handbook for Bankruptcy Trustees, Debtors in Possession, and Committees*

**Fair is Foul.** However, this is not a development to celebrate. The circumstances leading to the significant increases are indeed unfortunate. Our country is experiencing the most severe economic difficulties of our lifetimes, and we are seeing a direct result of these.

**Challenges Present Opportunities.** Our rapidly increasing workload is, indeed, a challenge. And unlike the spike in filings that preceded the BAPCPA amendments, this increase will not be followed by the sharp decline that occurred immediately after October 17, 2005. The challenges presented by the current economic conditions will continue to be significant. The workloads of everyone in the Courts will be greatly increased. But we have the opportunity to meet these challenges, and to handle the significantly increased workload with the same care and attention and professionalism that is characteristic of the Bankruptcy Courts across the nation. Additionally, we will have the opportunity to assist in the processing of cases that will provide businesses with the opportunity to survive and save jobs, and enable individuals to save their homes or eliminate overwhelming debt. Our hard work can be very rewarding.

**Filings as a percent of population.** It is interesting to look at where the cases are being filed and why. Rather than look at volume first, we look at the States where the highest percentage of people are filing.

**Chapter 7 cases.** In first place for Chapter 7 filings is Nevada, home of America's Playground, Las Vegas. Second, third, and fourth are the industrial Midwestern states of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. In fifth place is Colorado.

The Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics of the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the industry category of Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services in Las Vegas accounts for 29.8% of its economy, which is close to four times the national average of 7.9% for the United States. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that as of August 2009, Nevada has the second highest unemployment rate of any state, a rate of 13.2%. According to the RealtyTrac(R) U.S. Foreclosure Market Report, in August 2009 Nevada experienced the nation's highest foreclosure rate for the thirty-second straight month. In Las Vegas, foreclosure filings were more than 6.7 times the national average, and the city has the highest foreclosure rate among metropolitan areas with a population of at least 200,000.

The problems in the industrial Midwest appear to be tied to the significant difficulties experienced by the American automobile industry. Other contributing factors, as reported in June 2009

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by *The Indianapolis Star*, are the "extraordinary debt levels of consumers and corporations throughout the country." To illustrate, in 1979, GM employed 618,000 Americans, more than any other company in the country. In early 2009, that figure was only 88,000, and, according to an article published by The Associated Press in June 2009, the company plans to shed another 21,000 workers and close 12-20 factories. Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in August 2009, Michigan had the highest unemployment rate in the country (15.2%), Ohio had the seventh highest unemployment rate (10.8%), and Indiana the twelfth highest rate (9.9%). *The Indianapolis Star* reported that in May 2009 the unemployment rate in Indiana "was the highest ever recorded for any month in any year in Indiana in half a century of data maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics." The Bureau of Labor Statistics also reports that among the 19 metropolitan areas with jobless rates of at least 15%, five were located in Michigan.

In Colorado, the first six months of 2009 brought 13,041 new filings, compared to 9,470 during the same period in 2008. According to an article in *The Denver Post* in June of this year, the 38% increase in filings is attributable to failing businesses in real estate, construction and mortgages.

**Chapter 13 cases.** For Chapter 13 filings as a percent of the population, the top five states are Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Nevada, and Arkansas. According to statistics from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Tennessee led the country with the highest concentration of filings, 4.35 filings per 1,000 people, which is 3.5 times the national average. A common characteristic of these states is that they all have non-judicial foreclosure procedures, and all have been hard hit by the drastic decline in the real estate market.

**Total filings.** Next, we look at the Districts that have the highest number of total filings for all chapters. In first place is the Central District of California, second is the Middle District of Florida, third is the Eastern District of Michigan, fourth is the Northern District of Illinois, and fifth is the Northern District of Georgia.

Central California is usually the busiest District in the country. With Los Angeles as its major metropolitan area, it has a population of over 18 million, more than half of the people in California. The District is experiencing significant unemployment and foreclosures. In an article in *The Washington Post* earlier this year, economist Sean Snaithe, from the University of Central Florida's business school aptly observed in reference to California being in the epicenter of the housing bubble, "[t]hese economies were self-feeding off the housing boom. And when the boom went bust, there was no safety net to fall back on." With an unemployment rate of 12.2%, California ranks fourth in the United States.

The Middle District of Florida regularly ranks in the top five or six in filings. With a population of over 10 million, it includes over half of the people in the state. A large area, it stretches from Southwest Florida (Ft. Myers) through Central Florida (Tampa, Orlando, Ocala, and Daytona) to Northeast Florida (Jacksonville). Filings have increased over 300% between July 2006 and July 2009. Although this massive increase is attributable in part to the recovery from the decline in filings after the passage of BAPCPA, much of the increase is due to the fallout from the crash of Florida's housing market and from the significant reduction in tourism in the State. For example, the metropolitan area of Orlando-Kissimmee's foreclosure rate was eighth in the nation, and Cape Coral-Fort Myers ranked ninth. Interestingly, Orlando is generally a tourist area and Ft. Myers a retirement area, and on average approximately 15% of Orlando's filings are Chapter 13 cases, whereas approximately 55% of Ft. Myers filings are Chapter 13 cases.

The industrial Midwest has been hit extremely hard because of several factors, largely related to problems in the automobile industry. In 2006 and again in 2007, the Eastern District of Michigan, with Detroit as its major metropolitan area and a population of 6.7 million in the District, had the most filings in the country, even more than the Central District of California, which has approximately three times as many people. The Eastern District of Michigan is now third for the 12 months ended June 30, 2009. The Northern District of Illinois, with Chicago as its major area and approximately 9.3 million people, is regularly one of the top five, and is the fourth busiest District for the most recent 12 months' filings.

The Northern District of Georgia, with Atlanta as the main metropolitan area, has also been affected significantly by the real estate crisis. Georgia ranks among the top ten in foreclosures, and has the 10<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate in the country (10.2%).

**Business Filings.** According to the American Bankruptcy Institute, 16,014 businesses filed for bankruptcy in the second quarter of 2009, the highest number in a three month period since 1993. The ABI also reports that compared to the



## SPOTLIGHT ON PATSY BURKHALTER, SD/GA



## Are We There Yet?

By Patsy Burkhalter, SD/GA

Patsy started working in the Clerk's Office of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Georgia shortly after high school. During her tenure in the Clerk's Office, she served as claims clerk, notice clerk, docket clerk, and courtroom deputy. On November 1, 1979, she was selected by then Bankruptcy Judge Herman W. Coolidge to be his secretary. When Judge Coolidge retired in 1986, she was fortunate enough to be asked to stay on by the Hon. Lamar W. Davis, Jr., the newly appointed judge. Patsy celebrated her 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the court in July, 2009 and will be celebrating her 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a JA on November 1.

In 1989, she was elected founding president of the ABJA and has been active in the association since that time. She has served as 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Rep. on several occasions and has chaired several committees. She has also served on the CLE/CBA Committee and the Conference Committee and she is currently serving as Parliamentarian which she has held for several years. In 1995, she hosted the ABJA Annual Meeting in Savannah, GA.

She and her husband, Doug, have two children, Patrick & Susanne. Patrick, and his wife, Lauren, are the parents of grandsons, John Patrick and Peyton. Susanne has been her personal ABJA mascot. After accepting the position of ABJA President in 1989, she became pregnant with Susanne, and at almost six months pregnant, traveled to Las Vegas to preside over the first annual conference. Susanne is a reminder to her of the age of the ABJA. With Susanne now in college, she and Doug are officially empty nesters.

Twenty years. Countless hours. Overwhelming fulfillment. Priceless memories. That pretty much sums up my involvement with the ABJA. I have the distinct privilege of having served as founding president of the ABJA and for that honor I will always be grateful.

In October 1979 I received a letter from two bankruptcy judge's secretaries in Michigan asking that they be contacted by secretaries interested in forming an association for bankruptcy judges' secretaries. I responded to them with my interest. I later learned that a steering committee meeting was held in Chicago in 1981. Sadly, I never heard anything more and in my efforts to make further contact I learned that the secretary spearheading the effort had left court employment.

Back then there was only one bankruptcy judge in my district. At that time, I had met only one other bankruptcy judge's secretary, and I felt terribly isolated. Networking and training for chambers' staff just didn't exist. Even though the earlier attempt at forming an association appeared "dead in the water," I continued to nurture the enthusiasm I had felt at the possibility of being a member of an association. Then in 1987 a second judge was appointed in my district and I met Janet Payton. She and I spent hours discussing the possibility of an association and how we could get it off the ground. In April 1988, I placed an ad in the NCBJ *Conference News* asking secretaries interested in forming an organization to contact me. The rest, as they say, is history.

Marge Sullivan and Velma Smith were two of the first to contact me and we became fast friends. Like me, Marge and Velma had been in their positions for many years and felt that same isolation from other bankruptcy judges' secretaries. They shared my passion for forming an association. We quickly learned that the other secretaries who were responding with their interest were just as excited as we were. They brought their many talents to the table, and we went to work drafting bylaws and working on the logistics of actually having a face-to-face meeting. Their enthusiasm, and that of JoAnn Kelly and others that I heard from early on, became the basis upon which the ABJA was founded.

After much telephone conferencing, faxing, letter writing, bylaw drafting, name gathering, and just general "blood, sweat, and tears," we finally came together for our organizational meeting on November 3-4, 1989, at the Hyatt Regency Ravinia in Atlanta, GA. Fourteen of us - Anita Wolrab, Sue Herbert, Marlene Stubbs, Janet Payton, Anita Bonham, Wanda Abney, Bernice Whaley, Judy Huff, Kathy Harmon, Paula Funderburk, Carolyn Hubbard, Marge Sullivan, Nancy Logue, and myself. It was such an awesome experience to get to know other bankruptcy judges' secretaries. We came from Iowa, Missouri, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, Ohio, Georgia, and Arkansas, and we were on a mission. We paid our own expenses, and we came on faith. Each of us brought our own individual hopes and aspirations for an association of bankruptcy judges' secretaries.

When we left Atlanta on November 5, 1989, we had adopted by-laws, elected officers, formed committees, and set goals. Our vision for an association had become reality. I was elected President, Marge Sullivan was President-Elect, Nancy Logue was Secretary and Anita Bonham was Treasurer. We immediately strategized on building our membership



**First annual meeting - 1989  
Atlanta, GA.**

Pictured from bottom left to right are: Anita Wolrab, Sue Herbert, Marlene Stubbs, Janet Payton, Anita Bonh Cross, Wanda Aloney, Bernice Whaley, Judy Huff, Kathy Harmon, Patsy Burkhalter, Paula Funderburk Scholzen, Carolyn Hubbard, Marge Sullivan, and Nancy Logue

## Sales are Up .... (cont'd. from pg. 2)

first half of 2008, Chapter 11 filings more than doubled and the number of business failures increased by 64%.

The top five districts for business filings include the Central California, Middle Florida, Northern Georgia, Southern New York, and Delaware.

As discussed, the Districts of California Central and Florida Middle are in two of the states that have been hit hardest by the foreclosure crisis. As a result, all aspects of the economy in these districts have suffered. What began as a decline in real estate sales led to problems in a vast array of businesses in the real estate and construction related industries. The consequences of this, together with reduced tourism and declining retail sales, have led to difficulties in businesses outside the realm of real estate and construction.

The Northern District of Georgia has also been significantly affected by the real estate crisis. In an article in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in May 2009, a creditors' rights group in Atlanta explained that due to rising unemployment, upside down mortgages, and credit card debt, there are more corporate Chapter 7's than they have seen in the last twenty years. They also predict that "[t]here will be more Chapter 11's here, but the corporate covenant defaults and commercial real estate cases are still in the workout stages. We're going to be disproportionately worse off over the next two or three years because of our over-reliance on real estate development."

The established forums for large corporate cases are Delaware, where many businesses are incorporated, and New York, and it is no surprise that the Southern District of New York and the District of Delaware are in the number four and five spots. In April 2009, *The New York Times* reported that the "two locations have been home to six of the 10 biggest bankruptcy filings, including Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual and Enron, according to BankruptcyData.com." While all of us would love to handle such major cases, Delaware and New York Southern are outstanding Courts.

**Chapter 11 filings.** The top five districts for Chapter 11 filings include Delaware, Southern New York, Central California, Middle Florida, and Arizona. For the reasons discussed above, it is

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## Are We There Yet? .... (cont'd. from pg. 3)

and organizing our first conference which was to be held the next fall in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Since there was no court/government-sponsored training for secretaries, one of our priorities was to develop an annual conference with an educational program designed specifically for judges' secretaries. We literally spent less than \$1,000 on the entire Las Vegas conference. We had little money, and we spent little money. However that conference, like all of our conferences since, was phenomenal. The enthusiasm we shared was unlike anything I've ever been a part of. It was, and still is, magical.

The ABA has continued to prosper. Because of the resourcefulness and commitment of our members and officers, we established our world renowned newsletter, we created our own logo, and we designed and continue to upgrade and maintain our own website. The efforts of the ABA were paramount in accomplishing our title change from the more antiquated term of "secretary" to Judicial Assistant (or whatever we choose). Actually, the ABA, being the proactive group that we are, changed the name of our association from Bankruptcy Judges' Secretaries' Association to our current name - Association of Bankruptcy Judicial Assistants - prior to the official change in job title. Additionally, judicial assistants gained Administrative Office recognition which partially resulted in the formation of the Judges' Secretaries Advisory Group. Each year our current president is privileged to participate as an observer at that group's meetings. For many, the ABA has become a primary source of education and a key networking tool.

Probably the most outstanding of our accomplishments is the Certified Bankruptcy Assistant ("CBA") program. The CBA has helped us grow in so many ways. We have many talented and dedicated people who give of their time and energy each year to maintain the CBA program and to make the seminars educational and professional.

When Marge, Velma and I were in the early stages of planning and drafting, I often referred to an anonymous quote as my inspiration:

*We serve best when we hold dearly in mind  
the goal and purpose rather than our place in the process.*

I have often marveled at how closely the officers and committee members of this association have followed that quote - even though few of them ever knew of its existence. We were dedicated to the creation of the ABA and those who have since served have been equally dedicated to its purpose.

So . . . are we there yet? Twenty years later I still feel the same passion and enthusiasm that I felt in 1989. I am thankful for each and every member, and for all they do for the ABA. As our role of "Judicial Assistant" continues to evolve, so should our association continue to change and grow to meet the needs of our members. I'm not sure the founding members knew exactly where our great expectations would take us when we started this journey, but I'm honored to have been along for the ride.



## President's Message

By Elaine Coker, MD/TN

Happy Anniversary Everyone!

The success of the ABA goes back 20 years with the vision of the founding mothers. Through their vision, a group was formed, a comradery, and yes, you the members, have made this association what it is today. For 20 years, the chairs and members of the committees have held the association together to form a bond with not just the officers of the ABA, but with everyone.

The Certified Bankruptcy Assistant classes will be held October 20 and 21 with the exam scheduled for the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup>. On Thursday, October 22, we begin our education program with the impact of the mortgage crisis, changes to rules and bankruptcy procedures, administering mega cases, processing motions, administration of bankruptcy cases and the entry and exit barriers. Friday will bring a day of sharing information with each other. After all of that, don't you think we need a stress management class.

The closing banquet will take place at the Rusty Scupper. Be sure and keep your eyes open – you might just see a few of our retired former presidents in our midst.

The Conference and CLE Committees have worked extremely hard putting together a great conference. I hope you have made your travel plans and are utilizing the chamber's training funds.

My daughter, Lauren, and I are looking forward to seeing old friends and making new ones in Baltimore. See you soon.

Here's to a great 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

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## Court Funding for Annual Conference

By Cindy Korbol, WD/WI



Some questions have come up regarding the e-mail that was recently sent to the JAs/secretaries regarding the use of the judges/chambers staff training and training-related travel funds to attend this year's educational conference in Baltimore. The amount of money each court can spend on training and training-related travel for all of its judges and chambers staff is based on the number of authorized positions times a \$400 per capita allowance. The \$400 per capita allowance, however, is not a limitation on the amount that can be spent for training and travel for one individual who is authorized to attend the training. For example, if you are in a one judge district with a judicial assistant and a law clerk, then your court's allowance is \$1,200; if a court has three judges and each judge has a judicial assistant and a law clerk, then the court's total training allowance would be \$3,600 for the year. But if your court will exceed its training allowance because several JAs/secretaries in your court are planning to attend the ABA educational conference (or through other training), the Chief Judge of your court can write to **James Baugher**, Chief Budget Officer, explaining the reasons for the requirement and requesting authorization to exceed this amount (see *The Guide to Judicial Policies and Procedures*, Vol. I, Chapter III, Part F). Any chambers training funds that are not used are retained by the AO at the end of the fiscal year.

Most of the courses that will be offered at this year's conference fall into the category of administrative, operational, or managerial training. The AO has informed us that 74% (\$111) of the registration fee should be reimbursable, as well as all of your travel expenses. **(NOTE: THIS IS SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN THE AMOUNT IN THE EMAIL)**

Be sure to show the agenda to the Chief Judge of your court when you request approval to attend the conference. If the Chief Judge approves your request, he/she will need to certify in writing that the training is consistent with court training goals and Judicial Conference training policies. If you have any questions regarding this procedure, please contact me at [cindy.korbol@wiwb.uscourts.gov](mailto:cindy.korbol@wiwb.uscourts.gov).

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## News From the Administrative Office

By Jim Wannamaker, Staff Attorney  
Bankruptcy Judges Division



### **December Amendments to Code, Rules, and Forms**

A number of provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, the Official Bankruptcy Forms, and the Director's Procedural Forms will be amended effective December 1, 2009, in conjunction with the revision of time-computation under the Federal Rules. The amendments are summarized below along with links to additional information.

### **Bankruptcy Rules**

Unless Congress acts to the contrary before December 1, most deadlines of less than 30 days in Bankruptcy Rules 1007, 1011, 1019, 1020, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2007.2, 2008, 2015, 2015.1, 2015.2, 2015.3, 2016, 3001, 3015, 3017, 3019, 3020, 4001, 4002, 4004, 6003, 6004, 6006, 6007, 7004, 7012, 8001, 8002, 8003, 8006, 8009, 8015, 8017, 9006, 9027, and 9033 will be changed to multiples of seven and Rule 9006 will be rewritten to follow the template being adopted throughout the Federal Rules for computing time.

The deadlines will be amended as follows –

- 5-day periods become 7-day periods,
- 10-day periods become 14-day periods,
- 15-day periods become 14-day periods,
- 20-day periods become 21-day periods, and
- 25-day periods become 28-day periods.

The amendments are posted at <http://www.uscourts.gov/rules/supct1208.html>.

### **Bankruptcy Code**

The 5-day deadlines in sections 109(h)(3)(A)(ii), 322(a), 332(a), 342(e)(2), 521(e)(3)(B), 521(i)(2), 704(b)(1)(B), 749(b), and 764(b) of the Bankruptcy Code will become 7-day deadlines. The amendments were included in Pub. L. 111-16, which was intended to offset the shortening effect of the new method of computing time. The law was signed by the President on May 7, 2009, and will be effective on December 1 at the same time as the rules amendments.

### **Bankruptcy Filings**

A total of 1,306,315 bankruptcy cases were filed in the 12-month period ending June 30, 2009, according to statistics released by the Administrative Office. That is a 35 percent increase compared to filings for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2008, when filings totaled 967,831.

Consumer filings for the 12-month period totaled 1,251,294, up 34 percent from the 12 months ended June 30, 2008. Business filings totaled 55,021, up 63 percent from the preceding 12 months. Chapter 7 filings rose 47 percent to 907,603. Chapter 13 filings totaled 384,187, up 12 percent. Chapter 11 filings totaled 13,951, up 91 percent, and chapter 12 filings rose 34 percent to 422.

Filings in the three-month period ended June 30, 2009, totaled 381,073. Filings for the three months are the highest of any quarter since the 667,431 filings in the last three months of 2005, which included part of the deluge of filings just before the effective date of the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 on October 17, 2005. Filings in the last three months of 2008 totaled 301,317 and filings in the first three months of 2009 totaled 330,477.

The AO news release on the June 30 filings, which is posted on the Judiciary's website at [http://www.uscourts.gov/Press\\_Releases/index.html](http://www.uscourts.gov/Press_Releases/index.html), includes links to more detailed statistics for the 12-month period. Historic data on bankruptcy filings is available at <http://www.uscourts.gov/bnkrpctstats/bankruptcystats.htm>. Additional bankruptcy statistics, including bankruptcies by county, can be found on the PACER system.



**3rd Circuit** ..... (cont'd. from pg. 7)

Session Two met in one room for a seminar on "Dealing with Difficult People." I learned some things about how and why people react to certain situations and different ways to handle them. If you have any comments or suggestions for the future Workshops please feel free to send me an email or call.

There are several big events taking place in the Western District of PA. First is that **Judge Warren W. Bentz** will be retiring on September 21, 2009. Judge Bentz was appointed on March 22, 1985 and has been on recall status since March 22, 1999. He has also been very active outside the Court all of his life with Mrs. Bentz, his family, playing handball, boxing, track, football and many other activities. Judge Bentz's Judicial Assistant, **Lori Yochim**, is leaving the Court for new pursuits. We wish them the very best but will miss them terribly.

With the retirement of Judge Bentz, **Judge Thomas P. Agresti** will be taking over Judge Bentz' Erie docket as well as retaining his Pittsburgh caseload. With this transition I will be taking on the Judicial Assistant/Courtroom Deputy II responsibilities for Judge Agresti and he will be adding a term law clerk position to our Chambers. Also as of September 22, 2009, Judge Agresti will become Chief Judge for the Western District of PA. Change is an exciting challenge.

**Cathy Farrell**, JA, (DE) says she was fortunate to attend the 2009 CM/ECF Operational Practices Forum in Ft. Worth, Texas, with approximately 500 other Bankruptcy Court employees from all over the country. She also attended last year's Forum in Salt Lake City, Utah. However at this year's forum, in addition to several people from her Clerk's Office attending, her **Chief Judge Kevin Carey** and Clerk of Court, **David Bird**, were also there. The advantage to these forums is the ability to help create the agenda and participate in the events to acquire knowledge in many different areas. It was a great learning experience and an opportunity to share with other Courts on topics such as E Orders, new calendaring systems, Chambers and Clerk's Office communication, and the next generation of CM/ECF. It was also beneficial to participate in sessions with other judges. She encourages anyone who has an opportunity to attend this forum in the future to do so. It was great to connect with other ABA friends, fellow judicial assistants, and especially her dear Texas gals while in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Next year's conference will be in Washington, DC!



**Charlie & Pam**

On a personal note, Charlie and I had a beautiful wedding on July 3, 2009. What made our day extra special is that Judge Agresti

performed the marriage ceremony. My close Aunt & Uncle celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary that day as well. We spent a few relaxing days at Niagra-on-the-Lake soaking in up the culture, scenery and wine.

**News from Marleen Young** (JA from New Jersey)



My Judge, **Hon. Raymond T. Lyons**, celebrated his 10th year on the bankruptcy bench this year. Here is a photo of him and his former clerks (and me). He is the one to the far right. We had a celebration at the Trenton Country Club.

In April of this year, my niece, Faithann, and I visited Greece to celebrate her 31st birthday and I have included several pictures of our adventure.



The donkey is the only means of transportation on the island of Hydra!



Taking a break at a sidewalk café below the Parthenon in Athens.



The Acropolis in Athens



Us by the Temple of Zeus in Athens

**News from Angel Dios** (JA from New Jersey)

My wife, Kelli and I welcomed the birth of our daughter **Sofia Rose Dios**, who was born on June 30, 2009 at 11:49 am, weighed 6 lbs, 6 oz and measured 18 inches long. This is our first child.



Sofia Rose Dios

Congrats Angel and Kelli! She is a beautiful girl with a fabulous name. Keep us posted with updated pictures.

## 4th Circuit

By Barb Lewis, ED/VA

**Pam Barnes, JA to the Hon. Frank J. Santoro** in the 4th Circuit (EDVA), writes to share that she attended her first Operations Forum in Ft. Worth, TX in August and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



There were lots of great ideas following and exchanged and there was not enough time to attend all of the breakout sessions that Pam would like to have attended. She had to prioritize! She attended all sessions that gave her an opportunity to network with fellow JAs and went back to work with renewed enthusiasm. Here is a picture of Pam enjoying dinner out during the Forum at Cattlemen's Restaurant. Pam encourages everyone to attend a Forum and says next year's Forum will be held in Washington, D.C. Pam is looking forward to seeing everyone in Baltimore.



*Karin Doggett, IT, Bill Redden, our Clerk, Carl Mosca, IT, Terry Muller, CA in Richmond, VA,*

**Sharon Angel, JA, (ED/NC)** - On August 27, 2009, a special ceremonial session of court and portrait dedication was held to honor Bankruptcy Judge **A. Thomas Small** at the Century Station Post Office and United States Courthouse in historic downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. Judge Small has served as the second bankruptcy judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina since he was appointed on December 14, 1982, and his retirement is effective September 1, 2009.



Approximately 245 people filled the courtroom to hear many accounts of Judge Small's achievements during the past 27 years. Here is a sample of his accomplishments: Chief Judge from 1992-1999 and 2006-2007; Chairman of the U.S. Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on Bankruptcy Rules 2000-2004 and member 1996-2000; National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges, Board of Governors 1987-1990; Chairman of the NCBJ Long Range Planning Committee in 1989, 2000, 2003 and served as Chairman of the NCBJ Endowment for Education Committee; chaired various educational programs sponsored by the NCBJ 1993-1994; President of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges 2000-2001; Board Member for the Federal Judicial Center 1997-2001; Board of Directors of the American Bankruptcy Institute 1989-1995; Member of the United States Judicial Conference Long Range Planning Committee 1991-1996. One of the highest honors of Judge Small's career was when former Chief Justice Rehnquist appointed Judge Small as the first Bankruptcy Judge Representative to the United States Judicial Conference. Judge Small was heavily involved in the development of new bankruptcy rules after the passage of the

Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 (BAPCPA). At the ceremony, we heard remarks from court staff and members of the local bar. Several judges traveled a great distance to give their remarks including: the **Honorable Jeffery P. Hopkins**, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge from the Southern District of Ohio; the **Honorable Eugene R. Wedoff**, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge from the Northern District of Illinois. Also, several North Carolina judges gave remarks: the **Honorable W. Earl Britt**, Senior U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina; the **Honorable Malcolm J. Howard**, Senior U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina; the **Honorable J. Rich Leonard**, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina; and the **Honorable Randy D. Doub**, Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina. Chief Judge Doub and Judge Leonard presented Judge Small with gifts from the court: a framed Resolution declaring August 27, 2009 as "Judge A. Thomas Small Day" and a crystal eagle with the bankruptcy court seal and inscription. Several local associations also presented Judge Small with plaques for his loyal dedication and vast contributions to the bankruptcy community.

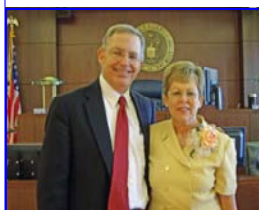
## 5th Circuit

By Anna Saucier, ND/TX



The Bankruptcy Court Operational Practices Forum was held in Fort Worth, Texas on August 18 and 19, and I am so glad I was able to attend. **Judge Russell Nelms** from Fort Worth gave a welcome address that will long be remembered. There were many interesting sessions, and the one I enjoyed the most was the Chambers Functional Requirements Group Elicitation Session held one afternoon. The ideas were really flowing and it is always amazing to see how differently each court operates.

**Sheryl Cody** (SDTX/Houston) reports that their Clerk of Court, **Michael Milby**, left their court on June 22 to accept a position at the Administrative Office of Deputy Chief Financial Officer. Sheryl says they are very proud of him and will miss him greatly. The new Clerk is **David Bradley**, who was formerly the Chief Deputy Clerk.



*Judge Jones & Beverly*

**Beverly Sparks**, Judicial Assistant to **Judge Robert L. Jones** in Lubbock, Texas, finally took the plunge and retired on August 6. Beverly worked for the court for 9 years

(cont'd. on pg. 10)

## 5th Circuit *(cont'd. from pg. 9)*

and came over with Judge Jones back in 2000. She worked for Crenshaw, Dupree & Milam there in Lubbock for 13 years. Before that, she worked at another law firm in Lubbock for 14 years. Beverly and her husband, Jerry, have been married for 44 years. They have two daughters and four grandchildren. The last I heard from Beverly, she still feels like she is on vacation. In addition to fishing, travel, and the time with the grandkids, Beverly plans to take a digital photography course and maybe even get involved in some volunteer work (political and otherwise). The court in Lubbock had a lovely reception for Beverly on July 30. The NDTX JAs threw Beverly a proper retirement party at the BC Ranch in Bolivar, Texas the weekend of August 18. Many congratulations to Beverly as she begins this new chapter in her life.

On the subject of Lubbock, Texas, I want to welcome **Shelby Wimberly**, Judicial Assistant to **Judge Robert L. Jones** (ND/TX). Before joining the bankruptcy court, Shelby worked for the Standing Chapter 12 and 13 Trustee for twelve years. She is a graduate of Texas Tech University with a B.B.A. in Finance. Shelby and her husband, Toby, have two boys, ages 7 and 4. I am so happy that Shelby has joined the ABA and she will be joining us in Baltimore. Welcome to the court, Shelby!

Newsflash from **Beth Towery** in Fort Worth: Beth and her fiancé, Michael, will be fishing in a Bass Tournament at Lake Whitney the weekend of September 20. I want a photo of Beth holding the winning bass for the next newsletter.

The Plano Bankruptcy Court (EDTX) hosted a farewell reception for retired **Judge Robert C. McGuire** on July 27. Judge McGuire was recalled to fill in for **Judge Brenda Rhoades** while she was undergoing chemotherapy and radiation. We are all thankful that Judge Rhoades has returned to the bench and that she is doing well.

Finally and on a very sad note, **Judge Harold C. Abramson** passed away on July 18, 2009, in Atlanta, Georgia. He had moved to Atlanta a month earlier to be close to his daughters and grandchildren. Judge Abramson served on the bench in Dallas from 1985-2004. **Jan Houchin** and I worked with Judge Abramson for many years and we will miss him terribly. He was one of a kind and larger than life. The Dallas Bankruptcy Bar held a lovely memorial service on August 31.

Hot Off the Presses: I just found out today (9/14/2009) that we have a new judicial assistant in Austin, Texas. **Carol Dancy's** first day with the court was August 31, and she works for **Judge Craig Gargotta** (WD/TX). Judge Gargotta became a bankruptcy judge in September 2007. Carol worked as executive legal assistant in the appellate

department at Weil Gotshal & Manges in Austin. Before that, she worked as a legal secretary at Bryan Cave LLP in Santa Monica, California. Carol graduated summa cum laude from Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles with a BS in Business Administration. She relocated to Austin from California in October 2008. A big welcome to the court to Carol.

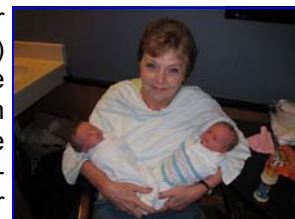


## 6th Circuit

*By Sherie Hitch, ED/MI*

As a part of the lease renewal for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Michigan, the court's space has undergone some aesthetic renovations. Four judges and their staff were temporarily relocated within the building, one chambers at a time, for three weeks. The move back and forth was somewhat of a chore, but it's nice to be back "home" in a fresh environment!

Congratulations to co-worker **JoAnne Iovannisci**, JA (ED/MI) who is the very proud, first-time grandmother of twin girls born September 13, 2009!! JoAnne will be missed when she relocates this year to be with her daughter and family in Chicago, Illinois.



*JoAnn with Quinn JoAnne and Zoe Jean*

An aside by **Shirley Vaught, JA** (ED/TN): *"If you are ever in the WDC/Alexandria area, I highly recommend a wonderful "private" bed and breakfast and tour guide service owned and operated by one of our own, Pixie Shannon. Pixie is definitely "the Hostess with the Mostest." I was treated to airport pick-up; wonderful accommodations; tour of surrounding areas (in a convertible no less); made-to-order breakfast; "to die for" peach cobbler; and front-door service to the hotel. That just skims the surface! My sincere thanks to Pixie, Kent, Bo, and Bella for sharing their lovely home and going out of their way for an appreciative out-of-towner."*



## 7th Circuit

*By Cindy Korbol, WD/WI*

Greetings to everyone from the Seventh Circuit. We've been very busy this summer as our filing rates continue to climb. Here in the Western

*cont'd. on pg. 11*

District of Wisconsin, our filings are up 30% over last year's at the same time.

Some of our courts are about to begin participating in the FJC's Bankruptcy Courtroom Use Study using a special software application in Lotus Notes to record data for the period of September 14 to December 14. In order to prepare for the study, many of the JAs/secretaries from this circuit traveled to D.C. for a one-day training course on how to use the software. Everyone that I heard from felt the training was excellent. All four of the JAs attended from ED/WI (Tina Fies, Paula Bartels, Paula Macomber, and Stephanie Larson), as well as Chief Deputy Janet Medlock, Judge Kelley's CRD, Kirk Fedewa, and Judge McGarity's CRD, Carolyn Belunas-From WD/WI, Penny Brellenthin; Judge Martin's CRD, Kathleen Boucher, and I attended. I believe several JAs and CRDs from ND/IL attended as well. Dorothy Clay passed along to me that she and Judge Schmetterer's CRD, Deborah Smith found the training very detailed and informative. Dorothy was able to extend her stay to tour Washington and visit her grandchildren who live in Virginia.

Tina Fies, JA, (ED/WI) informed me that she and Judge Shapiro celebrated their 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of working together in June. Congratulations! She says they are very busy (especially with Chapter 13 filings), and that their district is on a record pace for filings.

I have learned that the Milwaukee court has a new Chief Deputy for Administration. She is Janet Medlock, and she has worked for ED/WI since 1997. She has held the positions of Case Administrator, Courtroom Deputy, Administrative Assistant to the Clerk, and Personnel Specialist, and she has also served as Acting Clerk. Prior to her career with the judiciary, Janet worked in a private law practice and for the U.S. Department of Justice. She has an undergraduate degree from Indiana University, and a master's degree in Management and a certification in Human Resource Management from Cardinal Stritch University.

This year's Bankruptcy Operational Practices Forum was held in Fort Worth, TX. Becky Woodrum was able to attend had this to share:



Jerry Miller, Kathy Traenkenschuh, Teresa Burch, Debby Townsley and Becky Woodrum

*I miss my "home on the range." The Bankruptcy Operational Practices Forum was held this year in Ft. Worth, Texas, at the brand new Omni Hotel. I had the most deluxe hotel room I have ever had, with a walk-in shower, bar with refrigerator, and floor to ceiling windows. I am sure, from the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, that I could see all the way to Dallas!*

*Approximately 500 people attended the Ops Forum this year. It was my first time. I was very impressed with the forum and happy to*

*have had the opportunity to attend. I believe they said there were 40 attendees from Chambers there. I know there were quite a few Judges in attendance.*

*We started out with a reception on Monday night. The entertainment was the "Docket Rockets," a rock band made up of Bankruptcy em-*

*ployees who only play together once a year or so. They are very entertaining. We had general sessions where we all met together each morning and each day after lunch. There are a certain number of topics already picked out for the forums, but, at each general session, attendees can introduce a topic to be discussed. If there is enough interest, the topic is added to the morning or afternoon sessions. There were quite a few topics applicable to JAs and Chambers: CHAPS, CEO, Next Generation of CM/ECF, Use of Technology in Chambers, and general Chambers roundtable sessions. I especially enjoyed the sessions which were exclusively Chambers, because a lot of pertinent issues were discussed in a comfortable atmosphere between Judges and Chambers staff. I encourage everyone to consider attending next year.*

## 8th Circuit

By Barb Sutton, ED/MO



Here we are approaching yet another annual conference for the ABA and a big one at that. 20 Years!! The few of us that are able to attend the upcoming conference in Baltimore are very excited to say the least. I touched base with Paul Anderson, CBA from Fort Smith, Arkansas who plans on attending the conference and getting there by his new means of transportation, a Goldwing. How exciting. Be safe on your travels and see you in Baltimore!

Chicquita Greene, Judge Surratt-States' JA, attended the Ops Forum in Fort Worth. Chicquita reports that she had a good time and of course, came home with a wealth of information to be shared with Eva Kinzel (JA to Judge Rendlen) and myself over lunch.

Sally Hanson, JA, (SD) reports: *I attended the AO Jumpstart Workshop in Washington, DC on August 3-5. It was a very informative and beneficial workshop and I encourage anyone who hasn't yet attended this workshop to do so. This was my first trip to the AO and it was nice to meet the AO staff and to put names with faces. It was equally as nice to meet and visit with fellow JAs from all over the country. I will be at the ABA annual conference in Baltimore and look forward to seeing my many ABA friends and meeting new ones.*

Me too, Sally!

## 9th Circuit

By *Connie Ray, CD/CA*

Warm Autumn Greetings from the Ninth Circuit!

**Christine Rhambo**, Judicial Assistant to the **Hon. Meredith A. Jury**, CDCA, includes the following announcement regarding her son's recent nuptials:



*Carlos & Linda*

*My son Carlos James recently had to hang up his party shoes after saying his "I Do(s)" to his fiancé of three years. Carlos James Jr. and Linda Yayeri Naziwa Kazibwi celebrated the creation of a new tribe on June 19, 2009. The celebration was a blend of American & Kenyan traditions which made for a beautiful experience. Best wishes to the newlyweds and their families.*

Christine has also provided an overview of what it is like to work with the CM/ECF Chamber Functional Requirements Group.

*Earlier this year I was offered by the Administrative Office the opportunity to participate as a member of the Next Generation of Bankruptcy CM/ECF Chamber Functional Requirements Group which I accepted proudly. My appointment is a one year term consisting of judges, career law clerks, judicial assistants and secretaries, courtroom deputies and other clerk's office personnel familiar with electronic case management which began in June. Our Chairperson is Bankruptcy Judge **Cecilia Morris** from New York - Southern, and the Team (A) that I am assigned, has designated Bankruptcy Judge **Elizabeth Brown** from Colorado to Lead our team.*

*This is an opportunity for me to be instrumental in gathering information from chambers' staff and judges for any input, suggestions, ideas or thoughts they would have for a newer or enhanced system. Currently, we are in the early stage of operation, and it has already become a great challenge as well as an exciting learning experience for me. I have witnessed various operations and chamber practices that are different from the operations I currently practice in my own office, and believe if combined with some of the things I have seen demonstrated or ideas discussed would be a wonderful system for any court.*

*This group was initiated in response to suggestions from various members of the Court Administrations and Case Management Committee, the Committee on the Administration of the Bankruptcy System, the Committee on Information Technology and others who felt it was time to take a fresh look at our current system. This is a wonderful opportunity for anyone who uses the current system, and*

*would like to contribute an idea or suggestion that they believe would be an enhancement in any way, to do so. So in the future if anyone approaches you directly for suggestions, or if offered the opportunity to participate in any of the elicitation sessions, I encourage you wholeheartedly to do so. Although my term is short, I feel a great sense of pride knowing that I am part of the group who will be instrumental in enhancing a program that may be used Nationwide.*



*Judges Brown & Morris*

The Clerk of Court for the Central District of California, **Jon D. Ceretto**, has resigned after 15 years of service in one of the largest districts in the country. The Central District of California encompasses five courthouses: Los Angeles, Riverside, Santa Ana, San Fernando Valley, and Santa Barbara, covering 7 counties, with over a 100,000 filings annually. **Michael E. Rotberg** will step in as Acting Clerk of Court until another Clerk of Court is selected. Mr. Rotberg has over 22 years experience with the Central District of California. Good Luck and Best Wishes to you both.

Former JA, **Yolanda Garcia**, wanted to share for those that knew her that one of our former JAs, **Edie Crispi**, passed away about 3 months ago. She was JA to **Judge Lasarow**, who was Chief Judge some time back. If you want further information, Joan Amos will have all the facts. [Joanie17@verizon.net](mailto:Joanie17@verizon.net)



*Proud Momma,  
Connie & Logan*

Good things can come from the California wildfires. On September 1, 2009, your own 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Representative, **Connie Ray**, was affected by the Pendleton fire in Yucaipa, California. The flames came over a hilly ridgeline causing my neighborhood to be placed under a mandatory evacuation all day. Luckily, the evacuation order was lifted that night as the firefighters worked quickly to extinguish the flames, but the stress of the situation was already in place.

At 38 weeks pregnant, I began having contractions the very next morning! Our son, **Logan Thomas Ray**, was born on September 2, 2009, at 7:15 p.m. He weighed 6 lbs. 10 oz, and was 18 1/4 inches long. Due to some minor respiratory issues, he was kept in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for 5 days, but has since come home and mother and son are doing very well.

Wishing everyone a very happy and safe Autumn

## 10th Circuit

By Thora Searle, D/UT



Hello from the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit!!

The District of Utah is now accepting applications for a new Judge to replace the **Hon. Judith A. Boul-den** who is retiring effective not later than June 1, 2010. I am hoping the new Judge will elect to have a Judicial Assistant in lieu of 2 law clerks.

The **Hon. William T. Thurman** was made the Chief Judge upon the retirement of **Judge Glen E. Clark** last January and as of August 10<sup>th</sup>, we have a new law clerk in our chambers. She worked for the court when the Judge and I first came to the court back in 2001. She moved to Las Vegas and worked for a Chapter 13 Trustee there while she finished her undergraduate schooling and then went on to law school at UNLV. We are excited to have her back with us.

We are going to get a new courthouse - how soon is a guess - but they have torn down all of the buildings located on our block except for one. That building for some reason was on the historical registry and they had to move it. It is just an old building with no significant architectural beauty. But they had to move it across the street. That was really an interesting thing to watch. They first had to move it off its foundation and to the west of where it stood. They then had to turn the building 180 degrees and then move it across the street to its new foundation. It has taken a year + for that move to be finalized. People here were taking bets on when it would crumble and the move would become a cleanup operation. However, the building has withstood everything so far. They are just building the foundation under it so it could still happen. It has been really interesting to watch them and the steps they have taken to get the job done were unreal.

I recently attended the Jumpstart Workshop in Washington D.C. and the Operations Forum in Ft. Worth. Wow! The information we received in D.C. was great! I really learned a lot from those sessions and really appreciated the opportunity to go.

Ft. Worth was a great opportunity as well. There were breakout sessions for the JA's, the JA's and law clerks, and the JA's and Judges. It was interesting to see how the different chambers operate and go about getting the work done. It was fun to share what we would like to see in the next generation of CM/ECF and also to get a preview of the revisions that are coming up in the 4.0 release. It was a very worthwhile Forum and I am glad that I was able to be in attendance.

The weather in Utah is still "hot" for this time of year but the leaves are starting to turn. The mountains and canyons are so beautiful. It is supposed to rain for the next 3 days and we certainly can use it. I am looking forward to the temperatures running in the mid 70's and a nice fall season.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Baltimore!!

**Mary Anderson, JA**, in Albuquerque, NM reports: *The District of New Mexico's new judge, the **Honorable Robert Jacobvitz**, started on 8/10/09. His formal investiture is August 28th. **Judge Starzynski's** chambers is feeling the heat as Judge Jacobvitz was with a very busy law firm. He has had to recuse himself from lots of cases. Hopefully things will settle down soon.*

*I just returned from the CM/ECF forum, which was great. It is the second one I have attended and encourage anyone who can attend to do so. It is lots of fun and I always learn so much. We are currently changing calendars from VCal to Chaps and are looking for a new digital court reporting system. To say things are changing is an understatement. Hope everyone has a great Fall. I hope to see you in Baltimore.*

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**Check this out ....**  
<http://www.govexec.com/column/>  
for tips on Pay & Benefits  
and  
Retirement Planning



## 11th Circuit

By Janet Payton, SD/GA

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY ABJA! I cannot believe it has been 20 years. As one of the founding members of the ABJA, I remember vividly the Association's very humble beginnings. Our first annual meeting was held in a hotel room and now we need an entire hotel to hold the meetings. To this day I am amazed of the growth and camaraderie among the members! Thank you ABJA members for keeping the mission statement a priority!

Happy 10th Anniversary CBA Program!

Thank you CBA Committees for 10 years of professional education!

Now that summer is over, I hope many of you are concentrating on making your plans to attend the 20th Annual Educational Conference in Baltimore. Once again, the program looks outstanding! Thank you Continuing Legal Education Committee for your dedication to our education!

In August I was fortunate enough to attend the OPS forum in Fort Worth, Texas. It was held at the beautiful Omni Hotel. This annual event provides for court personnel (Judges, Clerks, JA's, Law Clerks, IT and Clerk's office staff) to meet face-to-face and share information on CM/ECF and other topics. You also get to see displays and demonstrations of automation programs which are really interesting. I have learned so much from the forums I have attended. The experience is like looking into the court electronic crystal ball.

Wedding Bells will be ringing on October 10, 2009 for **Christina Gary** and Ronald Toole. Christina is a CBA/case manager Augusta Division. She says she is ready for the wedding today! Congratulations Christina and Ron!

As reported in my last article, my husband, Wade finished the 2009 Ford Ironman held in Louisville, Kentucky. His goal was to finish and finished he did in approximately 14 hours. What an exciting event to witness! Can you tell I am a proud ironwife!



On August 21, 2009, the Clerk's Office/ Savannah Division hosted an employee recognition luncheon and presented service awards to many long time employees. A total of 250 years of service was recognized. Congratulations award recipients.

## CM/ECF Operational Forum

By Linda Kimes, CO



Odds are likely that either you attended, or you know someone who attended, the 2009 Bankruptcy Operational Practices Forum, held August 18-19, in Fort Worth, Texas. With over 500 attendees, it was a tremendous opportunity for those in the bankruptcy community to share ideas and discuss issues. I attended this year as a scribe, so my experiences at the conference are a tad bit skewed in that I really "worked" a good deal of the time. But, despite the "working" aspect, it was still worthwhile, interesting, and productive.

The meeting, as in the past, followed the open space/breakout format, combined with a few large group sessions and various demonstrations of court-developed software applications. The breakout sessions varied across a wide spectrum, including topics like judicial assistant networking, Adobe IT issues, handling procedures for different judges, motivating employees, efficient management of deadline reports, teleworking issues, judges and judicial assistant chambers discussion, and federal rule amendments, just to mention a few.

Each bankruptcy court was authorized to send four attendees to the Forum: three attendees from the clerk's office and one attendee from chambers. All bankruptcy judges were invited and did not count as a court attendee. Although not an official count, it appears there were at least 30 judicial assistants who participated. In addition, there were 20 individuals who participated as scribes for the break-out sessions.

Scribes take notes during the breakout sessions and those notes are incorporated into a database of information, which can be accessed by everyone in the judiciary. Once that database is finalized, the link will be available on the J-Net under CM/ECF Bankruptcy Working Group, <http://jnet.ao.dcn/it/ecf/workinggroups/bcad/bankruptcy.htm>. At that link, you will also find the notes from past forums held between 2002-2008.

The Forum is sponsored by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts and the Federal Judicial Center. The Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas served as the local court host and they were gracious and kind as they welcomed us to their home state. The meeting was held at the Omni Fort Worth Hotel, a brand new hotel with more than sufficient room to accommodate the 500+ in attendance.

Next year's forum has been scheduled for August 31-September 1, 2010, at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. Mark your calendars now!



### Message from Velma Smith

*Retired JA and ABA President (1997)  
Kansas City, KS*

*"Thank you, Elaine and the Board of Directors for inviting me to attend the special occasion of celebrating the ABA's 20th year anniversary. I apologize for responding by email, but I thought you might be anxious, considering the timeline.*

*Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend. My husband, Fred, is planning to have knee surgery this fall, and will be somewhat incapacitated. We don't know exactly when the surgery will be, but as a result, have curtailed any extensive travel plans for the rest of the year.*

*Patsy, it seems like such a long time ago, when I believe I read a notice in a newsletter that you had posted, seeking contact with anyone who had attended the earlier Chicago meeting which never evolved. From that point, you, Marge and I, and some others, wrote letters and made phone calls seeking interest in developing a professional association for bankruptcy judges' secretaries. A small group of ladies met in Atlanta to formally create this organization, and the rest, as they say, is history.*

*Even though I am retired now, I keep abreast via the newsletter, of what is going on; and I commend you all for having developed such a formidable and professional association. The ABA and its members will always hold a special place in my heart.*

*Please let the other members know how much I regret not being able to be there. Barring any breakdown of my physical or mental capacity, I will look forward to celebrating the next milestone at 25 years (or who knows, I might pop up sometime before that).*

*Again, I congratulate you, ABA, for 20 years of success. I look forward to seeing you all again soon and I consider it a privilege and honor to have served as president of this Association.*

*p.s. Fred says "Hello" to everyone. You know he always thought of himself as a self-proclaimed "honorary member."*



**Message from  
Susan Maruszewski,  
JA to Hon. Marci McIvor &  
Former ABA President (2002)**  
*Detroit, MI*

*I want to wish the ABA a Happy 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! It was truly my privilege in 2002 to serve as President of such a wonderful organization. I had the honor of working with, and for, the most dedicated professionals that I have had the pleasure to know.*

*The ABA has grown and evolved during its existence in order to assist all of us with the duties and responsibilities that we face on a daily basis and I look forward to what the next 20 years will bring.*

*I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the conference this year to help celebrate this milestone, but my husband and I will be awaiting the birth of our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grandchildren (twins) which will be due around the time of the conference.*

*Have a wonderful time and I look forward to seeing you all next year!*

*"When Marge, Velma and I were in the early stages of planning and drafting, I often referred to an anonymous quote as my inspiration:*

*We serve best when we hold dearly in mind  
the goal and purpose rather than  
our place in the process."*

*Patsy Burkhalter*

## Sales are Up .... (cont'd. from pg. 4)

clear why Delaware, Southern New York, Central California, and Middle Florida are in the top four spots.

The District of Arizona, which holds the fifth spot for Chapter 11 filings, has had several high profile Chapter 11 filings in 2009. These filings include: Opus West Corp., which owns numerous high profile residential, office, and retail development in the East Valley; Eurofresh, Inc., a hydroponic vegetable producer and Southern Arizona employer; Bashas' Supermarkets Inc., a large grocery chain; the Phoenix Coyotes hockey team; and Arvizu Advertising & Promotions Inc.

**No Silver Lining.** In an era of bailouts, bank failures, foreclosures, and the crumbling of small businesses that are America's backbone, Bankruptcy Courts across the nation are as busy as ever. Although the economy presents a unique commodity for those of us in the Bankruptcy Courts (job security), there is no solace to take in the underlying causes of our Courts' activity. As mentioned, our satisfaction must come from the handling of cases that will provide businesses with the opportunity to survive and save jobs, and enable individuals to save their homes or eliminate overwhelming debt. These are our rewards



## 2009 Jumpstart Workshop for Judicial Assistants and Judges' Secretaries

By Jeanann Janisse, NV and Shirley Vaught, ED/TN



We're from a large family! The 2009 Jumpstart Workshop for Judicial Assistants and Judges' Secretaries (Workshop) brought us together August 3 - 7 when 155 members of our court family from throughout the United States gathered. This unforgettable event was made possible by the Administrative Office (AO). We were welcomed with a reception on Sunday evening at the Washington Court Hotel where the attendees stayed. During that week, the AO offered two sessions of special training at its headquarters located in the Thurgood Marshal Building in Washington D.C.

**The Honorable Margaret (Peggy) A. Irving**, Chief of the Article III Judges Division, welcomed us and presented an *Overview of the Federal Judiciary*. We were honored that **James C. Duff**, Director of the AO, took time from his busy schedule to meet with us. He shared information regarding his background, his vision for the AO, and how we all play an integral role in the court family. He encouraged us to share our ideas, our enthusiasm, and ourselves.

In addition, we were honored with the following presentations by their presenters: *Financial Disclosure* (**George D. Reynolds**, Staff Counsel); *Ethics for Chambers* (**Robert P. Deyling**, Assistant General Counsel, Office of General Counsel); *Learning and Development Opportunities* (**Rosann F. Reed**, Chief, Training Staff, Office of Human Resources); *"Shopping on the Internet" and Other Essential Skills* (**Stephen P. Levenson**, IT Specialist, Office of Information Technology); *Security in the Judiciary* (**Edward M. Templeman**, Chief, Court Security Office); *Library Services* (**Leslie M. Campbell**, Administrative Librarian, Appellate Court and Circuit Administration Division); *Review of the Law Clerk Appointment* (**Nancy Hurlburt**, Supervisory Human Resources Specialist, Office of Human Resources); *Online System for Clerkship Applications (OSCAR)* (**Laura W. Simon**, Management Analyst, Office of Human Resources); *Overview of the J-Net* (**Clare De Cleene**, Web Communications Manager, Office of Internal Services); *Travel Regulations and Procedures* (**Janice D. Jackson**, Acting Chief, Office of Finance and Budget); *Public Affairs Resources* (**Rebecca J. Fanning**, Public Affairs Specialist, Office of Public Affairs); *Non-Case Related Recurring Reports* (**Michele E. Reed**, Deputy Chief, Office of Judges Programs); *Using Adobe Acrobat* (**Lisa Croft**, PDF Standards Evangelist, Office of Information Technology); *Dealing With Difficult People* (**Carlton Reed**, Fred Pryor Seminars); *Human Resources Perspectives* (**Harvey Jones**, Acting Chief, Office of Human Resources)



Session 1 - Aug 3-5, 2009

Breakout sessions were held both days by **Margaret S. McCaleb**, Supervisory IT Specialist, for the Appellate Judge Staff; **Richard J. Goodier**, Attorney Advisor, for Bankruptcy Judge Staff, and **Barbara L. Kimble**, Senior Attorney, for District and Magistrate Judge Staff.



Session 2 - Aug 5-7, 2009

## 2009 Jumpstart Workshop ... (cont'd. from pg. 15)

These sessions were designed to speak to the specific needs of the various courts. As Judicial Assistants to bankruptcy judges, we were in Richard Goodier's breakout session. His optimism and enthusiasm for the Next Generation of Bankruptcy CM/ECF Project are unparalleled.

During the entire week, JSAG representatives acted as mentors and facilitators for the small-group sessions. They were: **Carla Gibson Baker** (E.D. La), **Pam Jewell** (Bankr. W.D. Pa), **Sandra Hanning** (4<sup>th</sup> Cir.), **Karen Hillebrand** (D.D. Mi), **Maryllynn Shawver** (W.D. Mo.), **Joyce Elliott** (N.D. Ga), **Catherine Higgins** (D. Az), **Annette Mains-Huskey** (D.C. Cir. COA), and **Rebecca Woodrum** (Bankr. C.D. Il)

**William Barto**, Senior Attorney, stated, "We encourage anyone who was not able to attend this year to join us for next year's Workshop." Bill anticipates that the course materials (including videos of certain classes) will be posted on the Judges Corner on J-Net by October 31.

The AO provided us with detailed information in a three-ring binder. Below is only a glimpse of that information:

- As Judicial Assistants and Judges' Secretaries, be aware of the *Rule of 80*, which means that your judge's age plus their years of service must equal 80 before they may retire or move into senior status.
- *Always* know your Judicial Security Inspector. Knowing your JSI is important for the safety and security of your Judge.
- *Sometimes* you just need to call the experts at the AO. We were invited to call any time we need an answer. They are here to help us.
- *Never* forget that you are an essential member in your chambers. You have great influence over your Judge.

Additionally, for any of you who help your judge with the Financial Disclosure process, there are plans to go electronic in 2011.

Never forget to call on your librarian! Web pages change all the time, and he/she can help you capture a link when it's referred to in an opinion so that it may be retrieved at a later date.

Remember to use your chambers fund! Each chambers is allowed \$400 per person to use for training purposes. If you don't use it, you lose it!

To receive tuition reimbursement, your court must have a training policy in place and must include policy or guidelines to apply to the course you wish to take. For information on applying, please see the J-Net.

And finally, as Carlton Reed (*Dealing With Difficult People*) so eloquently stated, "Today's workshop isn't about today, it's about tomorrow."

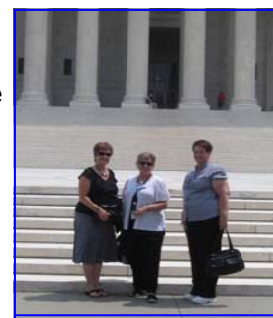
If you haven't attended a Jumpstart Workshop, please don't miss your next opportunity to do so!

AND NOW THE REST OF THE STORY (from Shirley)



*Shirley Vaught, Sally Hanson,  
Jeanann Janisse & Thora  
Searle*

"We had the most incredible time in WDC while at the Workshop. We did a night time sightseeing tour that took us from the Capitol Building, to the White House, to the Mall with the Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Wall, FRD's Memorial, then to the Iwo Jima Memorial and past Arlington Cemetery. And if we hadn't seen enough, a lunch hour was spent at the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress. There are pictures to prove it! One more time it is proven, it's not where you go – but who you take the journey with. "



*Sally, Jeanann & Thora  
in front of the Supreme  
Court Bldg.*



## My Passion for Fencing

By Suzanne Marx, OR

I have been breathing longer than I have been fencing, but not that much longer. I now fence as a veteran in the 50+ age group, something I never imagined when I began my fencing journey at 13.

I share a passion for fencing with **Judge Trish Brown**. I am her judicial assistant and in a small way had a part in introducing her to fencing. She wrote about the sport in the spring 2009 issue of the NCBJ Conference News, in an article entitled "Fencing, Family, and Friends." In 2001, I helped make a fencing venue available for a fund-raiser for a fourth grade class. Judge Brown's daughter was in that class. As the day's event wound down, a couple of fencers gave a beginner's lesson to some of the fourth graders. Judge Brown's daughter was one. She is now a varsity fencer in her first year of college.

Inspired by her daughter's enthusiasm for fencing, Judge Brown took it up in 2007. We now fence together as members of the same salle, the Northwest Fencing Center, in Beaverton, Oregon. Over the years, I have seen many people of all ages discover fencing. My husband, also a fencer, and I have provided housing to fencers who come to NWFC for training. We have served as guardians for three aspiring fencers. On a much more short-term basis, we house student fencers who come to NWFC for week-long fencing camps.

In part, our roles as hosts and mentors are testaments to how much we gained from our youthful years as fencers. I took up foil and epee, two of the three fencing weapons. (The third is saber.) I became one of two Oregon women who made national finals in two weapons. I fenced competitively through my thirties, medaling in individual and team events in the U.S. and Canada. I was proud to represent the West in at least seven Olympic Festivals. My husband represented the U.S. in three Olympics. His brother, who is the fencing master at NWFC, was on five U.S. Olympic teams.

What is it that I love about fencing and has kept me fencing? When I was younger, I loved coming from behind. I found myself never giving up, and that made me a good competitor. I also relished the spirit of a team event and found a niche in rallying a team. Fencing blends the effort and excitement of one-on-one competition with the support and camaraderie of a team.



Cory, Judge Brown & Suzanne



Suzanne competing at the NIKE World Masters Games in 1998.

Although I stopped fencing foil competitively in 1992 and epee competitively in 1997, a few years after the birth of my daughter, I have continued to fence recreationally. It is great exercise and gives me an opportunity to show young fencers some of the tricks they can encounter on the fencing strip. Despite my "retirement," Judge Brown encouraged me to try fencing in my age group in the 2007-08 fencing season. Even though I felt a bit rusty, I did well and found I had not lost my competitive drive.

Fencing has its more adult aspects too, that is, making fencing clubs and facilities available to people from seven to seventy. In fact, it has no age limits. I have served on the board and supported the local governing body for the sport for years. I am active in a charitable organization whose mission is supporting fencers and fencing. I am the fencing commissioner for the State Games of Oregon, having served in this capacity since 2004.

My husband and I even run a small business related to fencing apparel. That keeps us traveling to fencing competitions and close to the sport and the many fencing friends we have made.

In some ways, my husband and I are now giving back to fencing from the wealth it has given us, yet we continue to find fencing and fencers enriching our lives. My thanks to **Sally Hanson** and **Martie Kantor** for giving me the opportunity and encouragement to write about my avocation.





## An Introduction to the Houston Association of Bankruptcy Paralegals

By Turea Simpson, CBA

One of the most magnificent things ever written by Walt Disney was, *"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them."* When the Houston Association of Bankruptcy Paralegals ("HABP") was formed in April 2009, it was merely a dream in the beginning. A few individuals came together with a collective vision of having a unified organization for debtor, creditor and trustee paralegals to meet, share ideas, have ongoing continuing legal education and peer to peer mentoring, and an annual seminar for bankruptcy paralegals.

The need for this type of organization is warranted and its arrival has been well received by the legal community as a whole - inside Houston and beyond. Finally, Texas has a forum exclusively for bankruptcy paralegals! HABP is the first association of its kind in Texas and just the second of its kind in the nation. HABP has attracted over 50 members since its introduction of the organization in April. The HABP offers several levels of membership, including voting and non-voting levels, with annual dues of \$50. In addition, The Houston Association of Bankruptcy Paralegals offers members monthly CLE events, an annual conference, opportunities for pro bono work, a mentorship program and an online job bank. According to data from Automated Access to Court Electronic Records ("AACER"), *"there were over 120,000 U.S. bankruptcy filings in May 2009 or 6,020 for each of the 20 business days in May. That is the first time daily bankruptcy filings have topped the 6,000 mark since the 2005 bankruptcy law was adopted."* Although Congress enacted the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 or BAPCPA to increase distribution to creditors and make it harder to file for chapter 7 bankruptcy - bankruptcies are on the rise. During this time, as individuals who are involved in bankruptcy, we must maintain professionalism when dealing with clients and remain compassionate and sensitive to our clients' needs. I interact with individuals on a daily basis who are brought to tears because they are no longer able to manage or preserve their businesses, homes, etc. This subject is very serious and sensitive to them. The most successful approach to dealing with individuals who are faced with bankruptcy is by being a great listener. Whenever a client notices or feels I have given them an attentive ear--it allows the client to become more at ease. The more at ease a clients feels, the smoother the process becomes for them and for the law firm.

Paralegals and support staff are the life's blood of any law practice. I believe a great law practice must have an excellent attorney/legal assistant working relationship to help maintain a successful practice. A paralegal is generally the first person a client encounters, and the demeanor of the paralegal may help determine whether or not an individual or business is ultimately willing to hire the firm. In addition, a great attorney/legal assistant working relationship is imperative for the morale of the office. Typically, an unhappy employee can be sensed a mile away! An unhappy employee generally produces a negative work environment, which can ultimately affect the client.

I envision that the Houston Association of Bankruptcy Paralegals will improve the quality of bankruptcy filings in Houston and its neighboring cities, by providing continuing education for bankruptcy paralegals and by encouraging higher standards amongst well trained bankruptcy paralegals. I encourage us all to learn more; to be more; to strive for excellence.



## SPOTLIGHT ON TUREA A. SIMPSON, CBA



**TUREA F. SIMPSON, CBA**, is a senior bankruptcy paralegal with the Houston based firm, Hughes Watters & Askanase, L.L.P. A Houston native, Ms. Simpson has been a bankruptcy paralegal for Janet Northrup, Of Counsel, for the past eight years and has been in the bankruptcy field for over 10 years. Simpson has been a certified bankruptcy assistant since 2007 and is an active member of the American Bankruptcy Judicial Assistants (ABJA).

Ms. Simpson is the founder and president of the Houston Association of Bankruptcy Paralegals (HABP).

Turea has been married seven years to husband, John, and they have two children - an 11 year and a one year old that was born during Hurricane Ike last year!

## GRAMMAR GREMLINS

By Don Ferguson, ED/TN

C  
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### It's vs. Its

The apostrophe is a devilish little punctuation mark that confuses a lot of people. It is not uncommon to see **it's** when the writer meant **its**. This is one of the most common mistakes seen in business correspondence today.

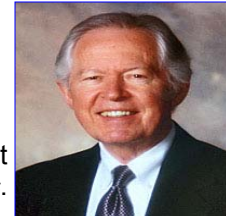
With the apostrophe, the term means *it is* or *it has*. Without the apostrophe, *its* is the possessive form of *it*, as in "The cat ate its food." Remember, If you want to say *it is* or *it has*, use the apostrophe, Other-

wise, leave it out.

### Periods and Commas with Quotation Marks

Many people have trouble trying to decide whether the period and comma go inside or outside quotation marks. And when they do make the placement, they are never really quite certain. In American usage, the rule is simple: Periods and commas are always placed inside the quotation marks.

This rule stands even when it seems more logical to place them outside, as in writing the title of a song or television show. It appears in this instance as if the quotation marks belong to the title and should, therefore, stay with the title. But the rule holds: Periods and commas are placed inside quotation marks -- always.



Don K. Ferguson, Eastern District of Tennessee, welcomes comments and questions via telephone, 865-545-4234, extension 222, or by email at [Don\\_Ferguson@TNED.uscourts.gov](mailto:Don_Ferguson@TNED.uscourts.gov). His office address is U.S. District Court, 800 Market Street, Ste. 130, Knoxville, TN 37902. Don writes a weekly newspaper column titled "Grammar Gremlins" and is the author of a book by the same name, published by Glenbridge Publishing Lt., Aurora, CO.

## *DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR CERTIFICATION EXPIRES?*

Check out our website - [www.abja.org](http://www.abja.org) - and click on the link "CLE Status"

*Names are shown under Certification Site and Date*

## **It All Began in 1999 ....**

By: Ann Virgadamo, CBA/CLE Chair



When **Martie** asked me to write an article on the history of the Certified Bankruptcy Assistants' Program, I hesitated; however after some thought I agreed because I hoped to inspire others to make a difference in the ABA as this a great organization.

In 1992, the year I started working for the **Hon. Jerry Brown**, I joined the ABA. It just so happened that the Annual Meeting was in New Orleans that year when I was getting ready to start my new position. I was invited to the conference. **JoAnn Kelly** and I went to the annual conference every year and have not missed one year.

Here is a short story on my road to becoming involved with the ABA, on the Continuing Legal Education Committee, becoming Secretary, and President of the association. I was Secretary in 1999, President of the Association in 2000, and again in 2005. I was appointed the Chair of the Continuing Legal Education Committee in 1997 to the present. Every year I work with the incoming president of the ABA to coordinate the educational program for the annual conference. And here is how it began. **Patsy Burkhalter**, one of the founders of the association, used to encourage me to get more involved with the association. I tried ignoring Patsy, but anyone that knows her also knows how persuasive she can be. I was one of the party animals in the association and sometimes fell asleep in the back of the room during the seminars, until one day, **Steve Morgan**, a motivational speaker, picked me out of the crowd and asked me if I had

(cont'd. on pg. 21)

## It All Began ... (cont'd. from pg. 20)

had a rough night. I told him – “Yes, I did.” It was enough to wake me up and really listen to him and found that I really enjoyed his presentation.

At that time, the ABA invited speakers from Administrative Office and other various interests. This started me thinking of our needs in education. At that time, I was attending night school to become a paralegal and trying to get a Bachelors degree Paralegal studies were my minor at the University of New Orleans. In May, 1999, I received a Bachelor of Science degree with honors from the University of Phoenix, Metairie, Louisiana and in June, 2000, I received a certificate in paralegal studies and graduated with honors from the University of New Orleans. I also attended numerous seminars in New Orleans put on by Fred Pryor and National Seminar Groups and received certificates of completion.

I then started thinking that there were no courses in bankruptcy, our field of expertise. I wanted to set new goals for CLE and to make a difference in the Association. I approached Patsy and she told me to sign up for the CLE Committee. I spent time researching what courses were out there that would be beneficial to the group. I started making phone calls to the various seminar groups to find out if they would come to the ABA Annual Conference.

In 1997, I spoke with **Karn Weirman**, Director of the Paralegal Studies Program at UNO, about certification programs to find out if it was possible to start a Bankruptcy Certification Program. I did more research on certification and spoke with one of the attorneys in bankruptcy who helped start the American Bankruptcy Certification for the ABI. A lot of time was devoted to research and talking to different people concerning how to develop the program.

In 1999, the Certification for Bankruptcy Assistants' ("CBA") Program, the first and only bankruptcy certification program for non-lawyers in the United States, and the educational seminar were formed. What makes the program unique is that bankruptcy law is a specialized field.

Since the first CBA seminar was held in Minneapolis, MN (1999), it has continued to flourish in the following cities and states: Orlando, FL (2000 & 2007); Savannah, GA (2001); San Diego, CA (2002), New Orleans, LA (2003); Charleston, SC (2003); Atlantic City, NJ (2004); Nashville, TN (2004); Las Vegas, NV (2005); Portland, OR (2006); San Antonio, TX (2008), and next month, Baltimore, MD (2009). The ABA now has more than 200 certified bankruptcy assistants throughout the United States.

The ABA has been a good foundation for me. It has been a challenge in many ways. I have met so many wonderful people and will remember them always. I have grown so much and learned from this experience, and I will always cherish it. I thank the ABA for changing this part of my life and hope to spread the same to others who have joined this Association. Remember you make the difference to change and grow. I will continue to do whatever I can to bring a great educational seminar for the ABA. It is worth the ride! It's a great organization.

See you in Baltimore for our 10<sup>th</sup> Annual CBA Educational Seminar and 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Educational Conference for the ABA!



## SPOTLIGHT ON ANN VIRGADAMO, JA ED/LA



**Ann Virgadamo** is a Certified Bankruptcy Assistant, paralegal, and has worked as a Judicial Assistant to Chief **Judge Jerry A. Brown**, U. S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, since his appointment in 1992. In August 2005, Judge Brown was reappointed.

From 1989-1992, she was secretary to the Honorable John Minor Wisdom, U. S. Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, Eastern District of Louisiana. Ann has worked in the federal court system for 32 years.

She has been a member of the Association of Bankruptcy Judicial Assistants ("ABJA") since 1992. She was Secretary and President of the Association in 2000 and 2005 and has served as the Chair of the Continuing Legal Education/CBA Committee from 1997 to present.

In May 1999, she received a Bachelor of Science degree and graduated with honors from the University of Phoenix, Metairie, Louisiana. That same year, she participated the first CBA seminar in Minneapolis and received a Certificate as a bankruptcy assistant.

In June 2000, Ann graduated with honors from the University of New Orleans and received a Certificate in paralegal studies.

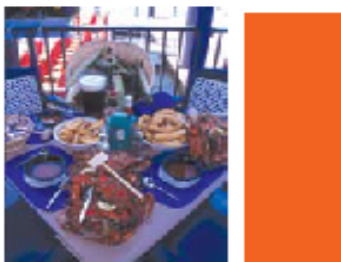
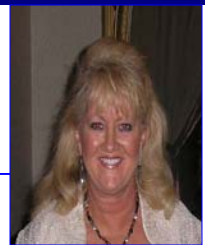
It was ten years ago, in 1999, that an idea to start a program to certify bankruptcy assistants was developed with the help of the Director of the Paralegal Studies for the University of New Orleans, and a bankruptcy attorney, who had helped form the American Bankruptcy Certification for the ABI. The Certified Bankruptcy Assistants' ("CBA") Program and the educational seminar were formed, and the first CBA seminar was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is co-author of the CBA Study Guide, which is edited by bankruptcy judges and bankruptcy attorneys. The guide is constantly revised with the updated law.

Ann was an adjunct teacher at the University of New Orleans during the Spring of 2008. She developed a workbook and is on a CD with practical bankruptcy examples for Aspen Publishers to a book called, *Basic Bankruptcy Law for Bankruptcy for Paralegals*, written by David Buchbinder.

COMMITTEE  
REPORTS

Conference Committee

By Marleen Young, NJ



# Baltimore

filled with surprises and charm

## Five Great Reasons to Come to Baltimore

### 1. Easily Accessible

Baltimore is easily reached by car, plane, bus or train; the Baltimore/Washington International Airport is just 15 minutes from downtown.

### 2. Simple and Fun to Get Around

Harbor taxis and duck boat tours are unique ways to see the city. Don't forget your walking shoes...there are more than 130 attractions to visit that run the gamut from high art at the Walters Art Museum to crazy kitsch in Hampden.

### 3. The Inner Harbor

Baltimore's famed Inner Harbor is the jewel of the city! Dive into an unforgettable journey under the sea at the National Aquarium. When you surface, visit nearby restaurants and shopping. Make the Inner Harbor your first stop upon arrival.

### 4. Extraordinary Neighborhoods

Visit Little Italy or Greektown for great food, Mount Vernon for arts and culture, the Inner Harbor for family fun, and Fell's Point for antiques shopping!

### 5. Scrumptious Food

From five-course dinners to 10-legged meals (Maryland crabs), Baltimore serves up a whole new way of eating at more than 1,000 restaurants and entertainment venues. The 14 blocks of historic Fell's Point alone hold over 50 restaurants, clubs, bars, pubs and taverns.





## Continuing Legal Education and Certification for Bankruptcy Assistants Committee

By Ann Virgadamo, ED/LA

Well, the year is coming to a close, and the Conference is around the corner.

This year, as always, we set goals and reached them – with the help of the mid-year board meeting, the judges who support the ABA, the JA's, and the attorneys who teach us. They are always there to lend a hand, an arm, their minds, and their hearts.

Usually, the final article is a summation of what the CLE Committee accomplishes for the year. But, I would like to review not just what the CLE Committee has accomplished but the 10-year anniversary of the CBA Program, because they go hand-in-hand. The CBA program has helped the CLE committee maintain the high standards of learning for the Association. Every year for the past 10 years, the committee has offered and maintained a high standard of educational conferences, and continue to be the only association that has a specialty certification program available for non-lawyers in the field of bankruptcy.

We are proud of the number of attendees every year who become certified and support the ABA, and this is what helps the program to grow stronger. And if the program is stronger, then the ABA is stronger.

Let's take a walk down memory lane – if you remember in 1998, which was a year of many accomplishments – a future development was to complete the ABA website, which was done in 1999 – 10 years ago. We even started a "Helping Hand Program" designed to assist individual members at a time of great distress (flooding/fire, etc), and it was used for Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which is now called the "Support and Assistance Committee."

I believe we even worked on a "Title Change" over 10 years ago to change our titles to "Judicial Assistants." This Title Change had been discussed and pursued by the Legislative Committee, but the actual proposal went before the Judicial Resources Committee (JRC) in June 1998.

Yes, even the CBA Program was brought to the attention of the ABA in 1998 and would be finalized in 1999. A letter was written to **Judge Charles E. Matheson**, Chair of the Liaison Committee for the NCBJ, asking for their support. On July 21, 1998, he wrote a very nice letter stating "the Certification Program is a worthwhile program and would be encouraged by the bankruptcy judges. He

also stated that they are always supportive of our efforts to develop our skills." What more can an Association ask for from our judges who have supported us in every endeavor we achieve to complete.

These are only a few historic landmarks the ABA through the CBA and CLE started over 10 years ago. This year our Association marks two great events – 10 years for the CBA Program and 20 years for the ABA – major accomplishments and many, many goals were reached. The ABA has a lot of memories and accomplishments to be remembered – a lot to be proud of, and most of all, the JA's in this association who belong and support it should be proud of what they have accomplished too.

Without the help of the Judges, JA's, and the committees, where would we be?

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**



## History Committee

By Barb Sutton, ED/MO

**Marleen Young**, JA (NJ) past History Committee Chair, forwarded to me all the folders of records and photo albums for safe keeping upon my appointment to this Committee. What a hoot I had going through all those old photos. It was quite a trip down memory lane.

I am in the process and will continue with going through all the records and putting the old musty paper documents on CD's and portable flash drives. This process makes the records readily available for reference.

I have prepared a PowerPoint slide show of photos from the 2007 Orlando conference and our 2008 San Antonio conference and will be showing them at this year's conference in Baltimore. I will continue on with this project from year to year and hopefully we will have these presentations posted on our website also.

Serving as Chair of the History Committee has been a wonderful experience as well as fun. I hope I am given the opportunity to continue on with this project.

Check out our website -

[www.abja.org](http://www.abja.org)



## Membership Committee

By Sherie Hitch, ED/MI

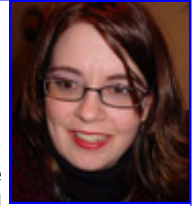
The ABA continues to attract new members! If you are not a member please consider joining. Feel free to call any current member and I'm sure you'll only receive positive feedback about the ABA, or visit [www.aba.org](http://www.aba.org).

I hope everyone is planning to celebrate the ABA's 20th anniversary by attending annual conference in Baltimore! The educational agenda is yet again a great success, the Baltimore area has much to offer, and the friendships we resume once a year are priceless. If you are new to the ABA and/or the conference, and would like a mentor to introduce you and show you around, please let me know. If you're an experienced ABA and would like to be a mentor, I'd like to hear from you too!

If you joined the ABA in 2009 but have not yet received your membership packet, please get in touch with me.

Again, I want to thank **Dana Muccie**, ABA Treasurer, and **Sally Hanson**, Membership Committee, for keeping such excellent records!

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## Support & Assistance Committee

By Penny Brellenthin, WD/WI

This past quarter the Support & Assistance Committee has been busy sending get well wishes to the following individuals:

In May, 2009 we sent a bouquet of flowers to our President, **Elaine Coker** (6<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Tennessee), JA for **Judge George C. Paine, II**, following surgery.

Get well wishes were sent to **Thora Searle** (10<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Utah), JA for **Judge William Thurman**, following health complications in June, 2009.

In July, 2009 we sent condolences to **Michelle Phillips** (CBA Associate Member, Georgia) following the death of Attorney **Oliver D. Peters, Jr.**, whom she'd worked for 23 years.

We sent get well wishes to **Shirley Vaught** (6<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Tennessee), JA for **Judge Richard S. Stair, Jr.**, following heart catheterization surgery in July, 2009.

A get well card was sent to **Beth Towery** (5<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Texas), JA for **Judge D. Michael Lynn**, in July, 2009 following hernia repair surgery.

Please contact me if you know of an ABA member or their family who could use our thoughts and prayers.



## Nominations Committee

By Beth Towery, ND/TX



We sent out 96 ballots on August 24, 2009. They were sent to all voting ABA members. The returns come in daily. The ballot does not allow for many choices since only one member was agreeable to run for circuit rep. and secretary. **All absentee ballots are due September 25th.** The final voting will be at the business meeting in Baltimore on October 24th. Following are the candidates:

President-Elect: **Becky Woodrum & Beth Towery**

Secretary: **Laura Stevenson**

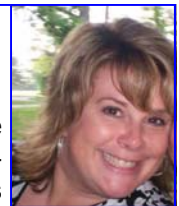
1st Circ: <b>Kate Kelly</b>	7th Circ: <b>Dorothy Clay</b>
2nd Circ: <b>Rosemary Rizzico</b>	8th Circ: <b>Barb Sutton</b>
3rd Circ: <b>Laurie Frick</b>	9th Circ: <b>Rosa Green</b>
4th Circ: <b>Sharon Angel</b>	10th Circ: <b>Thora Searle</b>
5th Circ: <b>Barbara Groves</b>	11th Circ: <b>Janet Payton</b>
6th Circ: <b>Patti Francis</b>	

Thanks to everyone that agreed to run for office this year.

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## Website Committee

By Sherie Hitch, ED/MI



I'm excited to report that the ABA website ([www.aba.org](http://www.aba.org)) is getting a makeover. I attended a Microsoft Office FrontPage class and I have been giving the ABA website a facelift! This has been a fun and exciting project that remains under the scalpel. Expected release date is before 2009 year end.

If you are new or have forgotten how to access the "Members Only" page, please feel free to contact me at [Sherie\\_Hitch@mieb.uscourts.gov](mailto:Sherie_Hitch@mieb.uscourts.gov).

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## Happy 20th Anniversary ABJA!

### Annual Meeting Sites

1989	Atlanta, Georgia - Organizational Mtg.
1990	Las Vegas, Nevada
1991	Little Rock, Arkansas
1992	New Orleans, Louisiana
1993	Kansas City, Missouri
1994	Portland, Maine
1995	Savannah, Georgia
1996	San Antonio, Texas
1997	St. Louis, Missouri
1998	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Joint w/FJSA)
1999	Minneapolis, Minnesota ( <b>First CBA</b> )
2000	Orlando, Florida
2001	Chicago, Illinois (Joint w/FJSA)
2002	San Diego, CA
2003	Charleston, South Carolina (Joint w/FJSA)
2004	Nashville, Tennessee
2005	Las Vegas, Nevada
2006	Portland, Oregon
2007	Orlando, Florida
2008	San Antonio, Texas
2009	Baltimore, Maryland

### ABJA Presidents

1990	Patsy Burkhalter	Atlanta, GA
1991	Marge Sullivan	Kansas City, MO
1992	Nancy F. Logue	Chattanooga, TN
1993	Anita B. Cross	Little Rock, AR
1994	Martha Primosch	Jacksonville, FL
1995	Betty Stovall	Lynchburg, VA
1996	Judy Huff	Birmingham, AL
1997	Velma J. Smith	Topeka, KS
1998	Michele Boyer	Philadelphia, PA
1999	Ann Virgadamo	New Orleans, LA
2000	Karen Krouch	Minneapolis, MN
2001	Paula Funderburk	Shreveport, LA
2002	Susan Maruszewski	Detroit, MI
2003	Mary Morrison	Tampa, FL
2004	Martie Kantor	Tallahassee, FL
2005	Ann Virgadamo	New Orleans, LA
2006	Janet Payton	Augusta, GA
2007	Becky Woodrum	Danville, IL
2008	Cindy Korbol	Eau Claire, WI
2009	Elaine Coker	Nashville, TN

## Happy 10th Anniversary CBA!

***The purpose of this Association, shall be to promote the general welfare of its members; to encourage the highest standards of conduct among its members and in the profession at large; to promote the continuing education of its members; and to foster among its members a feeling of camaraderie and mutual confidence."***

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*I want to join in with everyone in wishing the CBA program and the ABJA a Happy 10th and 20th Anniversary, respectively. As the saying goes ... "we've come a long way baby!"*

*I've only been part of the ABJA since 1999 and over the years it has exceeded all expectations. Without the foresight, determination, and perseverance for excellence of our founding members, the ABJA would have been nothing more than a group of people who hold similar job titles. Thank goodness for us they had a vision for something much more than that. I especially want to thank **Patsy Burkhalter** for always being our 'voice of reason' and for helping us to maintain the professionalism this organization has come to achieve.*

*Our Conference Chairs (**Michele Boyer** and now **Marleen Young**) and our CBA/CLE Chair (**Ann Virgadamo**) spend a lot of time ensuring that from the moment you arrive at the conference until the time you leave, you come away with the feeling of satisfaction you have gotten your money's worth. Until you become active and see what goes on behind the scenes, can you then see and really appreciate the final product. I applaud not only these ladies, but everyone else who has a part in putting it all together. I hope you will take a moment and let them all know how much you appreciate their efforts because they are continuously working to make your job easier.*

*I apologize for the length but because we are celebrating two very important anniversaries, I thought it only fitting to include some additional articles and information so I hope you will find it all informative.*

*My special thanks goes out to **Chief Judge Paul Glenn** for agreeing to being our feature judge and stating what most all of us are feeling .. **SALES ARE DEFINITELY UP!** Courts and law firms alike are feeling the extra workload.*

*Also, thanks to **Jim Wannamaker** (who will be one of our speakers in Baltimore) and **Don Ferguson** for their article contributions..*

*Last but certainly not least, thanks to all of the Circuit Representatives, Committee Chairs and those additional individuals who took time out of their busy schedules to contribute to this issue. I know some of you were probably ready to throw your computer at me with all of my harassment, but know that your efforts don't go unnoticed or appreciated.*

*I'm looking forward to seeing all my old friends and meeting some new ones in Baltimore!! Will you be there?*

Martie