

# 2014 Midyear Meeting Features 50th Anniversary Celebration

by Linton Johnson

**T**he 2014 Midyear Meeting of the State Bar of Georgia took place Jan. 9-11 at the InterContinental Buckhead Hotel in Atlanta, featuring the official celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the unified State Bar. The three-day meeting was also filled with CLE seminars, receptions, section events, law school alumni gatherings, committee meetings and more.

More than 400 Bar members and guests attended the 50th Anniversary Gala on Friday evening, Jan. 10. Gov. Nathan Deal delivered the keynote address.

Chief Justice Hugh Thompson of the Supreme Court of Georgia, Chief Judge Herbert Phipps of the Court of Appeals of Georgia and Hon. Beverly Martin of the U.S. Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit, also spoke during the celebration, reflecting on the relationship between the State Bar and the court system over the past 50 years.

State Bar of Georgia President Charles L. Ruffin presented the Founders Award to former Gov. Carl Sanders, whose leadership and support resulted in the passage of the 1963 legislation to create the State Bar, culminating a 40-year unification effort by leaders of the Georgia Bar Association. Sanders was



(Left to right) Former Gov. Carl Sanders accepts the Founders Award from President Charles L. Ruffin.

unable to attend the dinner, but the presentation was made through a video presentation of an interview

Photos by Sarah I. Coole, Jennifer R. Mason and Derrick W. Stanley

between Ruffin and the former governor, which had been recorded earlier in the week.

Ruffin also unveiled the Bar's new history book on the legal profession in Georgia, *From Banished to Unified*, which was published in observance of the 50th anniversary. All Bar members in attendance received a copy of the book.

Ruffin closed the Gala evening with the following toast:

To Cliff Brashier, may he rest in peace; to our profession, may it always be noble; to the State Bar of Georgia, may it sail on to an ever bright future.

## Board Meeting Highlights

On Saturday, Jan. 11, Ruffin presided over the 250th meeting of the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia. He opened the meeting by recognizing members of the State Bar staff for their efforts to carry on the Bar's work following the passing of Executive Director Cliff Brashier on Dec. 20, 2013. He specifically thanked Chief Operating Officer Sharon Bryant, Chief Financial Officer Steve Laine and General Counsel Paula Frederick for their help and support.

Ruffin also recognized Linton Johnson, Director of Meetings Michelle Garner, Director of Communications Sarah Coole and Meetings Administrative Assistant Gakii Kingoriah for their work in preparing the 50th Anniversary Gala and the history book.

Board members observed a moment of silence in memory of Cliff Brashier, which was followed by Ruffin recognizing the past presidents of the Bar, members of the judiciary and other special guests who were in attendance.

## JQC Appointment

As part of the consent agenda, the Board of Governors voted unanimously to appoint Past Bar President James B. Franklin of Statesboro to serve on the Judicial Qualifications Commission through 2017.



President Charles L. Ruffin presents Gov. Nathan Deal with a statue of Lady Justice commemorating the governor's keynote address at the 50th Anniversary Celebration.



Chief Justice Hugh P. Thompson and wife Jane arrive for the reception at the InterContinental Hotel Buckhead.



Chief Judge Herbert E. Phipps reflects on the relationship between the State Bar of Georgia and the Court of Appeals of Georgia during the 50th Anniversary Celebration.





Court of Appeals Presiding Judge John J. Ellington and wife Sandra Kate enjoy the evening.

## Bylaw Change

Following a report by Bob McCormack, the Board of Governors voted unanimously to dissolve the Resolutions Committee and the accompanying Bylaw Article II, Section 5.

## 2014 Legislative Program

With the 2014 session of the Georgia General Assembly scheduled to convene on Monday, Jan. 13, President Ruffin introduced Thomas Worthy, who previously served on the staff of Gov. Deal, as the Bar's new Director of Governmental Affairs.

Following a report from Advisory Committee on Legislation Chair Dan Snipes, the Board of Governors voted unanimously to support a legislative proposal on the unlicensed practice of law, recommended by the Real Property Law Section, and HB 674 on state-funded positions for the Juvenile Court.

Lobbyist Rusty Sewell presented a preview of the 2014 legislative session, which he said would be a short one because of an earlier beginning of the election season this year, with candidate qualifying scheduled to begin

March 3. Sewell reported that Zach Johnson has coordinated legislative programs for 14 local bar associations around the state, reaching at least 827 attorneys and 43 legislators. Major issues of interest expected to be addressed during the session include medical malpractice litigation, gun carrying rights, criminal justice reform and the budget. Carryover legislation includes guardianships and military parental rights. Groundwork is being laid for increases in judicial salaries, but no action is expected to be taken on this issue until 2015.

Ruffin reported on the 2014 Legislative Forum, which was held Thursday, Jan. 9, the first day of the Midyear Meeting.

## Civil Legal Services Task Force

Prior to Secretary Rita Sheffey reporting on the activities of the Civil Legal Services Task Force, Ruffin announced that the IOLTA rate comparability proposal on the agenda would not be voted on at this meeting. Sheffey reported that on average, the Atlanta Legal Aid Society (ALAS) and the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) jointly lost \$3 million from their annual budgets since 2008. At the

same time, Georgia's poverty population has increased by 64 percent. She reported that the president and director of the Georgia Bar Foundation asked for additional time to review the proposed revisions to Bar Rule 1.15 and New Part XV, which is the reason for withdrawing the proposal from the Midyear Meeting agenda. She expects that the proposal will be an action item at the Board's Spring Meeting.

Other funding options being explored by the task force are pro hac vice fees, and she referred Board members to the handout on proposed amendments to Rule 4-4(E) of the Uniform Superior Court Rules for their review and comment. The task force will be asking the Council of Superior Court Judges to modify the pro hac vice rules to incorporate a \$75 per matter application fee and a \$200 annual renewal fee, if the case is still pending. The \$75 fee would go to General Counsel's office for administration, and the \$200 fee would go to the Georgia Bar Foundation. If approved, the proposal would likely be adopted in the state, magistrate and probate courts. Similarly, the Supreme Court of Georgia has a pro hac vice rule, but no fee associated with it, so the task force has begun talks with it about implementing a fee and will do the same with the Court of Appeals of Georgia.

The task force is also looking at county law library funds and hopes to facilitate conversations with those boards and ALAS and GLSP. The task force plans to embark on an informational campaign to explain and encourage trial judges statewide to consider legal services when disbursing cy pres awards. The task force has also been looking at the expense side of ALAS and GLSP. While it is not in the purview of the task force to dictate how these organizations should be run, a checklist of items is being prepared for consideration.

Ruffin reported that there is no limit on the number of times



(Left to right) State Bar President Charles L. Ruffin, Sally Ruffin, Sandra Deal and Gov. Nathan Deal.

an out-of-state attorney can come into Georgia and practice pro hac vice, and he hopes the Task Force will explore that. At every opportunity he has to speak to civic groups or local bar associations, he has made a point of talking about what it is that GLSP does and provides examples of how they have helped in dramatic ways people who cannot afford a lawyer. He also reported that he thinks it is equally important for the civil legal services organizations to go out and talk to groups and encourage donations.

## Officer James Neal Bowers Resolution

President Ruffin reported that a resolution was to be presented to the family of Police Officer James Neal Bowers of Columbus, who attended night law school in Atlanta and had passed the Bar exam, but was killed in the line of duty before he could be sworn in to the Bar. Since his family was unable

to attend the meeting, the resolution is being sent to the Columbus Bar Association for presentation at a later time.

## Marshall-Tuttle Award

Norman Zoller presented the Military Legal Assistance Program's 2014 Marshall-Tuttle Award to William John Camp for providing legal expertise in working with military service members and veterans, and for his unwavering support of the program. (See story on page 26.) Zoller also announced that there is a CLE trip to Normandy and Paris in May, which is open to all Bar members.

## Nomination of Officers

The Board of Governors received nominations for officers to serve during the 2014-15 Bar year and, there being no others, declared the nominations closed.

Robert J. Kauffman was nominated for president elect by S. Lester Tate III, with a second by Kenneth R. Bernard Jr.

Rita A. Sheffey was nominated for treasurer by Dawn M. Jones, with a second by Thomas W. Herman.

Patrick T. O'Connor was nominated for secretary by Allegra J. Lawrence-Hardy, with a second by Daniel Brent Snipes.

## Nomination of ABA Delegates

The Board of Governors, by unanimous voice vote, nominated the following attorneys to serve two-year terms as Georgia's delegates to the American Bar Association:

- Robert Leonard Rothman, Post 1, to succeed Rudolph Patterson
- Hulett Askew, Post 3, to succeed Cubbedge Snow Jr.
- Gerald Edenfield, Post 7

## Executive Director Selection

In his President's Report, Ruffin announced that, during the time



# The 50th Anniversary Celebration of the State Bar of Georgia

1



4

2



3



5

1. (Left to right) Carol V. Clark, State Bar Ethics Counsel Bill Smith, Dot Smith and Gayle Camp during the reception.
2. State Bar President Charles L. Ruffin welcomes attendees and guests to the 50th Anniversary Celebration.
3. Gov. Nathan Deal delivers the keynote address during the 50th Anniversary Celebration.
4. Hon. Beverly B. Martin, U.S. Court of Appeals, 11th Circuit, addresses the audience.
5. Members and their guests enjoy dinner at the InterContinental Buckhead during the 50th Anniversary Celebration.



6



7



8



9



10

6. (Left to right) J. Marcus Howard, Justice David Nahmias, John F. Kennedy and Sally Akins.
7. (Left to right) YLD President-Elect Sharri Edenfield, YLD Past President Amy V. Howell and Christina Varnedoe.
8. 2005-06 YLD President Damon Elmore and wife Paulette enjoy the evening.
9. (Left to right) YLD Immediate Past President Jon Pannell, Gov. Nathan Deal and YLD President Darrell Sutton.
10. (Left to right) Sue Kauffman and Treasurer Bob Kauffman; Becky and Hon. William C. Rumer; Ellene Welsh and Tom Holder at the 50th Anniversary Celebration.

InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta  
January 9, 2014





(Left to right) J. Michael Cranford and wife Teresa with 2009-10 State Bar President Bryan Cavan after the Board of Governors dinner.



(Left to right) Sandra and Gov. Nathan Deal, Immediate Past President Robin Frazer Clark and Bill Clark following the 50th Anniversary Dinner.

the executive director's position is vacant after the passing of Cliff Brashier, operational questions that call for a legal discussion will be directed to Paula Frederick, and Sharon Bryant will take on the day-to-day role of running the Bar as necessary. He also announced that the Executive Committee had unanimously approved the appointment of a search committee to oversee the selection process.

Serving on the search committee will be Ruffin, President-elect Patrise Perkins-Hooker, Immediate Past President Robin Frazer Clark,

Young Lawyers Division (YLD) President Darrell Sutton, YLD President-Elect Sharri Edenfield, YLD Immediate Past President Jon Pannell, State Bar Past Presidents Jeff Bramlett, Bryan Cavan, Jim Durham, Ben Easterlin, Robert Ingram and Paul Kilpatrick Jr., Court of Appeals Judge Carla Wong McMillian and YLD Past President Derek White. The search committee will engage the services of an executive search firm to assist with the process.

Ruffin also reported the Executive Committee felt it was

preferable for the new executive director to be a practicing lawyer or law school graduate. The Board of Governors, by unanimous voice vote, authorized the president to use the executive director's salary line item to hire a professional executive recruit to assist with the selection.

## YLD Report

YLD President Darrell Sutton reported that 185 young lawyers attended the YLD General Session. He said four of the five Georgia law schools are participating in the Law School Fellows Program allowing 2L and 3L students to serve on the YLD Executive Council. Sutton provided an update on the Local Affiliate Outreach efforts. He reported 11 young lawyers received scholarships in order to participate in the 2014 Leadership Academy. Fifty-five young lawyers were selected for the new class out of 140 applicants. In an effort to establish an endowment to obtain permanent funding for the Public Interest Internship Program, that program will be the beneficiary of the 2014 Annual Signature Fundraiser. Sutton encouraged board members to make a donation to help the YLD reach its endowment goal.

## Long-Range Planning & Bar Governance Committee

Patrick T. O'Connor reported on the activities of the Long-Range Planning & Bar Governance Committee and its Midyear CLE: The Future of the Practice of Law and Access to Justice. Participants heard that change in the legal landscape is rapid. Now, non-legal firms worldwide are providing legal services, and legal services are being auctioned on eBay. Law school admissions are down 24 percent nationwide. Today there are almost 1 million lawyers in the nation. Job opportunities are increasingly challenging. New lawyers in Georgia are forming virtual law firms. In South Dakota,

the state bar and the state legislature are providing financial incentives to lawyers to practice in rural areas in that state. There is a rise in pro se litigation in Georgia and the nation. He reported that the committee plans to address specific proposals that it will bring to the Board designed to assist all lawyers as they face these and other issues.

## Law Day 2013

Secretary Sheffey reported on the 2013 Law Day Program, a collaborative effort between Georgia's legal community, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and school systems in Atlanta and Fulton. The program, *Realizing the Dream—Equality to All*, is being honored with a Law Day 2013 Outstanding Activity Award from the American Bar Association. That same collaborative group has begun planning the 2014 Law Day program on *Why Every Vote Matters*. If anyone is interested in working on the program they should contact Sheffey or President-elect Patrise Perkins-Hooker.

## Members Benefits Committee

John Flanders Kennedy reported on an insurance exchange that will soon be available to all Bar members through Member Benefits Inc., the Bar's recommended insurance broker. It is a private marketplace for attorneys' health insurance rather than going through the federal government's exchange. There will be a presentation on the exchange at the Spring Board meeting.

Steven Liebel asked if there is a way for the Bar to get policy information for each member for a minimum insurance for malpractice. As part of dues structure, there could be a minimum limits malpractice insurance policy for all members of the Bar, so that there are insurance funds available when something happens rather than using funds from the State



(Left to right) William Alexander, M.D., and wife Avarita L. Hanson, executive director of the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, enjoy a moment with Sandra and Gov. Nathan Deal.

Bar. He was asked to attend the next Member Benefits Committee meeting and make that proposal.

## Other Actions and Reports

The Board of Governors also voted unanimously to:

- Approve the creation and bylaws for a new Law and Economics Section.
- Approve the creation and bylaws for a new E-Discovery and Use of Technology Section.
- Approve a recommendation to the Supreme Court of Georgia that Article 1 of the Bylaws be amended as follows:

- Section 1. Registration of Members.

Persons admitted by the courts to the practice of law shall, within sixty days after admission to the bar of the Superior Court, register with the State Bar and pay a monthly pro-rated dues amount calculated from the date of Superior Court admission through the remainder of the State Bar's fiscal year.

The Board of Governors also received the following reports:

- Treasurer's Report as of Nov. 30, 2013, presented by Treasurer Bob Kauffman.
- ABA Annual Meeting Report, presented by Paula Frederick. She announced that State Bar Past President Linda Klein has announced her candidacy for president-elect of the ABA.
- Written reports from the Office of the General Counsel, Military Legal Assistance Program, Law Practice Management Program, Consumer Assistance Program, South Georgia Office Usage, Coastal Georgia Office Usage, July 2013 Georgia Bar Examination General Statistics Summary and the Spring Street Viaduct Replacement Project.

In its final action of the meeting, the Board of Governors, by unanimous voice vote, approved a motion acknowledging confidence and support in Sharon Bryant and Paula Frederick and all of the Bar staff going forward until a new executive director takes office. GBJ



**Linton Johnson** is a media consultant for the State Bar of Georgia.