

# Past Presidents of the Young Lawyers Conference—A Reflection

by Robert S. Ballou

Since the inception of the Young Lawyers Conference (YLC) of the Virginia State Bar in 1973, past presidents of the YLC have inspired others to become members of the Conference, and to be leaders of the State Bar. These men and women are prominent in their profession, successful in bar life, and leaders in their communities.

But more importantly, the unanimous chorus sung from surveying past presidents was the intangible value, both personally and professionally, of being active in the bar. Everyone enjoyed a sense of pride at having achieved worthy goals. Most notable were the friendships and personal connections made during years of YLC involvement that have returned continuous rewards throughout the years.

***Man can climb to the highest summits, but he cannot dwell there long.***

—George Bernard Shaw, *Candida*

The YLC president's term is typically one year. The president guides the Conference as steward, from one caretaker to another. New programs may be initiated, ideas nourished and initiatives begun. But, the brief tenure of the president at the "summit" of the Conference is made successful only through the hard work of the Board of Governors, the committee chairs, circuit representatives and other young lawyers who plan, prepare and execute the activities of the YLC.

**Karen Wilbanks Kincannon** ushered in the first year of the Young Lawyers Conference in 1973. As the first president, Karen actually was the first of everything. Karen not only held the inaugural seat (and therefore was the first woman), but also was



Karen Wilbanks Kincannon

the only person to serve two terms. The early years were spent creating the organization and recruiting volunteers. What was not clear was whether Karen could find anyone with the energy to run the fledgling Conference at the end of her first year, or if she simply stayed in office until deposed by the age limitation.

The Conference began by planning programs to assist the bar in its mission to improve the legal system, and its responsiveness to the public. The Conference leadership felt comfortable enough in its place within the bar to develop a long-range plan during **Diane Strickland's** tenure

(1977–1978). This enabled the Conference to grow in a sustained and orderly way.

As the Conference grew, so did the need for a bureaucracy. **Frank Morrison** (1979–1980) was largely responsible for the early development of the committee and subcommittee structure. Actually, having committees and their offspring encouraged the YLC to have recurring projects (many of which have become anticipated events) for law-related education and programs for the education of the public. Also, the publication and distribution of the *Senior Citizens Handbook* began while Morrison was president. This handbook remains in print. The projects developed after distribution of the book have been quite successful.

The committee and subcommittee structure took root quickly, which allowed the Conference to develop a pattern of yearly programs. **Bruce Wallinger** (1981–1982) fostered programs for law-related education, and for public awareness of the legal system, such as Community Law Week.

Originally, the president served as an ex-officio member of VSB Bar Council and an "invited guest" (without a vote) on the VSB Executive Committee. This changed under **Ed Burnette** (1985–1986), when the president became an ex-officio voting member of the Executive Committee. Now, the YLC president not only could express an opinion on the matters that came before the Executive Committee, but had a real voice in setting policy. Some of us with a more cynical viewpoint might think that Ed Burnette's brush with the Executive Committee while he was YLC president set in motion a plan to overtake the entire bar. Sure enough, Burnette served as president of the State Bar during 1993–1994, and has been a fixture in the bar—promoting, among other things, the activities of the YLC and professionalism. He served as president of both the YLC and the bar and led the Conference to create the R. Edwin Burnette, Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year Award in 1994. Now Burnette is an "invited guest" at the annual YLC luncheon to present this award to the young lawyer in Virginia who has best demonstrated a "selfless dedication to public service and increasing the public awareness of the legal system."

Under **Dan Frith's** leadership (1989–1990), the YLC consolidated the mandatory professionalism course to one day, while maintaining the quality substantive materials that have made the course so important to the professional development and ethical education of new lawyers. The Conference capitalized on the success of this project when **Stuart Thomas** (1992–1993) converted the materials to the Model Rules of Professional Conduct,

and created a model course on professionalism that has been used by the ABA Young Lawyers Divisions throughout the country.

**Jim Hoffman** (1993–1994) and **Sharon Moon** (1994–1995) dedicated endless hours to develop—with The Virginia Bar Association—the Emergency Legal Services Response Plan to provide legal services to victims of natural disasters. Their timing and foresight for development of this plan was impeccable. The first day that Moon graduated to the immediate past president position, heavy rains and flooding in the Shenandoah Valley prompted the declaration of a natural disaster. The Emergency Legal Services Plan kicked into action and the YLC, with the VBA, organized volunteers to help the victims. Twice more that year, volunteers were recruited to provide legal services to natural disaster victims—when Hurricane Felix threatened Tidewater, and following the Blizzard of '96 and flooding in Southwestern Virginia. Many persons throughout the Commonwealth received legal assistance thanks in large part to the presence of the Emergency Legal Services Response Plan.

The modern face of the YLC boasts a diverse range of programs that reflect the wide range of interests and needs of both the leadership and members. **Shireen Kirk** (1997–1998) helped to oversee the development of the tele-court project with the Virginia Supreme Court, giving the public greater access to information about the court system. Also, the YLC assisted with the recent conversion to the Model Rules of Professional Conduct.

The success of the *Senior Citizen's Handbook*, and the valuable service it has provided throughout the Commonwealth, was the impetus for development of the Virginia Domestic Violence Safety Project. Under **Julie McClellan's** leadership (1998–1999), pamphlets were distributed that outlined the legal rights of victims of domestic violence. The project included training lawyers to provide pro bono services to victims.

***Perfect courage is to do without witnesses what one would be capable of doing with the world looking on.***

—Francois, Duc de La Rochefoucauld,  
*Sentences at Maximes Morales* (1678).

This article does not have room to describe the achievements of the YLC past presidents in a “Where They Are Now” section. Suffice it to say, the industrious men and women who have served as YLC president are all doing well. They are corporate, real estate and trial lawyers, in-house counsel, lawyers from big firms, small firms—in big and small towns. One is a professor. Surprisingly, only one is a judge. The past presidents have continued to be leaders in the bar—on a local, state and national level. Likewise, community service in churches, schools and civic organizations have been important to the past presidents.

Updates on some of the past presidents:

**Diane Strickland** (1977–1978) is the only one of the group to be elected to the bench. She serves on the 23rd circuit in Roanoke. I like to believe that only one past president has become a judge because most are still too young for consideration as a judge. But, I suspect that Judge Strickland's rise to the bench illustrates her unique abilities as a lawyer, jurist and leader.

**Frank Morrison** (1979–1980) of Lynchburg has remained extremely active in both the state and local bars. He has served on the State Bar Council and as chair of the extremely successful State Bar Family Law Section. Morrison has also been a leader in the Lynchburg Bar and an active and important member of many civic activities in Lynchburg. He focused his practice in domestic relations. He has served as a judge *pro tempore* and as an arbitrator in family law, and is well respected throughout the state as a family law mediator.

**Bruce Wallinger** (1981–1982) is currently the managing partner of Wharton Aldhizer in Harrisonburg. He serves as an arbitrator and mediator for the American Arbitration Association in commercial matters. Actually, Wallinger developed this interest through YLC Past President Bill Slate (1978–1979), who is president of the American Arbitration Association in Philadelphia.

**Robert Grey** (1983–1984) of Richmond remained active in the State Bar through the late 1980s before expanding his bar commitment to the “mother of all bars”—the ABA. Grey has been active in the ABA since the early 1980s, and currently is a member of the ABA Board of Governors and chair of the House of Delegates.

**Jack Holleran**, my successor, left private practice and went in-house with Philip Morris the year before becoming president of the YLC. He enjoyed a great year as president and was elected the following year to Bar Council from the 13th Circuit, which is traditionally one of the most competitive seats. His election to Bar Council speaks of his abilities since in-house attorneys typically do not have the daily contact with the local bar. Holleran is now a member of the State Bar Budget & Finance Committee. (Questions about that next dues increase, obviously, should be directed to him.)

#### ***Time Well Spent***

**When as a child I laughed and wept,  
Time crept.**

**When as a youth I waxed more bold,  
Time strolled.**

**When I became a full-grown man,  
Time RAN.**

**When older still I daily grew,  
Time FLEW.**

**Soon I shall find, in passing on,  
Time gone.**

**Christ! wilt Thou have saved me then?  
Amen.**

—Henry Twells, *Time's Places*, poem fixed to the front of the clock case in the North Transept of Chester Cathedral.

All the benefits and joys of active participation in the YLC and related bar activities must ultimately be placed in perspective with one's personal life. When asked to list any personal or professional awards or achievements of note for this article, Lewis

Powell described his wife and children and stated, “After that, everything else pales by comparison.” I hope that all the future presidents and active members of the YLC will adopt a similar balance and perspective. ↻

**Presidents of the Young Lawyers Conference of the Virginia State Bar**

Karen Kincannon Wilbanks	1973–74; 1974–75
J. Marshall Coleman	1975–76
Francis A. McDermott	1976–77
Hon. Diane McQuade Strickland	1977–78
William K. Slate, II	1978–79
Frank W. Morrison	1979–80
Wellford L. Sanders, Jr.	1980–81
M. Bruce Wallinger	1981–82
Waller T. Dudley	1982–83
Robert J. Grey, Jr.	1983–84
Penelope W. Kyle	1984–85
R. Edwin Burnette, Jr.	1985–86
Lewis F. Powell, III	1986–87
Jane W. Sellers	1987–88
Walter D. Kelley, Jr.	1988–89
T. Daniel Frith, III	1989–90
Arnold R. Henderson	1990–91
Peter D. Eliades	1991–92
C. J. Steuart Thomas, III	1992–93
James A. Hoffman, II	1993–94
Sharon Maitland Moon	1994–95
Robert S. Ballou	1995–96
John E. Holleran	1996–97
C. Shireen Kirk	1997–98
Julie D. McClellan	1998–99
J. Tracy Walker, IV	1999–00



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