

New CLE Chief Becomes New VLF Chief

by Gordon Hickey

Raymond White has worked the circuit. He was born in New York and went to college at Duke University in North Carolina. He has spent time in Nashville trying to break in as a songwriter, and in Los Angeles as an aspiring screenwriter.

While neither of those ventures made him a household name, he acknowledges that it was comforting to know he could always return to his chosen field, the practice of law.

Ray started his legal career at the district attorney's office, and later as a criminal defense lawyer, in Albany, New York. He decided to take a break from the law and joined the Michie Co., which later became part of LexisNexis, where he worked in Charlottesville and later in Los Angeles.

From there he became chief operating officer of the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA) when it was an institute at The Notre Dame Law School. He applied for the job at Notre Dame during an interview in Denver, Colorado, and took it before ever seeing South Bend, Indiana.

When his son developed allergies and asthma, and the family was told that it would be best for him to move from Indiana, NITA and Notre Dame told White he could work remotely from anywhere.

They moved to Tucson, Arizona. "It was terrific," White said during a recent interview. His son's allergies started to disappear and things were working out well. But his mother-in-law, who was living with the family, moved back to Albany and he and his wife decided that they should go home to be closer to her as her health was failing.

So, White once again got back in the law business and moved to New York. He worked there for an additional six years, practicing entertainment, criminal, matrimonial and child protective law.

Then in December 2011 White saw an ad on a website for a job in Virginia.

He had told his wife that one day they could move back to Charlottesville. So after his mother-in-law passed away, White applied to be the executive director of Virginia CLE.

"And here I am," he said.

All of that was in answer to a standard interview question: Where were you before you came to Virginia?

White is clearly pretty well qualified for almost anything to do with the law.

Shortly after joining Virginia CLE a year ago, former Virginia State Bar presidents Manuel A. Capsalis and David P. Bobzien approached White and asked him to help them in their search for a new executive director of the Virginia Law Foundation. They knew he had a fundraising branch at NITA, and, "I knew the ins and outs of what to expect," White said. He helped write the job description and one day he got a call from Capsalis asking to meet to gauge White's interest in perhaps taking on the job himself.

Eight months later White was offered the job — something he considers a tremendous opportunity and honor. "This is the greatest group of people I have ever known," White said of Capsalis, Bobzien, and the other members of the VLF. "I will do anything to help our cause."

White now finds himself leading both the VLF and Virginia CLE. Capsalis told him that being in both jobs could really work to the benefit of both organizations, and I agree, White said.

Though they have operated independently, VLF is the parent organization of Virginia CLE. "It makes more sense for us all to be together," he said, "to improve the education of the Virginia bar and to join forces to promote the philanthropy that has been such a cornerstone of the VLF."

The VLF was established in 1974 to serve as the non-profit vehicle for Virginia lawyers seeking to improve the administration of justice and promote



the rule of law throughout Virginia. The foundation has awarded about \$24 million in grants during its 39-year history. In addition to its work on continuing legal education through Virginia CLE, it supports the Capital Defenders Workshop, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), the Nuremberg Courtroom at the Virginia Holocaust Museum, The Rule of Law Project, and a number of organizations.

"We're looking for new things to fund," he said. "It just takes money."

He said his main goals include helping the foundation continue to support worthy projects, "raising additional resources to help support those who come to us looking for support, and finding ways to work closely with our fellows to improve the quality of legal services throughout Virginia by supporting worthy organizations, and by recognizing and encourage excellence in the practice of law."

After all his travels, Ray White is certain he has finally found a place to settle down.

In addition to more traditional fundraising efforts involving the search for additional like-minded financial partners, the VLF can look forward to more cooperative project with VACLE and more fundraising events across the commonwealth similar to the Fairfax County Bar's successful "Jazz for Justice" program.

"I believe the time is now for moving the Virginia Law Foundation forward toward a new level of philanthropy and service to the citizens and legal community of Virginia. While I love a good strategic plan as much as the next person, I am much more a fan of action plans."