

### MDP

Please give us a break! With all due respect to Mr. Spahn (*To Serve Clients in New and Better Ways*, April 2002), MDP is about one thing and one thing only: greed. His own words make the case. If our profession should be “alarmed” that somebody else is managing document discovery—other than the paralegals we invented so that we could “reduce” fees to clients—then it is already too late and we will all just have to stand to the side and watch the guys at Jiffy Lube start drafting bond indentures. I worry about this constantly.

What is even more hilarious in this fantasy quest to find something legitimate about MDP is using the European legal system as a model. Lawyers virtually everywhere else in the world are only marginal players in society. Why? Because no other country in the history of the world has elevated its legal system to a coequal branch of government and made the rule of law a paramount goal. Our profession is not simply another gaggle of technicians, like it is in Europe and elsewhere, but is an integral part of the most free and egalitarian society the world has ever seen.

Although Mr. Spahn gives us the standard revisionist history (post-Enron, of course) that the accountants are not behind this and that they don't want to practice with us lawyers, then who, exactly, wants to get in bed with us? I tried to work out a deal with the dry cleaners around the block from my office. I would write wills for their customers, split the proceeds, and they would split the dry cleaning proceeds with me. They threw me out and told me not to come back. The shrink upstairs also threw me out of her office when I suggested that if we teamed up, we could really fleece, er, serve, the clients. Of course, we all know why the CPAs don't want anything to do with us now. It is not pleasant to contemplate one partner advising another, “Prepare to do five to ten, John”.

Very truly yours,  
Alan M. Winterhalter

## Milestones of the Legal Profession in Virginia

The Virginia State Bar seeks nominations from its members of significant legal events or important legal figures who have played a major role in the evolution of the legal profession in the Commonwealth.

Selection of the events and figures to be recognized for their milestone qualities will be made by a panel of attorneys and Virginia State Bar staff. During the 2002–2003 bar year, the Milestones Project will feature permanent commemorative markers placed at locations that are appropriate for the selections. No Virginia State Bar dues money will be used in defraying the cost of the project.

Nominations, a brief description (500 words or less), and the names and addresses of other persons knowledgeable about the event or figure can be made by email to [coggin@vsb.org](mailto:coggin@vsb.org), or mailed to Rodney A. Coggin, Editor, *Virginia Lawyer* magazine, VSB, 707 E. Main Street, Suite 1500, Richmond, VA 23219. All nominations will be acknowledged.

### Public Image Campaign

I am a member of the Virginia State Bar. When I received the March 2002 edition of the *Virginia Lawyer Register*, I saw on page 45 an “advertisement” depicting a young girl, with a caption that discussed the help that lawyers can provide to abused children. While I certainly applaud the effort to raise awareness of child abuse and the role that lawyers can play in helping those children affected, I take issue with the caption's negative tone towards fathers.

There is a growing body of factual evidence, reflected in more and more studies, that refutes the popular image of men as being the sole abuser in families. Unfortunately, the caption on this page could be taken by many readers as reinforcing a negative, vicious and untrue stereotype of men, in general, and fathers, in particular, as abusive.

I am sure that it was not the intent of anyone involved with your publication to portray all fathers as being abusers. However, as a father, I cannot help but say that I was

shocked and offended when I read the caption. I suggest that the wording be changed to a gender-neutral term, referring to a “parent” rather than a “father.” This would make the point that lawyers can help children of abuse, without casting either men or women in a negative light.

Other than this, I am impressed with your publication. Your articles are useful, and the other information contained is both timely and relevant. Please keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Mark D. Matthews

### **The bar responds:**

*Dear Mr. Matthews:*

*Rod Coggin, of the Virginia State Bar, passed along your letter to me, as I was the chair of the committee that created the public service announcement campaign.*

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*As with any campaign of this sort, we had to balance the dangers of stereotyping and our desire to have a specific enough scenario so that it would catch the reader's attention and essentially "draw a picture" in the reader's mind. For instance, we could have avoided a picture altogether, and have a generic child being abused by a generic parent. This would have avoided any allegations of stereotyping, but I hope that you agree with me that it would also have been drab and unimpressive.*

*In consciously balancing these interests, we decided to select a particular scenario that we know actually exists. As you indicated, we certainly did not intend to portray all fathers as being abusers, and I cannot imagine that anyone seeing the picture would think so. Likewise, I cannot imagine that anyone seeing the picture would believe that only fathers abuse children, or that only female children are abused.*

*I certainly understand your thoughts, but I hope you understand the balancing process that we undertook. Thank you very much for your interest, and for your kind words about the publication.*

*Best regards,  
Thomas E. Spahn*

**We want to hear  
from you.**

Send your letter to the editor\* to:

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