

A Gift that Gives Back to You

by Michael A. Glasser 2001–2002 VSB President

Over dinner with friends (one of whom is a Virginia lawyer) in the late summer, I mentioned that one of my new responsibilities as leader of the Virginia State Bar was to author a president's page article every other month. I was concerned about my ability to identify and communicate pithy legal topics that had not been addressed by the preceding 62 presidents. With characteristic frankness, my lawyer friend advised me not to worry. "No one reads them anyway," he consoled. I suspect that there is a lot of merit to my friend's advice, but for those few who may be low on other reading material, I would offer the following brief remarks.

Why should anyone become involved with bar activities? After all, with the pressures of work, the obligations of family life and the little time most of us have to relax after the commitments of work and family, involvement with the bar is easy to be lost in the shuffle. Well, there is an answer, and, friends, I have found it and would like to share it with all lawyers. The answer is "A gift that gives back to you." In my experience being involved in my local bar and the State Bar, I have discovered that the time I devoted to bar activities was somewhat akin to a good investment.

Though I have given with no expectation of return, I have received far more than I gave—in a multitude of ways. My time with the bar has resulted in new and enduring friendships all over Virginia, a significant gain in knowledge of the issues facing the legal profession and in my substantive areas of practice, and an appreciation of how other busy people balance the needs of their professional life with family, friends and time for serenity.

No profession shares more willingly of its time to promote the public good than lawyers. Wherever you live, look at the list of trustees or directors of your museum, hospital, symphony, Rotary club, zoo, church, synagogue, Red Cross or United Way chapter, and I bet you will find lawyers. Lawyers care about the world we live in. Lawyers care about justice. The two concepts are inseparable.

Since there is this common thread that runs through all lawyers—a baseline desire to make this world a better place—you are bound to find people you respect and who, in turn, will enrich your life, while you participate in activities of the bar. And, by the way, I am not advocating solely or even predominantly for involvement in the Virginia State Bar. We are blessed with many—roughly 130 different bar associations in this Commonwealth, ranging from a multitude of local bar associations to several statewide bar associations.

In any of these associations, your gift of time will likely result in a return gift to you exponentially greater. You can access information relating to local bar associations in your area or statewide bar associations—in practice areas or ethnicity that appeal to you—by visiting the increasingly more interesting Web site maintained by the Virginia State Bar at www.vsb.org and searching the page maintained by the Conference of Local Bar Associations. The Virginia State Bar is proud to facilitate communication among the local and statewide bars. I recommend that you invest a small amount of time seeking a way to contribute to one of these organizations. You will be glad you did. ☺



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