

President's Column

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First, I thank the members of the AJA for giving me this opportunity to serve you as president for a year. It is a great honor, and I will do my utmost to bring credit to the organization and the judicial community.

The annual conference in Orlando was successful and satisfying in at least three ways. First, Judge Rosinek had prepared an outstanding educational program. Second, Judge Strickland-Saffold conducted a productive business meeting in which the AJA renewed its collective resolve to advance the causes of law and justice. Third, the attendees and their families had an opportunity to meet, to socialize, and to enjoy the many attractions in the Orlando area, including Disney World and Epcot Center.

The educational session got off to a stimulating start with the Tom C. Clark lecture by Dr. Wade Davis. Dr. Davis illustrated his lecture with slides of his cultural studies of the peoples of the Andes, Tibet, and Haiti. Other speakers and panelists presented topics ranging from domestic violence and juvenile justice to the relationship between the courts, communities, and the media. Recent decisions of the Supreme Court were discussed by Prof. Charles H. Whitebread.

One of the innovations of note at this particular conference was the emphasis on court technology. That emphasis was directly related to our first-ever vendor show, which featured a demonstration of Courtroom 21, the world's most technologically advanced courtroom. In all, twenty-one vendors provided booths and displays for the participants at the conference and their guests. Many of them conducted drawings and awarded gifts to lucky winners.

Judge Rosinek reported at the general meeting on Thursday that the vendors had been very pleased with the interest shown in their products and expressed a desire to return to future AJA conferences. The technological advances that were demonstrated during the Courtroom 21 presentations were received with interest by the judge participants, many of whom indicated an interest in incorporating the new technology into their own courts.

AJA members whose states have continuing legal or judicial education requirements are reminded that the educational program provided 13 CLE/CJE credits for the participants.

At the General Assembly meeting on September 3, 1998, there were two things of note to report. Before the election of officers of the association, First Vice President Doug Voss withdrew his name from consideration as president-elect. Judge Voss explained that because of his retirement and relocation far from the madding crowd in Michigan, his contacts with the

courts and court activities had waned. He felt that a more active judge should be in the leadership role. The association will miss his skills. Gerald T. Elliott was elected to the position of president-elect; Chris Williams was elected first vice president; Bonnie Suddreth was elected second vice president; and Francis Halligan was elected secretary.

During the meeting, the membership discussed implementation of the long-range plan that had been approved in 1996. It is interesting to compare the long-range plan presented by Judge Philip Fairbanks in 1976 with the plan approved in 1996. Judge Fairbanks suggested that the AJA's long-range goals should be (1) increased membership; (2) improved communications and publications; (3) strengthened and improved relations with other judicial organizations; and (4) continued sponsorship and participation in a strong, judicial education program.

Since 1976 our membership has doubled. Since 1976 AJA publications have quadrupled, and recent improvements in the *Court Review* journal have dramatically increased its quality. Since 1976 AJA members have been invited to participate on many significant national boards and committees. But we cannot rest on those accomplishments. As is clear from the goals of the 1996 long-range plan, the organization is a work-in-progress. Those goals are: (1) to retain and increase membership; (2) to be a leading voice of the judiciary; (3) to address issues of judicial interest; (4) to improve the effective administration of justice; and (5) to provide and promote education.

It is clear that these compatible and continuing goals extend from 1976 to 1996 and to the present. The executive committee has pledged to diligently pursue the implementation of the 1996 long-range plan. We will be calling upon the committees, the delegates, and the membership-at-large to help us carry out this mandate.

I mentioned three innovations at this year's meeting. The first was the vendor show. The second was a silent auction of various items that had been donated by AJA and AJF members. The proceeds of the auction, over \$2,000, will go into the coffers of the AJF to be used for educational programs for the AJA. The third innovation of note was that, thanks to the efforts of Judge Strickland-Saffold, we had our first judge from Mexico to attend a conference. Justice Julio R. Patino, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Vera Cruz, honored us with his presence. We hope that he will return and that other judges from Mexico will participate in future conferences. With members from Canada, the United States, and Mexico, ours will truly be an association of North American judges.

