

A View of the Past

With an Eye to the Future



Joy Lambert Phillips, President of The Mississippi Bar, presents a champagne toast during the Centennial Anniversary Celebration on January 25, 2006 at the Bar Center.

MMy previous President's columns were primarily about Hurricane Katrina. While there certainly remain enough Katrina related issues to fill at least a book or two, for this article I want to focus on another topic – the Centennial Anniversary of The Mississippi Bar.

As most of you know, The Mississippi Bar recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary. On Thursday, January 25, 1906, approximately 300 lawyers from across Mississippi gathered to form a permanent State Bar Association. Garvin D. Shands of University, Mississippi was chosen to serve as the first President.

To commemorate that historic event, The Mississippi Bar hosted a Centennial Anniversary Celebration on January 25, 2006, at the Bar Center in Jackson. It was a "birthday party" of sorts, complete with cake, punch and a champagne toast (but no funny hats). Invitations were sent via email on The Mississippi Bar Briefs. Several hundred attorneys attended, many from distant parts of the state. I was privileged to be asked, along with Chief Justice James W. Smith, Jr., to deliver some remarks at the celebration. Since the remarks were fairly brief (Larry Houchins of The Mississippi Bar cordially invited me to make the remarks brief), I would like to share them with you. My apologies to those who were in attendance – you can skip to the bottom.

"I want to welcome all of you to this Centennial Celebration and want to thank the Centennial Committee and the staff of The Mississippi Bar for organizing it...To quote in part from the *Clarion Ledger's* account of the historic meeting held one hundred years ago today 'A large and enthusiastic meeting of attorneys at law,...perhaps the most distinguished gathering of attorneys in the recent history of the state' came together in the Hall of Representatives for the purpose of forming a State Bar Association. While we are not presently gathered in the Hall of Representatives, I have to echo the statements about today being one of the most distinguished gathering of attorneys in the recent history of our state.

I am sure that Garvin D. Shands was honored to be the first President of The Mississippi Bar, but I can assure you that having the privilege of serving as the 100th President of this outstanding organization is beyond anything I could have imagined.

*Thank you for
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After its formation, the first annual meeting of the Bar was held on June 19, 1906. It may come as no surprise to you that one of the statements made on the front cover of the proceedings from that meeting is, for the most part, just as applicable today: 'After almost five decades of civil war, political strife, and economic stagnation, to her lawyers would fall the task of providing assistance and advice to her government leaders, her businessmen, and her citizens in every walk of life, help that would come to be ever more urgently needed as modern life became steadily more complex.'

Today marks the end of a century of assistance and advice provided by The Mississippi Bar and its members. It is fitting that over this next year, we look back at not only the leadership and accomplishments of the members of a proud and noble profession, but also at the traditions

and structure they brought to this association over the last 100 years. Traditions such as the Memorial Service, which began in 1928 to honor those members of the Bar that passed away; the first publication of the *Mississippi Lawyer* in August, 1954; the creation in 1982 of the Mississippi Pro Bono Project, now the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, as the first statewide pro bono project in the United States; the formation of the Consumer Assistance Program in 1994, another first in the United States.

The people and the events of the past century will be recognized and celebrated this next year in a variety of ways, including the continual display of ten storyboards depicting the ten decades of service, the publication of a Centennial book and the inclusion of articles in upcoming issues of the *Mississippi Lawyer*.

Here is to another 100 years of service by our lawyers to their communities and by The Mississippi Bar to its members."

I hope you will stop by the Bar Center in Jackson and view the ten storyboards. Each one depicts selected events from a certain decade. They will be on display all year and will also be at the Annual Convention. The Mississippi Bar, through its members, has accomplished a great deal and established many worthy traditions. You should be proud of your profession and your Bar.

Finally, a sincere thank you to the members of the Centennial Committee, particularly the Co-Chairs, Richard Bennett and William "Cham" Trotter, III, and to the entire staff of The Mississippi Bar. This Centennial event marked the beginning of a year of celebration, when we will look back at what we have done and forward to what we will do in the future.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving as the 100th President of this outstanding organization. ■