

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Erica Moeser

Customarily, the August issue of this magazine, which is published near the time of our Annual Meeting, is the one in which I summarize the Conference year that is ending and look forward to the year that is just ahead.

This year any reflection about the year just past has an overlay of grief because of the untimely deaths of two members of our Board of Trustees in May. John Oliver succumbed suddenly on May 13 as the result of a heart attack, and Erias Hyman's life ended on May 22 following the rapid deterioration of his health after the discovery of an aggressive brain tumor in early March.

These two men joined the Board in close proximity—Erias in June of 2001, and John in August of the same year. Erias had considerable experience as a bar examiner in Washington, D.C., and John had served for years in Missouri. Their politics could not have been farther apart, and yet they forged a friendship as warm and deep as any I have observed on the Board. They were our Felix and Oscar, our very own Odd Couple!

At the time of their deaths, Erias and John had advanced to senior leadership roles on the Board. Both were "worker bees" who invested substantial time and tireless energy in their many assignments.



Both were positive contributors—optimists who pitched in with good humor and gusto. And the loss of both so close in time has more than doubled the tremendous sorrow that would have marked the passing of only one.

Even though these losses have shocked and saddened us, they have also illuminated the power of these two men to rally and inspire us. Their deaths have hit us hard, and their absence leaves a void. They were a joy to work with, and they were respected for their dedication. I cannot imagine that anyone who shared experiences at the Conference with them will ever forget them.

Erias would have been proud of the Seattle program that was his baby—our April offering was a product of his hard work as chair of the NCBE Education Committee. John undertook an unusually large number of committee assignments, attesting to his broad interest in the Conference's work. As I write or review the minutes from one meeting or another and bump into their names on the page, I realize all over again how deeply involved both of these men were in so much of our work.

The Board of Trustees has moved to fill the vacancies. Early in July the Board elected Franklin Harrison of Panama City, Florida, and Jorge Rangel of Corpus Christi, Texas, to complete the two

unexpired terms. Both Franklin and Jorge come to the Board with experience as bar examiners in their home jurisdictions as well as “time served” in our NCBE committee structure.

And so Dave Boyd’s year in the NCBE chair has come to a close. I have appreciated his steady leadership and his capable quiet style. The Conference was in the right hands as we fulfilled our objectives for the year while living through the unanticipated tragedies.

The leadership mantle will pass to Marva Jones Brooks of Atlanta this month. Marva led the Georgia Board of Bar Examiners several years ago, and she brings enthusiasm and creative energy to the chairing assignment. Her service will take us into the 75th year that the National Conference has been in existence. A centerpiece of Marva’s year will be our next biennial seminar, to be held in Memphis, Tennessee, in late March and early April.


Looking back at Dave’s year, our Seattle conference drew a record number of attendees for what we term our off-year seminar. During the year the Conference successfully launched new educational programming. For the first time we conducted “mini-seminars” in Madison to which we invited small groups of administrators and examiners to tackle subjects in greater depth than is possible at one of our national events. One mini-seminar (which we repeated) was on testing—covering the theory and practice of assessment—and the other was on the subject of technology as applied to bar admissions screening.

We also developed a program on drafting performance test items as a means of stimulating interest and expertise in the creation of these items as tools for evaluating law students and bar applicants. This endeavor introduced us to a new group of

talented legal educators. We offered our fourth annual Drafting and Grading Workshop in May. Last fall in Chicago we performed the administrative tasks associated with the successful conference that was sponsored by the Joint Working Group on Legal Education and Bar Admissions. Looking ahead, we are in the midst of completing the foundation work for a new outreach effort to law school academic support personnel to be held early this fall.

The number of jurisdictions using NCBE test products continued to expand with the adoption of the Multistate Essay Examination and the Multistate Performance Test in several more states. More and more jurisdictions are seeking our assistance with testing and research issues. Our Covington Award research projects are contributing to the bar examination testing literature. Our electronic application products are speeding up the investigative process both for our in-house investigations and in the jurisdictions that are now using our technology for their own work.

The Conference’s research efforts and measurement support to jurisdictions have expanded significantly over the past year, and we have generated numerous reports to jurisdictions seeking information and advice as a predicate for evaluating local policy choices.

In short, despite the personal setbacks, the National Conference has continued to improve its range of products and its performance throughout the year. Erias and John would have expected nothing less. 

Marva Brooks and Dave Boyd have contributed thoughts about Erias and John on other pages of this magazine. I commend their remembrances to you. EM