

LAWYERS HAVE ALWAYS MADE A DIFFERENCE

In the May 200 issue of The Connecticut Lawyer my column, as President, speaks of the legal profession as the magnificent profession, as Professor Bowman spoke of so eloquently at today's luncheon. I quoted from Ted Koskoff's essay about what it meant to him to be a lawyer.

Although I don't have the skill with words and with imagery that Ted Koskoff had, let me tell you what it means to me to be a lawyer.

I see us as responsible for the enforcement of rights and the preservation of our freedoms. We not only enforce rights and preserve freedoms, we build – like architects – except we don't build buildings – we build a freer, fairer, and more open society.

We have caused:

- manufacturers to make safer products
- industry to provide safer workplaces
- insurers to be aware of good faith requirements
- governments to follow laws
- professionals – doctors, accountants and our own – to be aware that negligence will not be tolerated.

Our air is cleaner, our water more drinkable, our endangered species less endangered.

Not because polluting industries have charitably changed their ways, but because lawyers have successfully forced these changes in a courtroom, and continue to do so.

We have made equal access to justice a reality for many of the poor, the underprivileged, the sick and the elderly, and we continue our efforts everyday on their behalf.

We are, as Ted Koskoff so eloquently reminded us, the guardians of society's freedoms and its laws.

This is how I see us – whether our work is in an office, a school, or a courtroom.

I know that I speak from an idealism about lawyers and the legal profession that some may find it difficult to share. Our work is hard. Often frustrating! We are not always winners.

But when we become discouraged, we should look to our past to refocus on who we are, why we do what we do, and where we are going.

Lawyers have always made a difference. We have stirred people's emotions from the dawn of time. Consider Demosthenes – speaking to rouse Athens against Philip of Macedon. Or Cicero – in championing the cause of Sicily against its dishonest governor.

Consider the social changes wrought by Jefferson, Madison and the other lawyers who helped craft our constitution. Consider Lincoln, rededicating the nation at Gettysburg to a government in which all people are equal under the law.

It is no accident that 25 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were lawyers;

- that 31 of the 55 signers of the federal Constitution were lawyers
- that 28 of the 42 Presidents have been lawyers
- that 59 of our 100 senators are lawyers
- that 195 of our Congressional representatives are lawyers
- that 52 of the 62 Secretaries of State have been lawyers
- that 28 of the 50 governors are lawyers.

We come from a rich legacy. We have always made a difference, and we will continue to make a difference toward a better society – a society freer, fairer and open to all.

The Connecticut Bar Association, serving the legal profession, likewise has a rich legacy, and will continue to aid and serve its membership in their quest for a better society.

The highest honor you, as members of the CBA, can bestow upon one of your own is to elect him – or her – President. In the past year I have tried to discharge my duties consistent with this honor, and your expectations. I thank you for the opportunity.