

TYLA PRESIDENT'S OPINION

“Gee, Charlie, What was it like to practice before there were fax machines?”

By Charles A. Beckham Jr.

“Gee Charlie, what was it like to practice before there were fax machines?” I had made the mistake of going to lunch with four of my firm’s new associates and although the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Young Lawyers Association and I still believe that I am a young lawyer, they clearly did not. Matt, Brent, Marcia, and Gene couldn’t fathom the thought of practicing law without the latest tool of the modern day litigator—the fax machine. I sheepishly shrugged my shoulders, said, “We got by” and swallowed another bite of my burger. I would have been indignant but I recalled asking a similar question to Jack Duncan, a deceased member of my firm, about how he practiced law before there were Xerox machines. Rather than being insulted by my question, Jack gave a wonderful and humorous explanation about carbon paper that made me wonder why we even needed Xerox machines.

On Nov. 18th, Matt, Brent, Marcia, Gene, and hundreds of other recent law school graduates will be sworn in as new members of the State Bar of Texas. When they enter the legal profession they will change it forever in a way more grand than the fax or the Xerox machine. The new lawyers will change the legal profession forever not with new technology, but with their vigor, enthusiasm, high ideals, and practical insights.

This page is written for Matt, Brent, Marcia, Gene and hundreds of others to welcome them to the practice of law. It is my hope that they will improve their profession. It is also my hope that they will improve the Texas Young Lawyers Association and the State Bar of Texas by active participation rather than indifferent observation. I believe they will make these improvements because the new lawyers of Texas have always strived to improve the profession.

I became a member of the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Young Lawyers Association in November 1979. Just as I joined a State Bar of Texas that was new and improved as the result of the Sunset process, Matt, Brent, Marcia, and Gene join a State Bar of Texas that has just emerged from Sunset. They do not join, however, the same Texas Young Lawyers Association that I

joined. They join one that has evolved and improved over the years—continually changing and improving.

In 1979, TYLA had 46 committees that were involved in numerous worthwhile activities. While there are a number of similarities between the committees of 1979 and 1991, the differences are more striking. Perhaps our society today has more problems or at least a greater awareness of the social problems than in 1979 because the young lawyers of Texas, through today’s TYLA, have found more ways to deal with those problems. In 1979, the TYLA did not have committees concerning the legal problems of persons with AIDS, assistance to chemically dependent attorneys, assistance to Central American refugees, children’s rights, assistance to death row inmates, dropout prevention and literacy, drug and alcohol abuse, the environment, hunger relief, opportunities for minority attorneys or minority involvement in the State Bar, prevention of domestic violence, the rights of the homeless, or human rights. The Texas Young Lawyers Association, which Matt, Brent, Marcia, and Gene will join, has committees designed to serve members of the public and members of the profession who have those problems. Just as the practice of law has improved through such “marvelous things” as the fax machine, the TYLA has improved through constant evolution.

We don’t know what problems Texas will have in 2000, we only know that the lawyers who were sworn in as members of the State Bar of Texas on Nov. 18 will be leading the way to solve these problems. It is my hope the TYLA will continue to be the avenue they follow to achieve these goals. Who knows how technology will assist new lawyers in the practice of law in the year 2000 and whether Matt, Brent, Marcia, and Gene will be asked what it was like to practice without it. Hopefully, however, they will be able to say that the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Young Lawyers Association to which they belong has evolved and improved over the years through their active participation and the participation of their peers.

Welcome new lawyers to the Texas Young Lawyers Association and State Bar of Texas. I am glad you have arrived. **TBJ**