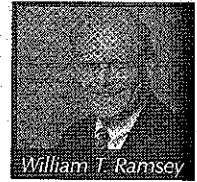


February 2005



William T. Ramsey

From The President

# Nashville Bar Journal

A Monthly Publication of the Nashville Bar Association www.nashbar.org

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The *Nashville Bar Journal*, ISSN 1548-7113, is published monthly by NBA Member Services, Inc. at 315 Union Street, Suite 800, Nashville, TN 37201-1401, (615) 242-9272. Periodicals Postage Paid, Nashville, TN (USPS 021-962). Subscription price: \$25 per year. Individual issues: \$5 per copy.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address corrections to Nashville Bar Journal, 315 Union Street, Suite 800, Nashville, TN 37201-1401.

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## My Apologies To Groucho Marx

This is my first column as President of the Nashville Bar Association. Frankly, it is hard for me to believe that I am President of an organization that was established in 1831, and has almost 3,000 members, making it the largest Metropolitan bar association in Tennessee. I realize that many of you are thinking just what I'm thinking; I am not certain I want to be a member of an organization that has me as its President. Seriously, it is an honor to have the opportunity to serve in this position. It will be hard to follow in the footsteps of Gregg Ramos who did an excellent job of leading this organization last year. However, with the help of the Board of Directors who meet the highest standards of professionalism and judgment, law partners who fully support me in this endeavor and my wonderful assistant of 23 years, Jean Moore, I am optimistic that the Nashville Bar Association will continue with its excellent record of service to the legal community even with me as its President.

There have already been two events in my brief tenure as the NBA President that have reinforced my thoughts and opinions on what we should try to accomplish as a bar association.

First, I attended a meeting hosted by the Tennessee Bar Association that brought together the leaders of various local bar associations, including Knoxville, Memphis and Chattanooga. Each of the local bar association leaders identified their "themes" or goals for the year. The visions expressed by each of the local bar leaders were remarkably similar.

All of the local bar associations expressed concern that the public has a poor image of lawyers. In our meeting, all agreed that there were a variety of reasons for our poor image, and we struggled with ways to improve it. This issue – the poor public image of lawyers – is something that I had hoped we could address during my tenure as President.

Today, I participated in a second event that brought these issues to the front of my mind. Judge George Paine hosted a brief ceremony in which a plaque honoring the "Sister Cities" relationship that Nashville enjoys with Zagreb, Croatia was unveiled. Through Judge Paine's efforts, our city has established an exchange of ideas between the commercial courts in Croatia and our business and commercial courts and systems. To borrow a phrase from Martha Stewart "it is a very good thing."

These two experiences have made me realize what we need to do as lawyers to improve our image. First and foremost, I believe we need to do a good job. It seems to me that the first step is to make sure that we represent all of our clients zealously, but honorably and ethically. As a result, we will be improving our image one client at a time. I realize that this is certainly a long-term strategy, but I believe it is essential to our collective desire to improve our image. As my partner Jim Kelley puts it, "doing a good job is like spreading wildflower seeds along the highway. You never know which seed will sprout and make a beautiful flower, but many of them will and the ef-

fect will be positive." Secondly, in the short-term, we need to continue our professions long-standing commitment to public service, and I don't mean just public service in the form of *pro bono* work. I mean public service by serving on charitable boards, by building Habitat for Humanity houses, by volunteering our time for wonderful charities like Second Harvest Food Bank, and by supporting the Arts in our city and community. I call on each and everyone of you to "step up to the plate" and continue your public service efforts – or better yet improve and increase them. During the coming year, I will attempt to "toot our own horn" for the NBA in the tradition of my partner, Jim Neal, who is an expert at tooting his own horn. I will meet with community leaders and discuss opportunities for lawyers to assist in service to our community. At every opportunity, I will attempt to remind those who will

listen that "lawyers are the glue that holds society together." Rather than resolving our differences by the use of force, our society resolves disputes by following the rule of law. Without lawyers, the entire system would fall apart. Please join me in my effort this year to remind the public at large that lawyers aren't such bad people after all. ■

*William J. Ramsey*



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