

Tennessee Bar Journal

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Do some pro bono and enjoy it

It's not broccoli ... it's dessert!



Bill Haltom
President

I can't stand to be guilt-numbered. With some justification, I already have a pretty guilty conscience. The last thing I need is for someone to smugly suggest that there is something else I should feel lousy about.

For that reason, I have never liked it when "bar leaders" lecture me that I should do more pro bono work. Besides, the "eat your broccoli" approach to encouraging pro bono work is totally counter-productive. It makes taking a pro bono case sound like staying after school, or, worse yet, having to go to the assistant principal's office. (When I was a "scholar" at Frayser High School in the late '60s, being dispatched to the assistant principal's office meant an immediate paddling, without even a due process hearing.)

I say it's time for a whole different attitude toward pro bono work. It's not broccoli ... it's dessert! And when I say "dessert," I don't mean sorbet. I'm talking banana pudding or Death by Chocolate.

All across the Volunteer State, Tennessee lawyers are devoting a few hours each month to providing legal services to folks who otherwise cannot afford them. And guess what? These lawyers are not only doing good. They're having a good time!

For example, one of the most popular gatherings for Knoxville lawyers these days is "the Saturday bar." And when I say bar, I mean bar. Every other Saturday morning, several Knoxville lawyers get together to spend a few hours holding a pro bono legal clinic for folks who otherwise couldn't afford a lawyer. And then, when the clinic adjourns, the group convenes for lunch, libations, and an informal lecture by the great Don Paine, who is not only Tennessee's leading CLE speaker, but the Tennessee Bar's foremost authority on beer.

In Nashville, there's a similar "Saturday Bar" group, only they like to get together on Tuesday nights as well. I hear the group has a rollicking good time, and the Tuesday night sessions have even inspired a new country music hit (with apologies to George Jones), "He Stopped Loving Pro Bono Today."

In this month's cover story, you'll read about some Nashville lawyers who have reaped personal rewards from helping free indentured slaves in Asia. I don't know about you, but getting the word that people you first met as slaves who are now free because of something you did, is one of the bigger pro bono accomplishments a person could ever hope to achieve. This happened to Wally Dietz, who says, "There are some days in your life you never forget." That sounds more like dessert than broccoli to me.

Meanwhile, back in my hometown of Memphis, Memphis Bar Association President-Elect David Cook leads a group of lawyers to the Shelby County

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LETTER

Views of judges are significant

I read with interest Bill's article on judicial elections and the right of a candidate to express her/his views on matters that might come before the court ("Remember the Code of Judicial Conduct: Will we elect Judge Roy Bean?" *President's Perspective*, December 2005, by Bill Haltom). I think it would be highly improper to say how one would vote on any case; but, the general views of a judge seem to be of significance, at least it seems so in the Senate of the United States.

— John E Acuff, Cookeville

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President's Perspective (Continued from page 4)

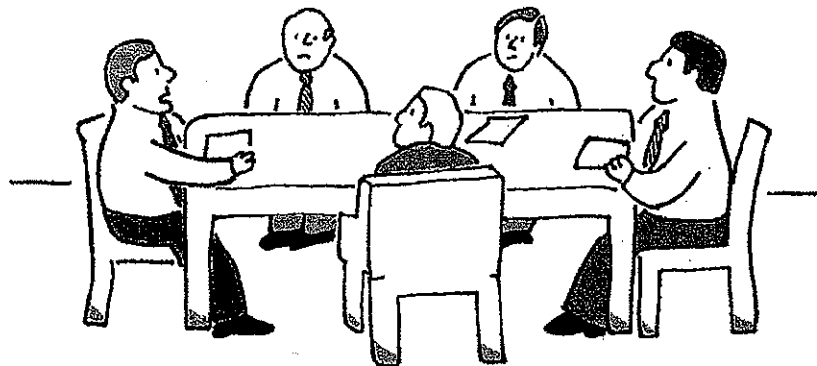
who haven't paid their bills. This is just reality, part of the life of being a grown-up.

But we can't just sit around eating broccoli all day. We deserve some fun. So let's follow the lead of so many fine lawyers across the state. Let's each

devote at least a few hours each month to escaping the office, getting together with a few of our brothers and sisters in the Bar, and spending some time doing a little pro bono work.

In short, I say it's time for dessert. I'll have the bananas foster, thank you. ^{TA}

JEST IS FOR ALL



GLICK

"I don't care if the lender has filed UCC statements to secure the collateral -- I already called dibs on it!"