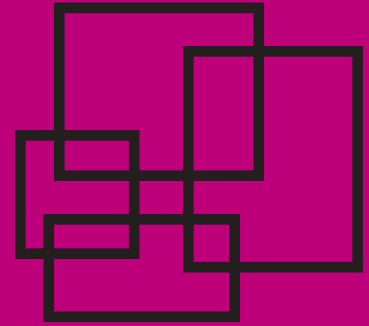


CERTIFICATION LINK

Your Quarterly ABA Specialization Connection



SPRING 2003

Newslink

What's new from programs across the country



◆ The American Board of Certification (ABC) elected new officers and board members at the organization's recent Board of Directors meeting. Elected Chair is **James T. Markus**, partner at Block, Markus & Williams LLC, Denver, CO. **John D. Penn** is the organization's President. He is partner at Haynes and Boone's Fort Worth, TX office. Penn states, "I hope to raise awareness of board certification in the legal profession. Many people who insist upon board certified physicians never think twice about finding a board certified attorney. Plastic surgeons and podiatrists are both certified in the medical field, but there is a world of difference between the two. The same is true among attorneys." **Rudy J. Cerone**, who practices in the New Orleans, LA office of McGlinchey Stafford, PLLC, assumes the position as Vice President.

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View From the Chair: Brumbaugh reflects on three years, bids farewell

By Jack Brumbaugh, Chair, Standing Committee on Specialization

While *Certification Link* keeps you updated on what's going on in the Lawyer Specialty Certification community, I'd like to fill you in on what the Standing Committee on Specialization is up to.

As a committee, we meet three times a year, including a meeting prior to the start of the Roundtable. We have seven committee members, appointed by the President of the ABA. Currently, two law professors, two plan administrators and three practitioners serve on the committee. The main focus of the Standing Committee is the support and administration of the ABA's Accreditation of Specialty Certification Programs. We are very proud of all the national programs that have submitted their programs to the rigorous scrutiny of the ABA Standards and the Governing Rules and continue to guide their programs through the equally thorough reaccreditation process.

We currently have four new programs seeking accreditation. As the legal profession continues to self-specialize, we hope to reach out to

groups of lawyers working to advance the interests of their specialty group by offering information about the opportunity to offer specialty certification programs.

Other than the day to day work of operating the accreditation program,

the Standing Committee has worked on promotion for the state and national plans, most recently completing work with the ABA Division for Media Relations and Communication Services in drafting a Strategic Communications

To me, the merits of our shared cause are so clear: specialization improves our professionalism, and serves the interests of the consumers of our products, our clients.

Plan that all groups can adapt to their own needs.

We also keep long-term statistics on the growth of Specialty Certification programs. We are continuing our partnership with the American Bar Foundation research team to study these trends.

In order to achieve that very important work/life balance, the Standing Committee also plays hard. In the past year we have stalked wild alligators, visited the World Famous San Diego Zoo, had wild brown bears stalk us, remembered the Alamo, visited Civil War era homes, done some

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Stories from the Front (continued)

The organization is proud to have two former judges, several highly regarded law professors and two prominent certified attorneys join the ABC Board. **Hon. Mary Davies Scott** served as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge in Arkansas and is now retired. Judge Scott held the prestigious position as President of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges in 1999-2000. **Hon. John Pearson** served as a United States Bankruptcy Judge in the 9th and 10th Circuits for the District of Kansas. He is currently a Professor at President's College School of Law in Wichita, KS.

In other ABC news, the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists announced that the American Board of Certification's business bankruptcy and consumer bankruptcy programs are now accredited. The accreditation of these ABC bankruptcy programs means that Ohio attorneys certified by ABC may now cite their certification in advertisements and other communications under Rule DR 2-105 of the Ohio Rules of Court – Code of Professional Responsibility. In order to be accredited by the Supreme Court of Ohio, certifying organizations must demonstrate, among other things, that its lawyers can, through intensive training, education and work concentration, attain extraordinary competence and efficiency in the delivery of legal services in that practice area.

Specialist Profile: NBTA Member Juggles American Practice in Greece

How can a full time practicing trial lawyer live and work in another country for five months and keep his litigation practice going? "That's what I agonized over," said John W. deGravelles, a partner in the civil litigation firm of deGravelles, Palmintier, Holthaus and Fruge in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and a member certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy (NBTA) as a civil trial advocate since 1995.

"When I received the Fulbright Scholarship, I wanted badly to participate but knew that it would require a great deal of advanced planning along with the help and sacrifice of my staff and law partners."

DeGravelles was named a Fulbright Scholar in March of 2001 to teach international aspects of maritime law and lecture on the American judicial system at the University of Thessaloniki Aristotle School of Law during the fall semester of 2001, from September to January 2002. "That's when I really began to get serious in my planning," deGravelles said. "I knew that I would have to settle or continue any cases set for trial that my partners could not handle. I also knew that I would have to set in place a stable and efficient means for daily communication with my office."

"We've had him out of the office for several weeks at a time," said Jimmie Murvin, deGravelles' paralegal for over 20 years. "But for five months? It made us nervous!" DeGravelles developed a system of regular communication through e-mail, daily phone conferences and an international cell phone for emergencies. "It worked great," said Jodi Fryoux, his legal assistant. "I would connect him with old and new clients, other lawyers and even court conferences. In some cases, they didn't even know he was calling from Greece."

"I could review and respond to my daily mail by phone dictation but important pleadings and correspondence were simply scanned and e-mailed for my review and response." Said deGravelles.

John and his wife Jan found leaving the US in the wake of the events of September 11 very difficult. "Leaving your family for five months is difficult in the best of times, but after the terrorist attack, we wondered whether our place was here," said Jan. "It was a hard decision," John said, "but especially considering the express goal of

Fulbright to encourage international understanding and cooperation, we felt there was no better time to go."

Once there, deGravelles found that his work at the university was both exciting and rewarding. "The faculty and students at the University of Thessaloniki Law School are first rate," said deGravelles. "It was a pleasure to be a part of it and I learned at least as much as I taught." DeGravelles found students especially interested in the U.S. trial system. "It is ironic that although Greece is a birthplace of trial by jury, it is simply not used at all here in civil cases and has a very limited role in criminal cases. I found that, like in the U.S., there are many misconceptions about how our jury system works."

John and Jan lived in an apartment in central Thessaloniki, with a population of 1.5 million. "We have never lived in a big city, let alone one in another country," Jan said. "It was not practical to have a car and we soon learned the bus system and how to get around. We did a lot of walking too." The students in deGravelles' class were post graduate students who were tested in English proficiency before being admitted to the program.

The deGravelles found the people in Greece warm and open. "They are a great people and while they don't mind engaging you in political discussions, they love Americans," deGravelles said. "We were treated with extreme kindness," said Jan. "We made life-long friends."

DeGravelles' interest in juggling careers came early. "Years ago, I realized that by broadening your activities beyond your firm and practice, you not only make life more interesting and enriching but you actually help your clients in the long run." In addition to a full time civil litigation practice focusing on maritime, medical malpractice, toxic tort and products liability, deGravelles is a member of the adjunct faculty at LSU Law School where he teaches Advanced Litigation and Tulane University Law School's summer program in Rhodes, Greece where he teaches Maritime Torts. "I became interested in Fulbright after talking to my friend Judge Steve Plotkin of the Louisiana Court of Appeal, Fourth Circuit, who was awarded a Fulbright to teach at the law school in Spohia, Bulgaria. Steve

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Register Now for Roundtable

Wouldn't it be great to head to Arizona for some sun, fun and specialty certification sessions? This dream is within your reach, but your time is running out. Registration deadlines for the 2003 National Roundtable on Lawyer Specialty Certification are quickly approaching. Held this year at the SunBurst Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona, March 27-29, the ABA room block closes on March 5 and attendees are encouraged to register with the ABA office by March 6 to secure their spot in the session and the social event on Friday night.

Sessions this year include the staples Certification 101: Introduction to Lawyer Speciality Certification session, led by **Mike Ferguson** of the California Board of Legal Certification, and the Program Administrators' Workshop, led by noted facilitator **Dick Lee**. Contributions also come from California's **J. Scott Bovitz** with his look at communications with lawyers and consumers about legal specialization. **Wendy Weiss** of the New Jersey Supreme Couty Board on Attorney Certification and **Alice Neece Mine** of the North Carolina State Bar Board of Legal Specialization will lead a panel discussion exploring how ADR has impacted attorneys. The popular Saturday Morning Players returns, organized again by **Phyllis Culp** of the California Board of Legal Certification, followed by sessions led by **Gary McNeil** of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization on technology, and **David Shearon** of the Tennessee Commission on CLE & Specialization will give participants a hands-on look at the Strategic Communcations Plan. Register now and don't miss this great networking opportunity! ♦

For full Roundtable brochure and registration form, log on to www.LegalSpecialists.org

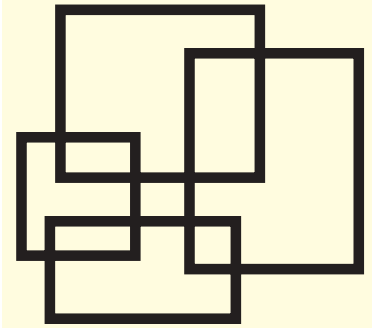
Specialist Profile- Continued from page 2

let me know that Fulbright Scholarships are given to practitioners as well as full time academics and he encouraged me to try."

DeGravelles' first experiment with a "dual life" came in 1999 when he agreed to serve as a pro tempore judge of the Baton Rouge City Court to serve out the unexpired term of a retiring judge. "I knew that it would be a challenge to be judge, lawyer and teacher all at one time, but I decided to give it a try; it was hard but always interesting."

DeGravelles is also a past president of the Louisiana Trial Lawyers Association (1992-1993), past president of The Louisiana Chapter of The American Board of Trial Advocates (1998) an a past member of the Board of Directors of American Trial Lawyer's Association (1999).

When asked about other outside activities, deGravelles said, "I do have time for hobbies, believe it or not. I live out my rock and roll wannnabe fantasy by playing guitar in a local band. I also love to jog." The deGravelles' son Neale is a freshman at LSU Law School and his daughter Kate graduated from LSU and is in the process of applying to law school. "I think our kids have seen that practicing law can be fun and far reaching," deGravelles said. ♦



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View from the Chair-Continued from page 1

white water rafting, and dined well along the way.

Being the Chair of the Standing Committee these past three years has been both satisfying and frustrating. Satisfying in that I have had the opportunity of working with dedicated committee members and staff, as well as enthusiastic representatives of private and state certifying groups affiliated with our committee. To all of you, my heartfelt thanks. My frustration results from my not understanding why more attorneys are not embracing specialization. To me, the merits of our shared cause are so clear: specialization improves our professionalism, and serves the interests of the consumers of our products, our clients.

Spread the word! ♦

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