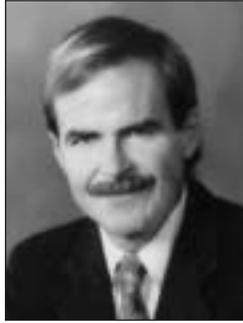


FROM THE CHAIR

Jerry Fritz has done it again. He packaged and produced what many say was the best ever edition of the Forum's annual presentation, "Representing Your Local Broadcaster." We presented this program on April 5th in Las Vegas jointly with the National Association of Broadcasters and Federal Communications Bar Association. Kudos are also well deserved by the other members of the planning committee, Jeff Bauman of the NAB and Guylyn Cummins, newly elected members of the Forum's Governing Committee.

Several years ago, Jerry revamped and resuscitated the "Representing Your Local Broadcaster" when declining attendance threatened its future. In addition to his expertise as a lawyer, he's a great showman and marketer. This year he enticed the audience to attend five segments with a David Letterman-style titles and format—"Top Ten 'Demands' from Your 'Web-Savvy' Station General Manager" or "Top Ten Naïve Comments from Sales Department Account Executives." The luncheon session was a punchy exchange between regulation-savvy Washington lawyers and legislators, agency counsel, and investment bankers, addressing the likely implications of the anticipated repeal of ownership concentration rules and other issues of interest to buyers and sellers of equity positions in media companies.

The program segments moved along at a staccato pace, each addressing the ten most topical issues within the ken of a well-credentialed panel. Of course, the foible of such a program is that in-depth analysis is impossible. But the presentations were great tuning exercises that perked our awareness of iceberg-like legal issues and provided current resources available to address them. Forum members are not noted for unlimited attention spans (indeed, this is the only Forum conference in which we work after lunch) in a distracting environment such as Las Vegas, but this



Thomas B. Kelley

program had the audience riveted the entire day. Many of us are outside-the-Beltway newsroom lawyers who are rarely called upon by broadcaster clients to address business and regulatory problems. Still, it always helps to learn how to "talk the talk" with a general manager over lunch.

The planning and orchestration of this program is an exhausting task, and Jerry

Fritz has declared his intention to retire from the undertaking. It would be understandable if he, like John Elway, follows through on that commitment and quits at his peak. If he does, we are lucky that Eastern Division Chair Greg Schmidt has agreed to become involved and contribute his broadcasting knowledge and D.C. networking capability to help assemble this program next year.

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The last year or so has been difficult because we have lost an unusual number of wonderful colleagues in what seem untimely deaths in the sixth decade of life: Sam Klein, Bruce Ennis, Rick Klein. As one of the fifty-somethings myself, I have to wonder whether these are untimely deaths, or whether they are simply "starting to hoe our row," a phrase I learned from Cam DeVore.

The one that hit me the hardest occurred March 27th, when we lost Bill Dixon of Albuquerque to cancer. I first met Bill in 1975, when Joseph Montoya II sued for libel over an article originated by the *Denver Post* and picked up by the A.P. and local media in Albuquerque. Bill, together with Dick Winfield, represented A.P. I asked my local counsel about Bill and he said, "Bill Dixon gets to the bottom of everything he does."

Then I had my first conversation with Bill and found him utterly disarming and delightful. I had called him to propose a summary judgment strategy. With the lightest of touches, Bill moved the conversation through a series of Columbo-like questions about what I was proposing, and gradually I realized my analysis would have to be a good one to survive the phone call. Since then, Bill and I have worked on several cases, and I've never had an unenjoyable moment with him. Like my many other friends in the

media bar that studied law at Yale, he never made me feel the least bit insecure about not having attended that august institution. I do this on my own.

Like the other colleagues we have lost recently, Bill had become something of a legend in his time and territory, having made most of the First Amendment law in New Mexico and having taught the subject to law students for much of his career. Because of his passion for freedom of expression, his clients included not only mainstream media, but also far less popular speakers. The State of New Mexico will miss him; I will miss him. To his wife Valentina and his family: As you well know, the experience of Bill's friendship will be treasured by all of those who knew him. **G**

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