

Susan Patterson: 51st President of the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary

By Richard A. Patterson

I willingly accepted the responsibility of introducing my wife to my fellow Bar members. Susan and I were high-school classmates and have known each other since junior high, although we did not start dating until our senior trip. After graduation from Birmingham High School, Susan went to Central Michigan and I to Michigan State. After a year of numerous trips between Mt. Pleasant and East Lansing, Susan transferred to Michigan State, ostensibly to enroll in the speech therapy program, but probably also to exercise damage control. I don't know which of us was more relieved when I was accepted to Wayne State Law School. Susan's pursuit of a degree met with much more academic success than mine.

We were married shortly after graduation. Susan was hired as a speech therapist in the Birmingham schools. She also worked part-time in the speech clinic at Wayne while pursuing her master's degree. Her salary and some part-time employment on my part got us through law school.

When our daughter, Karyn, came along, Susan retired. Our son, Chad, was born four years later. In the years following, Susan was actively involved as a room mother, athletic booster, cookie baker, carpool driver, and all-around supporter of her family. Karyn is now married to Erik Bloch, a Ford engineer, and lives in Dearborn with their two-year-old twins, Owen and Neah. Karyn graduated from Michigan State and has a master's degree in project management from George Washington. Chad works for Citizens Insurance Company. He and his wife, Kim, live in Lansing and have a three-year-old son, Zach, and a one-year-old daughter, Ava. We are fortunate to have our children and grandchildren close.

Once the kids were old enough, Susan began her community voluntarism. Missing



Susan Patterson

from her lexicon outside the home is the word "no." Among many other activities, she became very active in the Birmingham Junior League and was instrumental in facilitating the Virginia Slims Tennis Tournament which, for years, was a major fundraiser for the League.

Together, we served as youth advisors for six years for a Bloomfield Hills church. It is very gratifying that many of the teens with whom we had a small part in mentoring have become respectable adults.

During that time, I practiced in a medium-size firm, which was initially in Pontiac

and then Bloomfield Hills. In 1989, I set up a solo practice in the area. Susan, in addition to continuing her volunteer activities, pitched in with a number of part-time education positions.

In 1997, I accepted a position as an administrative law judge with the State of Michigan. After selling our home in Bloomfield Hills, Susan later joined me in East Lansing. It was a treat to have my wife and furniture (other than a TV, bed, and folding chairs) and an immediate East Lansing social schedule.

The move necessitated Susan's retirement from her speech therapy position in the Lake Orion schools, but she tried commuting for a year to serve that district as intersession coordinator. When that became a burden, she immediately became involved as a docent at the Kresge Art Museum on the Michigan State campus and served as president of the docent board for four years. She has also been active in the Wharton Center's Inner Circle, volunteering primarily with the Act One docent program. She served on the Inner Circle Board and was president in 2005–2006. She was distinguished with the Arthur Lueudders Circle Award in 2008 in recognition of her volunteer commitment to Wharton. They had that pegged, because she is again on the board in the community outreach position.

Maggie Frankland, 2003–2004 MLA president, invited Susan to join the Ingham County Bar Auxiliary (ICBA). She has enjoyed her association with that auxiliary,

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Susan and Rich relaxing at Lake Michigan.

erving one year as president and continuing to serve as liaison with the Child Benefit Fund that the ICBA supports. The ICBA recognized her commitment with the Fran Ryan Award. Other community organizations that seek her time are the Sparrow Hospital Guild and People's Church.

Susan is extremely conscientious and detail oriented. Many hours are consumed on the phone and computer. She occasionally considers "slowing down" with some encouragement from me, but somehow has never carried through. Even though I consider her my best friend, I have learned over 43 years of marriage that she is, in this respect, her own woman.

The MLA faces a number of challenges in the coming year, and I am confident it will be in good hands. There has never been a task Susan has undertaken that she did not give her all to and succeed in. She will also continue her participation in the State Bar Public Outreach Committee.

We have a summer home in Pentwater and plan to "retire" there. Retire is in quotes because Susan has already become active in a number of local organizations, a very active book club, and the local yacht club. ■

Rich Patterson, Susan's husband and the author of this article, has been an administrative law judge with what is now the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules for over 10 years, primarily hearing cases for the Department of Environmental Quality. Previously, he was in private practice in the Detroit area for 30 years.