

MICHIGAN **Bar** Journal **s h o r t - s t o r y c o n t e s t**

It's been two years since our inaugural short-story contest, and our members demonstrate a continued knack for storytelling. Twenty-six attorneys entertained us with tales of intrigue, murder, loss, and even a little humor. Our 2007 contest judges joined us again this year (see sidebar), graciously volunteering their time and enthusiastically accepting the challenge of reading and ranking the stories.

The judging process was the same as in our first contest, with preliminary and finalist rounds. For both rounds, the authors' names were removed from the stories before judging. In the preliminary round, judges read three groups of five or six stories each and ranked them numerically. The two stories receiving the highest number of points in each group advanced to the finalist round, and judges could nominate one or two additional stories. When the results were tallied, 13 stories advanced to the finalist round (see <http://www.michbar.org/journal/pdf/pdf4article1538.pdf>) and were read by all judges.

First time was the charm for Michael Kitchen, who earned top billing with his story, "The Word of the Day is 'Trust.'" Sworn in as an attorney in 2008, Kitchen wasn't even aware of the 2007 contest. "I'm honored to have this story chosen as the first-place winner," said Kitchen. "I've entered many contests, and have written three unpublished (and unpublishable) novels since I discovered my desire to write back in the early 1980s. This is the first contest I've won first place in." Having just started his own law firm, Kitchen takes primarily court-appointed cases, which affords him more time to write. "For me, writing is a necessity. In fact, one of the major reasons I went to law school was because of the writing component. It has made me a better writer." Kitchen took an interest in drug treatment courts in law school, and said he used a drug-court setting in his story because many lawyers may not be familiar with it. "I took the advice I'd learned about writing short stories by giving a normal setting a bit of twist."

Those of you familiar with our first contest will recognize our final two winners, as they tied for third place in the first go-around. Second-place winner Robert B. Nelson and third-place winner Jeffrey Caminsky demonstrate they're no "one-hit wonders."

Robert Nelson had two sources of inspiration for his second-place story, "The Shadow from the Wall." "A speaker at my Kiwanis Club related his first-hand experience with the hardships that were created for families when the first wall between the U.S. and Mexico was erected," said Nelson, whose story begins with two characters scaling the wall, leaving behind known danger for dangers unknown. "The state representative in the story," Nelson continues, "is a personification of several legislators I have known over the years." After publishing fiction in *Hemisphere Magazine* in 2002 and the *Michigan Bar Journal* in 2007, Nelson turned toward nonfiction with an article entitled "Administrative Law Implications of Michigan's New Energy Law," which was published in the Winter 2009 edition of the *Administrative Law Journal*.

Jeffrey Caminsky's third-place story, "Crucible of Justice," is based on one of his past cases. "It was a case that I lost on appeal, and one which still haunts me to this day," said Caminsky. As he eases further into semi-retirement, Caminsky tries to devote an hour or two each day to writing. He currently has two books in print, part of a series of science fiction adventures: *The Sirens of Space* and *The Star Dancers*. The next book in the series, *Clouds of Darkness*, is scheduled for publication later this year, with the final installment, *The Guardians of Peace*, scheduled for late 2010 or early 2011. Caminsky has also published *The Referee's Survival Guide*, a book on soccer officiating, and *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare*, a book on Elizabethan poetry. "I still tend toward bombast in my creative writing," said Caminsky. "It's an occupational hazard that comes from being a lawyer. While it can't be completely cured, research suggests that it can be treated quite successfully."

With the three winners determined, our judges turned to awarding honorable mentions—and the competition was fierce! When the points were totaled, six stories were in a near-dead heat. As a result, the judges awarded six honorable mentions to the following authors, shown in alphabetical order:

Eli D. Greenbaum, *Frantic Fire*
Robert E. Helm, *An Unwanted Education*
Scott A. Noto, *Slip and Fall: A Litigator's Tale*
Randall J. Petrides, *The Verdict*
Anthony A. Targan, *Garbage Law*
Robert Tomak, *The Courier*

You'll find our three winning stories on the following pages. To read all 13 finalist stories, visit http://www.michbar.org/publications/bar_journal.cfm. We hope you enjoy reading the stories as much as we did.

Congratulations to our three winning authors and other finalists. Thank you to all who entered, temporarily setting aside legalese for something a bit more creative. Let's hope you've inspired your colleagues to do the same when the *Bar Journal* holds its third contest in a year or two. See you all next time!

Our short-story contest judges:

Rosemarie Aquilina, 30th Circuit Court judge, is the author of *Feel No Evil*, a fictional suspense novel. Judge Aquilina is awaiting publication of her second novel and is currently working on her fourth novel. The first female JAG Officer in Michigan Army National Guard history, she retired with 20 years' honorable service. Former owner of Aquilina Law Firm PLC, she hosted "Ask the Family Lawyer," syndicated on Michigan Talk Radio Network. Judge Aquilina is an adjunct professor at Thomas M. Cooley Law School and mother of three.

Elizabeth Baergen has served on the State Bar Publications and Website Advisory Committee for over 20 years, and has enjoyed editing a variety of theme issues for the *Michigan Bar Journal*, including computer law, real property law, corporate counsel, intellectual property, and taxation. She finds mysteries, science fiction, and other fiction to be a great antidote to mortgages, leases, wills, trusts, and the daily trials and tribulations of the law and life in general. She salutes those who, like the authors of these short stories, create the works that pique our imaginations, challenge our thinking, and expand our horizons.

Frederick Baker, Jr., a Supreme Court commissioner, has served 26 years on the State Bar Publications and Website Advisory Committee, the past 22 as its chair. He taught legal writing at Wayne State University and Thomas M. Cooley Law Schools, received the Urban Law Annual Writing Award and two Cooley Law Review Distinguished Brief Awards, has published 12 law-related articles and one work of fiction, and has edited hundreds of articles. He also judges the annual Robert Traver Fly Fishing Fiction Award competition.

Francine Cullari is a former member of the State Bar Board of Commissioners and past president of the Genesee County Bar Association. She serves as vice chairperson of the Publications and Website Advisory Committee, responsible for the *Michigan Bar Journal*, and has edited several theme issues. She is the author of the "Citizen Lawyer" series for the *Journal*. She has edited and written for a daily newspaper and a local bar magazine, and has edited three novels. She has authored numerous professional articles, served on Law Review at Michigan State University College of Law, and teaches business law and international business law at the University of Michigan, Flint campus, in addition to a private law practice.

John O. Juroszek is a legal editor for the Michigan Supreme Court Reporter of Decisions and a member of the Publications and Website Advisory Committee. Among other things, he has been a judicial law clerk, an associate in private practice, and a legislative drafter. After a steady diet of legal stuff all day long, he relaxes by reading way too many detective stories and spy novels and dreaming about the mountains of Wyoming.