

FIRST IMPRESSIONS— A NEW BEGINNING



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Like it or not, first impressions are crucially important in all we do. The very fact that you are reading this article shows you have at least some interest in our Bar and its new director. Your first impression of me and of our Bar's new beginning may come in part from what you think about my first thoughts expressed to you in this article. That realization caused me to give much thought about what was most important to say. Should I highlight the important issues facing the Bar? Should my background and experience be stressed? As important as those topics may be, it became clear to me that the most important things to discuss by far are people, attitudes, and trust.

The foundation for all first impressions and for all great new endeavors is a gut feeling of trust and a genuine respect for the people you are interacting with. This is a time for a major personal new beginning for my wife, Barb, and myself. We have exchanged beach towels for parkas, and election madness for the serenity of certified vote totals on the first try (well, in most cases). I

am excited to be here because of my first impression of a Bar staff, leadership, and lawyers in this state who are open for change—even dramatic change—to provide a better profession for the lawyers of Michigan and better service to the public we all serve.

I'll describe my initial reaction to the State Bar of Michigan and I'll conclude with what I'm hopeful you'll see in me.

Justice Veasey, Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court and a leader in focusing us on change in our profession, said recently, "we are in a battle for the heart and soul of our profession." Early on, my observation has been that this Bar has a heart for a justice system that provides access to all. Likewise, there is a strong desire on behalf of the Bar leadership and staff to provide new ways to help lawyers in the real day-to-day areas of the practice of law—a heart to make your jobs enjoyable, and more fulfilling, so you can better serve your clients and enjoy your lives more doing it.

All bars, with Michigan as no exception, must wake up and look closely at all we do and listen closely to the people we serve or our very existence will come into question. I see a Bar with great accomplishments and for that we should all be proud. In some areas, we have failed and for that we are sorry. With your help, we will do better. It is my privilege to be part of this great time in our Bar's existence.

What is it I hope to convey to you about me as a first impression? First and foremost,

it is my sincere desire that you see someone who cares deeply about people and this profession. As far as my attitude toward you and those I work with, there will be complete honesty and openness—no spin control. If we mess up we will tell you, do our best to make up for it, learn from it, and go on.

Likewise, when we feel passionately about issues before us, we will have the courage to articulate that to you in the clearest way possible—even if it may be controversial. Most importantly though, we will closely listen to you and try our best to represent your interest in all forums possible.

With the great Bar leadership we have and an incredibly dedicated staff, we can and will do great things in the upcoming years, but it will take openness to change, starting right here at the Bar.

You will learn in other parts of the *Bar Journal* the great things being accomplished by you and the Bar regarding projects, programs, and local and state efforts. The monthly articles from the executive director will focus on finding ways to pique your interest in the tough issues facing us all and finding ways for you to send us your ideas on how best to handle them.

My first impression: I couldn't be happier. My staff and I will do all we can to give you a similar feeling.

Finally, I must thank Al Butzbaugh, Tom Ryan, and the Board of Commissioners for this opportunity. I look forward to meeting you, hearing from you, and learning from you. ♦

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