

March 2024

# BAR BEAT

Genesee County Bar Association



“Warm Fuzzies”

From the Editors

2023 Amy Harris Criminal Law Seminar

Elevating Legal Practice: GenAI (ChatGPT) in the  
Modern Law Office

John S. Beagle Scholarship Announced

Student Loans

Remembering Kathy Buckley

Thoughts of Dick Ruhala

Attorney Reese Winfield Stipes

In Memoriam 2022-2023

Meet and Greet

1st Generation Attorneys

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# “Warm Fuzzies”

By Craig R. Fiederlein, President



Craig R. Fiederlein

As we stroll through 2024, I want to address you as the President of our esteemed association, and to emphasize the importance of compassion as well as commitment to our local community.

As legal professionals, we excel at logic, analysis, and the precise interpretation of the law. While law school equips us with the tools to navigate statutes, precedents, and legal doctrines, it is compassion that truly distinguishes us. During our years of practice together, The Honorable Chris Christenson used to call it “the warm fuzzies.” Compassion for our clients’ matters requires understanding their needs and goals and explaining to them in easy-to-understand terminology the complexities of their case.

Recently, I found myself personally immersed in a legal issue. While I was attempting to purchase a home, the seller wanted to breach the contract. It was a reminder that even as seasoned professionals, the law and our judicial system provide unique hurdles that render justice limited. In my case, it was the utilization of the doctrine of specific performance in real estate to require a seller to perform and sell a piece of real estate per the terms of the purchase agreement. While I could execute such legal maneuvers almost effortlessly for a client, handling my own case was not so simple. This experience gave me the opportunity to better understand our clients’ fears and concerns, and to remind myself that being a

steadfast counsel for them through this turbulent time of their life is of the utmost importance.

Since being a member of GCBA, I have often witnessed firsthand the selflessness with which our attorneys give their time to our bar association and local community. We have all heard of Brian Barkey and his commitment to the holiday party and our Flint community. It was Brian and his wife, Dorie, who I have to thank for my involvement in the Crim running program. Their steadfast work with the Crim and the holiday dinner and gift give away is a stellar example of our members’ commitment to the local community. I want to personally thank Brian and all members who contributed to the holiday dinner. As attorneys we may possess different personalities, beliefs, and ideas, yet what unites us is our shared commitment to our profession and community.

As we continue our endeavors in the legal field, let us carry forward this compassion, recognizing its significance in building trust, fostering understanding, and ultimately achieving just outcomes for our clients. This same compassion will allow us to help our community in ways that are unique to each individual attorney. In doing so, we not only elevate the standards of our profession but also reinforce the GCBA as a bastion of legal excellence for this community.

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# From the Editors

By Shelley R. Spivack and Sean M. Siebigteroth

This year, 2024, I (Shelley) will turn 70. It's unbelievable to me - seems like I just graduated law school, took the bar exam and moved to Michigan. Editing the articles in this month's edition also reminds me of the passage of time.

In this issue, we remember three GCBA members who recently passed away: Reese Stipes, Richard (Dick) Ruhala and Kathy Buckley. Like the authors of the articles commemorating their lives, I also have my memories of each of these outstanding members of our legal community.

I recall meeting Reese when I first opened my own practice in 1983. Although I had worked for Legal Services for two years, I didn't know many members of the Bar outside of our LSEM office. Shortly after moving into 720 Church St., Linda Pylypiw took me over to the Circuit Courthouse to introduce me to the judges and their staff. The waiting rooms outside of the judges' offices seemed to me more like clubhouses- lots of folks sitting around talking, drinking coffee and yes- even smoking! It was in one of these offices that I was first introduced to Reese Stipes. What immediately struck me about him was that he was a truly kind and genuine individual. Over the years as we had cases together and as he appeared before me when I was a Referee, my impression of him never changed.

I don't recall when I first met Dick Ruhala. I think that I had heard of him long before we were introduced. It wasn't until I started working with *Bar Beat* and attending the Senior luncheons that I had a chance to get to know him. Our first conversations centered around some of my travel articles. He took a real interest in these trips and invited me to speak to the senior group about my cycling trip to Vietnam. After that I would look forward to the phone calls I would receive from him personally inviting me to the luncheons. Now that he is gone, I only wish I had attended more frequently.

The hardest memories to write are of Kathy Buckley. Like me, Kathy was born in 1954. We were both sworn in



Shelley R. Spivack



Sean M. Siebigteroth

by Judge Ransom on June 2, 1981. We both practiced family law and both had a love of outdoor adventures and travel. It was on one of these adventures- a bike trip across Florida- that Kathy's untimely death occurred. As I have ridden on many of these trails, (and will be riding on them again when this issue of *Bar Beat* is delivered) I will think of her each time I get on my bike.

As you read each of the articles about these three esteemed members of the Bar, take a few minutes to sit back, reflect, and think about what memories you will leave for your family, friends and colleagues.

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#### MISSION STATEMENT

The Genesee County Bar Association exists to serve the professional needs of our members, improve the justice system, and educate the public about the law and the role of lawyers.

# 2023 Amy Harris Criminal Law Seminar

By Jessica Mainprize-Hajek



Jessica Mainprize-Hajek

On November 30<sup>th</sup> of 2023 the GCBA Criminal Law Committee presented its annual “Amy Harris Criminal Law Seminar.” This seminar provides local attorneys with a unique chance to receive excellent training and educational materials without having to travel to Detroit or Lansing.

We began the seminar with updates from our fearless leader, Chief Public Defender Nathaniel C. Perry. Chief Perry and the amazing Michelle Bolthouse work tirelessly to assist us in defending our clients to the best of our ability. During the seminar, Chief Perry and Ms. Bolthouse provided us with updates to the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission’s [MIDC] mandates, policies, and funding requirements. As the pay scale and invoicing policies for public defenders changed in October 2023, we had many questions.

7th Circuit Court Judge and State Bar of Michigan Commissioner Chris Christenson taught us about the recently enacted Rule 21 – Mandatory Interim Administrator Planning. This was a very timely and helpful presentation providing us with information on the new requirements that will protect our clients if we unexpectedly become unable to practice. Rule 21 mandates our designation of an individual who will have access to our files as well as take our cases and/or wind down our practice.

My presentation focused on how to protect the record and avoid ineffective assistance of counsel claims on appeal. I also gave a brief evidence refresher and provided attendees

with a Michigan Rules of Evidence and objection ‘cheat sheet.’

In years past, “Amy’s Seminar” was an all-day event on Thursday and attendees were provided with a delicious lunch. This year, however, the Seminar was a half day on Thursday and Friday. Fear not, dear reader, as our attendees did not go hungry. Attorney Theresa Haruska provided everyone with coffee and a smorgasbord of food for breakfast. Theresa’s kindness was done in loving memory of Attorney Daniel Bremer, who we tragically lost last year.

Day two of the seminar kicked off with Attorney and Jury Consultant Keeley Blanchard providing an interactive session on jury voir dire. Attorney Blanchard, who has a passion for trial practice and regularly teaches at the Trial Lawyers College, gave a dynamic presentation and challenged attendees to undertake a non-conventional approach to voir dire.

Finally, Attorney Anne Yantus updated us all on sentencing issues that have arisen over the last year. These legal updates are always interesting and very helpful in the criminal law world. Anne has been a constant and dynamic presenter since Amy’s first seminar in 2016.

As all Genesee County public defenders know, every year we are required to have continuing legal education credits to remain active on the public defender list. The Michigan Indigent Defense Commission’s Standard 1 also mandates



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attorneys to complete at least 12 hours of continuing legal education courses. See <http://michiganidc.gov/standards/>. This year's seminar provided us with 8 hours of CLE. However, a subsequent seminar for defenders held via zoom on December 14 provided us with an opportunity to fulfill our annual requirements. Erich Speckin, of Speckin Forensics, presented a lively and informative session on "Using Forensics in your Defense and Effective Cross Examination Tactics".

I would be remiss to not specifically thank the Genesee County Defenders Office for their help and support throughout this seminar. Chief Perry, Michelle Bolthouse and Todd McKee were essential to the successful 7<sup>th</sup> annual "Amy K. Harris Seminar."

A very special thank you to Tina Burroughs. Without her, and her hard work, Amy's Seminar would not be possible. A big thank you as well to the Genesee County Friend of the Court. The use of the FOC conference room allows for a local beautiful and well-designed training room.

Last but certainly not least, a very special thank you must go out to the Genesee Bar Foundation Neithercut Fund for their continued financial support of "Amy's Seminar" whose grants allow us to obtain education from the best sources.

Topics for Amy's 2024 seminar are already being hashed out but suggestions are always welcome. See you at the Amy K. Harris Criminal Law Seminar in 2024.

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## *Elevating Legal Practice: GenAI (ChatGPT) in the Modern Law Office*

By LindaLee Massoud, with the reasonably-capable assistance of ChatGPT

The newest revolution in technology has arrived: artificial intelligence (AI). It offers great potential for all law offices.

But . . . there are still glitches in the system: since Large Language Models (LLMs) use a "predictive" model to provide an answer the user *might* want, results may include "hallucinations" (completely made-up text, facts, and even sources).

To bring home the importance of this issue, a US judge recently imposed both sanctions and a \$5,000 fine on two New York lawyers whose legal brief included six fictitious case citations generated by ChatGPT! Solution.

Practical tip: The prompt must be explicit and detailed enough to generate the intended response. Expect to need multiple iterations ("conversation") to tailor the final result to what you want.

To illustrate the use of AI, I created the prompt below and had Chat GPT 'write' my article. Here is the result:

### **My Prompt:**

**CONTEXT:** Write an article about ways lawyers could use AI or ChatGPT in a law office to streamline workflow. Include a numbered list of at least 5 ideas.

**AUDIENCE AND GUIDELINES:** The audience is attorneys. Use high level language. The article will be published in a legal magazine. Maximum 500 words.

**PURPOSE:** Beginning level introduction to GenAI (ChatGPT) and how it can be used in a law office.

**TASK:** Update the article using the stated guidelines. Include a word count and the time it took you to write the article.

### **ChatGPT's article:**

Title: Elevating Legal Practice: GenAI (ChatGPT) in the Modern Law Office

Introduction:

In the dynamic realm of legal practice, where time is of the essence, embracing cutting-edge technologies is not just an option but a strategic necessity. Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly the remarkable capabilities of Generative AI such as ChatGPT, is reshaping the landscape of legal services. This article explores the ways GenAI can be integrated into law offices, empowering attorneys to streamline workflows and enhance the delivery of legal services.

**Intelligent Legal Research:** In the legal arena, staying ahead of the curve often requires exhaustive research. GenAI, with its natural language processing prowess, facilitates intelligent legal research. Tools like ROSS Intelligence and Casetext not only expedite research processes but also offer a level of comprehension and context that can significantly augment attorneys' decision-making.

**Dynamic Contract Review:** Contracts, being the backbone of legal agreements, demand meticulous scrutiny. GenAI-driven tools like Kira Systems and eBrevia excel in dynamic contract review. They autonomously extract crucial provisions, identify potential risks, and compare clauses across myriad documents, ensuring a level of accuracy and efficiency unattainable through traditional means.



LindaLee Massoud

Continued on the next page



**Efficient Document Generation:** GenAI, through platforms like LawGeex and Contract Express, revolutionizes document generation. By understanding and interpreting natural language, these tools streamline the creation of legal documents, saving attorneys valuable time. This efficiency not only reduces mundane tasks but also allows legal professionals to focus on more intricate and strategic aspects of their work.

**Innovative Legal Assistance via Chatbots:** As client expectations evolve, the integration of GenAI-powered chatbots becomes imperative. These AI-driven assistants, powered by technologies like ChatGPT, provide immediate responses to common legal queries, schedule appointments, and even offer preliminary legal advice. The result is a more responsive and client-centric law office.

**Strategic Decision-making with Predictive Analytics:** GenAI enhances strategic decision-making through predictive analytics. Platforms like Lex Machina and Ravel Law utilize vast datasets to predict case outcomes, judge preferences, and legal trends. Attorneys can leverage these insights to devise winning strategies and anticipate the moves of opposing counsel.

## Conclusion

The synergy between legal practice and GenAI is a paradigm shift that not only expedites routine tasks but also elevates the quality of legal services. From intelligent research and dynamic contract review to efficient document generation, client-centric assistance, and strategic decision-making through predictive analytics, GenAI is an invaluable ally for today's legal professionals. As attorneys navigate the complexities of their practice, embracing GenAI ensures they do so with unmatched efficiency and foresight.

[Word Count: 406] *Time taken to generate this article: Approximately 10 minutes*

**Back to human evaluation:** Although ChatGPT said it took 10 minutes to generate the article, that included the time it took me to type in the pre-prepared prompt. The actual time to *generate* the response was approximately one minute. While AI will be a paradigm shift, we are in uncharted territory. Proceed with cautious optimism.

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## *John S. Beagle Scholarship Announced*

The Genesee County Bar Foundation announces that applications are being accepted for the John S. Beagle Scholarship established to assist students from Genesee County, Michigan with financial support while in their second or third level of law school.

For those interested in applying for the scholarship, it's crucial to note the following details:

- 1. Eligibility Criteria:** Applicants must be law students from Genesee County, Michigan, and be in their second or third level of law school.
- 2. Scholarship Amount:** A minimum scholarship of \$5,000 will be awarded.
- 3. Application Deadline:** The application deadline is May 1, 2024. Potential candidates need to ensure that all required materials are submitted before this date.
- 4. How to apply:** Interested individuals can find more information and access the application at [www.gcbalaw.org](http://www.gcbalaw.org). Additionally, they can contact the Foundation directly at (810) 232-6000 for further assistance.



The scholarship is a tribute to the late John S. Beagle, a distinguished member of the Genesee County Bar Foundation and Genesee County Bar Association. The purpose of this scholarship is to honor his dedication to justice and commitment to removing economic barriers for aspiring law students. It is through the generosity of the late John S. Beagle and his family that the scholarship was established.



# Student Loans

By Coryelle Christie



Coryelle Christie

Many lawyers have student loans, making this a topic that has a significant impact on GCBA members, especially newer attorneys. To earn their law degrees, many law school graduates borrow in excess of \$80,000 in student loans.<sup>1</sup> Coupled with loans borrowed for undergraduate degrees, new lawyers have an average debt of more than \$100,000, a number that continues to rise as more students seek loans to pay for higher education programs to advance their careers.

Since 2020, student loan debt has often been in the news. This article will summarize some of the hot topics regarding student loan debt since 2020. Specifically, this article will address how COVID-19 impacted student loan payments, the status of loan forgiveness, and the recent United States Supreme Court cases involving student loan forgiveness.

**Student Loans and COVID-19:** Along with other financial relief measures, the federal government suspended student loan payments and interest accrual beginning March 13, 2020. Student loan payments restarted on September 1, 2023, over three years later.

**Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program:** For lawyers working in public service (such as government or qualifying nonprofit organizations), public service loan forgiveness is possible, and many lawyers have seen their loans forgiven under this program, myself included. To qualify for this program, you must have made 120 qualifying student loan payments (approximately 10 years of payments) while employed by a government or not-for-profit organization. Additionally, payments that were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic count toward eligibility for public service loan forgiveness.

Although this program has existed since 2007, only 7,000 borrowers had received forgiveness before 2021. However, the federal government reports that the total relief through PSLF since October 2021 is up to \$53.5 billion for almost 750,000 borrowers.<sup>2</sup>

**Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) Waiver:** Income-Driven Repayment plans reduce student loan payments over a 20 or 25-year period, depending on the loan type, and then forgive the remaining balance. This waiver remains active. Additionally, the Biden administration is focused on alleged errors in the administration of income-driven repayment plans, which has led to debt cancellation for many borrowers.

**Proposed Student Loan Debt Forgiveness:** Additional efforts for student loan debt forgiveness were in the news recently. In 2022, President Biden proposed to forgive

up to \$10,000 in federal student loan debt for most borrowers, and \$20,000 for Pell grant recipients. These proposals were challenged in court, and in June 2023, the United States Supreme Court in *Biden v Nebraska*,<sup>3</sup> ruled in a 6-3 decision that the Biden administration did not have authority to forgive billions of dollars in student loan debt. At the same time, the Court also issued a unanimous decision in *Department of Education v Brown*<sup>4</sup> that two individuals lacked standing to challenge the debt-relief plan.

Since the Supreme Court case, Biden has redirected his efforts, releasing a new payment plan for borrowers to coincide with student loan payments resuming on September 1, 2023. The Saving on Valuable Education (SAVE) plan is an IDR plan that offers reduced payments for student loan borrowers. Further, the SAVE plan has an interest benefit. Where a borrower makes a full monthly payment, but not enough to cover the accrued monthly interest, the government covers the rest of the interest that accrued that month. This means that the SAVE Plan prevents borrower balances from growing due to unpaid interest.<sup>5</sup> High interest accruals have been a source of criticism of student loan programs. In addition, the Fresh Start program assists borrowers in default, which totals nearly 7 million individuals.

This article was intended to give a summary of student loan issues facing some lawyers in the past few years. As everyone knows, this issue has become extremely political since the pandemic, and will likely play a role in upcoming elections.

## Endnotes

- [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal\\_aid\\_indigent\\_defendants/ls\\_sclaid\\_lrap\\_finalreport.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_aid_indigent_defendants/ls_sclaid_lrap_finalreport.pdf)
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# Remembering Kathy Buckley

## *A Life Well Lived*

By Cara Willing, Barbara Dawes, and Julie Griffiths on behalf of the GCBA Family Law Committee

For over 35 years, Kathleen (Kathy) Buckley practiced as a family law attorney in Genesee County. A strong advocate for her clients, Kathy consistently demonstrated high ethical standards. If you were opposing counsel, you could rely on her to be fair and honest.

You could also count on Kathy to stay up to date on the latest family law issues. She regularly attended continuing legal education seminars and luncheons and was in the first class of family law lawyers to receive the Family Law Certificate from ICLE. On a national level, she was a member of the Fellows of the American Bar Association. Not content with only representing clients, Kathy completed the ICLE Family Law Mediation training in 2007 and greatly enjoyed assisting people amicably resolve their differences.

Kathy also strongly believed in giving back to the legal community. A founding member of the Genesee County Bar Foundation, Kathy not only served for 30 years on their board, but also held the offices of President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Kathy was also an active member of the GCBA and the Family Law Committee and participated in the Inns of Court.

Kathy believed in freely giving to her community and friends. She volunteered her services for the Greater Flint ACLU lawyer's committee, Christ the King Church, and the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. She mentored younger attorneys by demonstrating how to successfully practice family law. Every December prior to COVID, Kathy hosted a highly attended, lively holiday party at her office.

Kathy has always been active. Cara first met her when she was training at The Rock on Saginaw Street. She would be there early in the morning and late at night. She was one of the few people who could get away with a quick joke, which made working out easier. After training at The Rock, she started biking and walking all around Michigan. She participated in the



Slow Roll in Detroit, and the Crim in Flint. She also enjoyed scuba diving, kayaking, ballroom dancing, colorful scarves, quilting, travel, and offering ideas to parents for fun activities to do with children.

Upon retirement, Kathy moved to Naples, Florida, but never slowed down. She was often hiking, biking, and volunteering where needed, including beach cleanup; assistance after a tornado; or helping in local communities after a hurricane. She enjoyed trying new activities, joining new groups, and exploring new restaurants. She also had a love for animals, including her dog with three legs. Even after leaving Michigan, Kathy continued to be a proponent of Michigan and Flint.

As we move into this new year, we can all strive to be more like Kathy. As attorneys, we can be strong advocates for our clients, while also being courteous to opposing counsel. As members of the Flint community, we can volunteer our time to the things that matter to us. As individuals, we can stay connected with people even when we retire and move. And most importantly, we can have a good work life balance, and live everyday with purpose.

## *A Friend for Life*

By Patric Parker

My lifelong friend Kathleen Buckley passed away on January 9, 2024. She and I were born about two weeks apart when our parents lived in neighboring apartments in downtown Flint. Kathy's family and mine were close. Two

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of her younger brothers, Mike and John, were close in age to my younger brothers.

Kathy's father, Jim Buckley, attended law school after some years working in GM's labor relations department. Upon graduation, he moved their family to Holly from Detroit. They lived on a small lake, and Kathy had a horse she kept on their property.

Jim joined my dad Duke Parker in practice, and they practiced (along with Mike Smith) as Parker, Buckley & Smith for many years. I practiced with them after my own law school graduation.

After graduating from Holly High School in 1972, Kathy attended the University of Michigan - Flint. While she was in school she worked as a legal assistant for Jim and my dad. She then attended Detroit College of Law, our dads' alma mater, and joined her dad in practice.

Kathy always had a biting, dry sense of humor that she inherited from her mother Jean. She had a fierce belief in her client's position, a trait that she inherited from her

father. Kathy also had a reputation as a lawyer who advocated for her clients with less care about fees than about the justice of their case.

She was also a good friend to my wife Suellen, and would frequently bring gifts to our kids when they were young.

When Kathy was your friend, she was your friend for life. She was my friend from the time we were born. All of us will miss her terribly.



## Thoughts of Dick Ruhala

By Donald G. Rockwell

Life has been very kind to me. I have been gifted the opportunity to be a lawyer, and not just any lawyer but a lawyer from Flint and Genesee County who has had the opportunity and privilege to be around wonderful lawyers in our local bar who are true professionals and who are also just good and caring people – lawyers like Richard “Dick” Ruhala. Sadly, we lost Dick in October of last year.

I first met Dick early in my career as an insurance defense lawyer. Dick was representing a client who had been significantly injured by my client. I was immediately taken with Dick's perfectly professional approach in representing his client's interests. Dick was knowledgeable and confident in his actions and he was humble and kind when dealing with a young lawyer like me.

It was not until years later that I got to know Dick personally and it was then I began to learn of his life-long commitment to donating his time and talents to making our community a better place for all of us. It is not unusual for our colleagues to be active in the community but Dick's particular background reads like a Who's Who: school boards; candidate for US Congress; economic development and planning commissions; township board of trustees; GCBA committees and president of the GCBA; Flint City Charter commission; judicial candidate; Cancer Society, United Way, Crossover Outreach and other charitable organizations; SBM committees and chair of SBM Master Lawyers section; and most recently, of course,

the leader and energizer for our local senior lawyers' group. It was not until very recently that I learned Dick played football for Flint Northern High School and the University of Michigan. Very little of this did I learn from Dick as he seldom talked about himself but, rather, he would simply talk to me about his love of family and community and the bar, and he wanted to know about me.



Seated left to right: Eugene LaBelle; Theodore Weisswasser; David Ekmann, Assoc. Editor; Professor Strickartz, Faculty Advisor; O. Lee Belslette, Editor-in-Chief; Allan Blain, Business Manager; and Frederick L. Stackable. Standing are Gary Plotkin, Arnold Gordon, Lawrence Rodaki, and Richard Ruhala.

[It is amazing what one can find on the internet. Above is a photo of the Wayne State Law School Bar Journal staff (June, 1961) showing a young and handsome law student by the name of Richard Ruhala standing on the right.]

Continued on the next page



## Thoughts of Dick Ruhala

Continued from page 11

This last year was difficult for Dick health-wise. He was suffering with significant health issues but one would not know it talking with Dick. I remember the last time I saw Dick. He was his positive normal self while, once again, asking about me and my family and what I was doing. He was also most pleased to share that his beloved senior lawyers' group, that he organized and headed for so many years, was now going to be led by Judge Beagle. I have to believe Dick was very persuasive in getting Judge Beagle to assume these duties.

I think we recognize *very special people* by the way we feel just being in their presence. I always felt very special being around Dick as, I am sure, many of us did. I will miss Dick. We all will miss Dick. He was exactly that *very special person* to me and many others of us in the local bar. I was fortunate to know Dick as I did and that is one of the reasons why I know life has been very kind to me.



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## Attorney Reese Winfield Stipes

By Kendall B. Williams

In October 2023 we lost Reese Stipes, a stalwart and giant of the legal community. Reese was my mentor and dear friend. A member of the Bar Association and my law firm, who was aware of my close relationship with Reese, asked me to write an article about my friend and share some of the wonderful stories about a magnificent attorney. It is truly my privilege to do so for *Bar Beat*.

As a lawyer, Reese always exemplified the traits required for recipients of the Genesee County Bar Association's Herbert A. Milliken, Jr. Civility Award. During his professional career spanning 60 years, Reese demonstrated the "highest standards of professional courtesy and civility, combined with zealous and thorough advocacy on behalf of his clients". All attorneys who worked with Reese recognized him as not only an outstanding advocate, but a gentleman – a person of tremendous legal skill *and* integrity. He was beloved in the legal community because his character was partnered with great charm and an incredible sense of humor.

For several years, Reese would team with Duke Parker and Judge Robert Ransom to perform legendary comedy skits at Bar Association functions. During these hilarious skits, everyone in the audience would be in tears laughing. These skits were always highlights of the functions.



I had the pleasure of being invited to play golf Thursday afternoons at the Flint Golf Club with Reese, Judge Philip Elliott, and attorney Jack Neal. Judge Elliott and Jack Neal were also pillars of the legal community. Being younger than the other members of the foursome, I was honored to be offered an invitation to play in the Thursday afternoon rounds.

My rounds of golf with Reese, Phil, and Jack became the highlight of my summer work weeks. The rounds of golf we played Thursday afternoons were not so much about golf as the camaraderie, and inevitable laughter following every bad shot. Those nine-hole rounds provided too many stories for this article, but I must provide a few of them.

Reese claimed that Jack had the worse golf swing in the history of the game. After watching Jack's first golf swing for the first time, I agreed with Reese. While someone was putting, Reese would make a sign with one hand to put his "hex" on the putter. With me it usually worked; when I missed a putt Reese would walk off the green laughing and saying, "it worked!"

We would usually play different games for small monetary wagers— such as the last player to three putt a green during the round owed money to the other three players. These were games that Reese usually suggested to the foursome. For some reason, I always lost these games. At the end of every round, I would simply ask Reese how much I owed everyone.

One afternoon we were playing in front of Al Kaline (Tigers baseball great) and Al Serra, owner of the Serra automobile dealership corporation. Our foursome was standing on the seventh green lining up our putts. Apparently, Mr. Serra told Kaline it was safe to hit his second shot since there was no possible way he could hit his ball onto the green from the point where Kaline's drive was positioned. Following Mr. Serra's advice, Kaline hit his second shot with a fairway wood.

As expected for a baseball Hall of Famer, Kaline hit a perfect shot that landed on the seventh green and rolled by my feet.

Reese, seeing that it was Kaline who hit the shot told me to lie down on the green and act as though I was injured. After hitting his second shot and realizing it had reached the putting green, Kaline asked Mr. Serra if he knew the golfers on the green. Mr. Serra responded "Yes- three lawyers and a judge. In fact, the guy lying down appears to be a member of the law firm that represents my company." Kaline said – "Oh Boy! This will be trouble." Kaline and Mr. Serra walked up to the green apologizing profusely. When Kaline walked over to assist me, I stood up and we all began to laugh hysterically. My recollection is that Kaline, after a huge sigh of relief, did not appear to find our prank very amusing. Mr. Serra could not restrain his laughter.

After each Thursday afternoon round of golf we would have dinner which came with more laughter. It usually included Liar's poker games, which included another good friend, Jim Applegate, owner of the Applegate automobile dealership. Reese usually won the Liar's poker games; not because he was the best liar, but always had the most convincing demeanor during those games; as it was with his advocacy for his clients.

There is so much more I could say about my friend Reese, and stories about my experiences with this legal giant. However, Reese would remind me that "brevity is the soul of wit" – a wit he masterfully employed throughout his amazing time with us.

## *In Memoriam 2022-2023*

**Daniel Bremer**

**Howard Bueche**

**Robert M. Chimovitz**

**Judge John Conover**

**Edward G. Henneke**

**Michael A. Kowalko**

**Judge Charles B. Mosier**

**Hon. Steward Newblatt**

**Edward L. Parker**

**Randolph P. Piper**

**Harry S. Preston**

**James P. Ricker**

**Richard "Dick" Ruhala**

**Donald William Shaw**

**Robert L. Shegos**

**Alan Smith**

**Reese W. Stipes**

**Erik A. Warren**

**Roberta "Bobbi" J.F. Wray**





# Meet and Greet

On Tuesday, October 23, 2023, Genesee County Bar Association Bench & Bar Committee, Centennial American Inn of Court & Legal Services of Eastern Michigan hosted a Meet the Judges at Taboon in Grand Blanc. Judges, Referees, and Magistrates from Court of Appeals, Circuit, and District Court were all in attendance.





# 1st Generation Attorneys

Edited by LindaLee Massoud



LindaLee Massoud

Over the years, we have featured many special groups of attorneys, from multi-generational attorney families, to attorneys who have a business on the side, to attorneys who are very active in charitable and community activities. This new series will spotlight members who are the first in their families to become attorneys.

## Rhonda R. Stowers University of Michigan 2002

I saw a character on a TV show who was pretty, dressed nicely, and her job looked fun. “Oh, she’s a lawyer. I guess I’ll do that.” (Let this serve as a cautionary tale not to make life decisions in 8th grade!)

With no family background, I had some interesting court experiences. Once when I was passing through security at the courthouse, my umbrella, phone, and some other metals lined up perfectly in my briefcase to look very much like an assault weapon on the x-ray viewer. I (knee-jerk) said, “It’s not mine!” The officer, who was looking down at my bar card said, “Yes it is.” He looked up at the screen, tensed and said, “Yeah . . . I’m going to search your bag!” After he had searched it, we both had a good laugh.

**Goal:** I love justice. I love figuring out what happened, making things right, explaining how things work, and helping people worry less. I am blessed to enjoy all of these things in my profession. My mom was a nurse and it was inspiring to me how she would uplift people at a dark moment in their lives. I hope to do the same through my practice.



## Shayla Blankenship WSU TM Cooley Law School 2002

My West Virginia roots influenced the occupations in my family: preachers, coal miners, seamstresses, and house cleaners. Coming from that “traditional” background, and with only an uncle who had sought a higher education, my college professor’s suggestion of law school opened a new world for me. My family in WV is so proud to say they have a lawyer in the family. I’m proud to represent them. I was fortunate to meet Linda Pohly, Brian Barkey and Kathleen Buckley and they helped guide me and answer all my questions and to this day they serve as a mentors to me.

**Goal:** My service includes volunteering for boards and through various organizations, for the GCBA in many capacities. I serve on the Flushing Valley Swim Association board and also help with the Flushing High School music program with all their many bands and competitions.



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# November Bar Admission Ceremony

Congratulations to Laura J. Mebert, Austin S. Church, Jari A. Wilson, and Eric M. Warman on their admission to the State Bar of Michigan on Monday, November 13, 2023.

Thank you to Judge Dawn M. Weier, GCBA President Craig R. Fiederlein, GCBA Young Lawyers Representative Craig Datz, Judge B. Chris Christenson, Elias J. Fanous, Richard D. Hetherington, Thomas E. Howie, and Wayne Wilson for making this a memorable day!





## **BAR BEAT IS GOING DIGITAL!!!!!!!**

The GCBA Board of Directors and the *Bar Beat* committee are proud to announce that starting with the June 2024 issue, *Bar Beat* will be published electronically

The State Bar of Michigan (SBM) will work with the GCBA to create a 'flipbook' publication that will be very similar in appearance and style to the current *Bar Beat*. The SBM will also provide a link for the GCBA to put on its website and send to members. The Link will send the reader directly to the 'flipbook.' *Bar Beat* will continue to be published quarterly--March, June, September and December.

All advertising contracts and commitments will remain the same. An added benefit to advertisers will be that all ads, not only the ads on the front and back covers, will be in color. Another added benefit will be that ads could contain hyperlinks--leading the reader directly to the advertiser's website or email address.

As the cost of printing and postage continues to rise, a move to a digital format will help the GCBA remain fiscally sound. And instead of spending time putting labels on magazines and trekking to the post office, Tina and staff will have more time to make the GCBA an organization that works for its members.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at [barbeat@gcbalaw.org](mailto:barbeat@gcbalaw.org).

## **WANTED: WRITERS AND EDITORS FOR BAR BEAT**

*Bar Beat* is looking for contributing writers for our quarterly publication. If you like to write and have something to say--get in touch! We can help you choose a topic as well as assist you in the writing process.

We are also looking for volunteers to help with the editing and proofreading of articles. If you have a flair for style and grammar and have a sharp eye--we want to hear from you.

The *Bar Beat* Committee

Shelley  
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Cory  
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