

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR JANUARY 2010

"When good people in any country cease their vigilance and struggle, then evil men prevail."

Pearl S. Buck.

Recent events in the air over Detroit and the fallout from that failed terror attack has served to remind us that vigilance against the acts of those who would harm us cannot be taken for granted. This type of vigilance is not limited to international terrorists.

Late last year we saw the media explode with stories of deceit, theft, corruption, and scandal involving the legal practice of Broward attorney Scott Rothstein. The actions of Rothstein with all their salacious details so eagerly reported by the news media and consumed by the public has most certainly tarnished further the image of lawyers. We all know the jokes about lawyers and the harm those jokes cause. Here, with all the harm caused to clients and to charities who received donations from Rothstein and his firm, the reality may be worse. With more reporting to follow, I am regretfully resigned to the fact that additional details will emerge further casting lawyers as a group in a bad light. The age old saying "One bad apple spoils the whole bunch" seems again to be ringing true in the saga of Scott Rothstein and his now defunct firm. This reality begs the question...what can we do as a profession to root out the rotten apples?

What went wrong with Rothstein? How could his activities not be found out by the members of his own firm? Their accountants? Where was the professionalism and honor in being a lawyer lost on those involved?

The Preamble to the DCBA Code of Professionalism and Civility states:

"Honor and integrity are the essence and an indispensable part of our profession. It is not enough to speak of honor or profess integrity. In the end, a personal commitment to honor and integrity must be established. Professionalism may no longer be relegated to a secondary topic and/or study that is then summarily filed away. We must acknowledge the responsibilities we have to society and each other each day."

Perhaps if Rothstein would have had this Preamble hanging on the wall in his office as opposed to all those photos with the glamorous, rich, and powerful, he wouldn't be disgraced, disbarred, and facing imprisonment.

On Friday, March 19, the DCBA is holding its Second Annual Professionalism, Ethics and Diversity Seminar. While we don't claim to know all the answers to all the questions on issues of professionalism, ethics and diversity, we do plan to hold forth a discussion of these issues that we hope will prove beneficial to those participating. We

stand ready to deliver the tools that are needed to remain vigilant when it comes to these important topics. I hope to see you there.

As a final note, we invite you to join us at our February luncheon on the 17th to welcome 11th Circuit Clerk of Courts Harvey Ruvlin as our featured speaker. Mr. Ruvlin has a long history of public service dating to his days in municipal government and his tenure as Dade County Commissioner. The Dade County Clerk (now the Miami-Dade County Clerk) manages the legal filing and many related and other legal needs of the largest and most diverse county population in the state. It is an arduous task. You may be surprised to hear how much of your daily life comes under the purview of the Clerk's Office. Mr. Ruvlin will speak on current topics and the many challenges we face now and looking forward. We will have time for questions and answers. When did you last have face time with the Clerk? You don't want to miss this one.

Until next month...be vigilant!!