

## The KBA Convention, Civility, and Our Veterans

By Matthew D. Keenan, Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP, Kansas City, Mo., [mkeenan@shb.com](mailto:mkeenan@shb.com)

This month's column speaks to three topics near and dear to me.

**1. The KBA Convention.** This year's convention is June 13-15 in Overland Park at the Sheraton on College Blvd. Like last year, this is a joint convention with the state's judges, so it should be an informative and well-attended event. If your clients, like most, want to hire counsel who has some familiarity with the judge hearing their matter, attending this year's convention is a no-brainer. As an added bonus, you can see the Kansas City Royals play Wednesday, June 13 or Thursday, June 14 against the Milwaukee Brewers. The Royals are about to have their best season in years.

**2. Civility and Professionalism.** This year I'm revisiting a topic that's important to all of us – the state of civility in the Kansas bar. I'm organizing a CLE on Friday afternoon – June 15 – from 1:30-2:20 p.m. in the Cottonwood Ballroom at the Sheraton. I'm using a format I employed two years ago at the bar convention in Wichita, with modest tweaking. The panel will be made up of a cross section of Kansas attorneys, all of whom served our country in either the JAG Corps or in the armed services.

**3. World War II Veterans.** Since my recent series on veterans, I continue to be amazed by the dedication these men showed at such a young age. Something I read in the national press a couple of weeks brought this back to mind. Recently, the media reported a story with this headline: "Army blunders as British boy, 17, fights in Afghanistan." The story described how a teenage British soldier "slipped through tight army controls to fight on the front line in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Defence says. Adam Wilkie, who was just 17 years old when he was deployed to Helmand Province, lied about his age to sneak past checks. Combat troops are supposed to be 18, but the army admitted 'human error' led to the blunder in 2010."

Yet many who enlisted in WWII were not even 18. John Bausch, of Topeka, for instance, enlisted when he was 15 to join his father when his dad's outfit was called into service. "We were only supposed to be in service for one year and I planned to go back and finish high school," says John. However, the one year stretched to five, and John and his father first served in the United States and then went through five

campaigns in the European Theater during World War II. One of those campaigns included the Battle of the Bulge. There are other media reports of other veterans enlisting at 15 and 16 years old and serving.

Many other Kansas attorneys enlisted at 18. Emerson Shields is one. Arnold Nye is another. And also Aubry Bradley, Bob Bates (who passed away January 6), just to name a few.

And then you have the case of Charles Svoboda, who graduated from Lawrence High School at age 17. "With WWII in full swing, and I knew that I was going to be drafted. I had always wanted to fly and the Navy Air Corps was seeking applicants in Kansas City. A month before my high school graduation, I came to Kansas City to apply, and I spent five days taking tests, mental, psychological, physical, and intelligence. I succeeded in passing and was sworn in as an aviation cadet the following week." Svoboda's family was already one step

“If your clients, like most, want to hire counsel who has some familiarity with the judge hearing their matter, attending this year's convention is a no brainer. ...”

ahead of him.

"My dad had been in World War I, as an officer, and held a reserve commission. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, he had orders to report to the Navy Marine base. He went on to fight in the Pacific. In addition, I had twin brothers both drafted in the Army, and they were fighting in Europe and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. So I got consent from my parents at age 17. I remember phoning my father who was in Seattle, Washington, with the Marines and he didn't hesitate. I was sworn in a month before I graduated." Can you imagine how Chuck's mother felt – two twin sons, her baby boy, and her husband all engaged in world war?

Svoboda is one of the veterans joining me for my CLE panel. Come meet him and the rest of your bar professionals in Overland Park in June. See you there. ■

### About the Author



*Matthew Keenan has practiced with Shook, Hardy & Bacon since 1985. He may be reached at [mkeenan@shb.com](mailto:mkeenan@shb.com).*