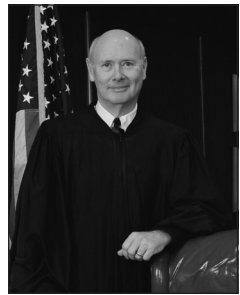


A Nostalgic Touch

The State of Civility and Professionalism in the Bar: Come Get Your Ethics Credit

By Matthew Keenan, Shook, Hardy & Bacon, Kansas City, Mo.

Fellow bar members – mark your calendars – Thursday morning, June 10, as part of the 2010 Kansas Bar Association Annual Meeting, I am organizing a continuing legal education session. But this will not be a typical CLE – I’m not subjecting the attendees to death by PowerPoint or slogging through an outline that would cure insomnia. Instead, I have assembled a panel of state and federal judges, and private practitioners to discuss a topic that is near and dear to us: The state of professionalism and civility in the Kansas Bar. It will be wide open “give and take” on how our fellow bar members treat each other, and whether recent trends showing a decline of civility is something happening in the Wheat State.



Hon. John Lungstrum

The panelists include Judge John Lungstrum, who has a perspective not just peering down from the bench, but from 20 years trying lawsuits in the Kansas courts. I wanted a state court judge as well, someone from the other side of the state, so I asked Judge Kim Schroeder, of Hugoton. Sometimes civility gets tested in discovery disputes, so I invited a magistrate who’s seen almost everything. Judge Karen Humphreys is on the panel.

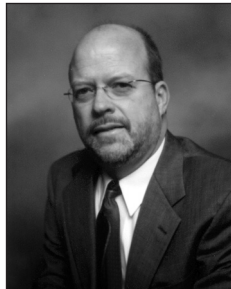
Next we needed an attorney who is a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers – someone who has tried a lot of difficult cases yet has a solid reputation for professionalism and civility – that lead me



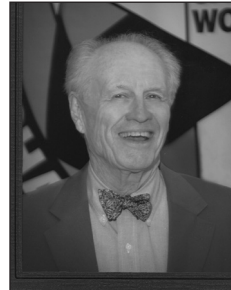
Hon. Karen Humphreys

to C. Stanley Nelson in Salina. A true treasure in our profession, he took his oath to practice in 1951 – when trial by ambush was not a cliché – it was daily practice. State and federal discovery rules were adopted over 10 years later.

A plaintiff’s lawyer was key also – these days of television and Internet advertising suggests to the public that the best plaintiff’s attorney is a difficult one – an aggressive one – someone who



Hon. Kim Schroeder



C. Stanley Nelson

considers a pit bull as a favorable role model. Yet, it’s my experience that the most successful plaintiff’s attorneys are not from that school. They treat adversaries, witnesses, and court personnel with respect, and receive that in return. So I thought Mark Hutton would be a great addition.

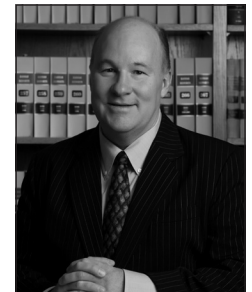
And finally, this panel needed an attorney who represents the newest generation of advocates – and so Paula Langworthy, of Triplett, Woolf & Garretson, will be there also.

But the most important panel member? You. I need your input, perspective, contributions. For the better part of the hour, I’m going to be channeling Phil Donahue, walking around the audience, getting your views, war stories, contributions.



Paula Langworthy

And by 11:05 a.m. on that Thursday, you’ll have your one hour ethics credit and maybe gained something else in the process. Learned a little, laughed a little, and gained a new perspective about this profession we are all a part of. It’s my hope that, for those 50 minutes, you will not have checked your BlackBerry once. Come join us! ■




Mark Hutton

About the Author

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“Eggs & Issues”

KBA Membership Forum Breakfast

Thursday, June 10 • 7:30 – 8:45 a.m.

