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2008–2009

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Save The Date!

**WLA Annual
Installation
Banquet and
Past Presidents
Reception**

*Wednesday,
September 2, 2009
5:30 p.m.*

The Roberts Historic
Mayfair Hotel
806 St. Charles Street
St. Louis, MO

President's Column by Tricia Susi



Stand By Me

I wish I could say that this year has just flown by, but I cannot. I am sad that it is over, but also somewhat relieved and glad that I can step aside, knowing that this organization will be in more than capable hands. This year in particular I personally have had many ups and downs. The women of this organization have been there for me both professionally and personally. In my first newsletter, I explained why I believed WLA to be relevant to me. Over the past year, the WLA board and other members have reminded me over and over again why I chose to become involved in this organization.

Last year, Genevieve Nichols titled her final column as President, "With a Little Help from My Friends." This year, I have to title my last column, "Stand by Me." Because without the support of this dynamic Board, the committees, and our members, I do not know that I could have made it through. The death of my father-in-law (an avid supporter of WLA), the hospitalization of my mother-in-law for a month after her husband's death, the demands of work and motherhood, and my commitment to this organization have been real challenges for me to say the least.

A few weeks ago, when I was feeling pretty low, Comm. Kris Kerr reminded me that things could be worse. When I asked her how, she responded with a quote from Young Frankenstein and said, "It could be raining." At that moment, I waited for the crack of thunder, a flash of lightning, and the downpour of rain. Needless to say, it did not happen, but I laughed and my spirits were lifted. To our Board and our Members, all I can say is thank you, ladies, from the bottom of my heart for standing by me, picking up the slack, and for another fantastic year!!!

And you ask, "What did WLA accomplish this year?" Let's start off with our Installation Banquet and President's Award in October. WLA put together a Tribute Book honoring past presidents of WLA and had the most successful turnout at the reception and dinner of any year since I have been on the board. That same week, our WLA Golf Tournament was played at Sunset Lakes, bringing it back to the original location, with golf, prizes, a BBQ lunch, and a happy hour, complete with a band. It was fantastic! Then in December, WLA brought you Home for the Holidays with a party and charity auction at the Rose of the Hill that was exciting and most enjoyable. WLA co-hosted with Mound City Bar the Second Annual Trivia Night, which was more fun than you could shake a stick at. Our other annual events, such as the Legislative Luncheon, held for the first time ever at the Missouri Athletic Club, and the Scholarship Reception and Judicial Awards Ceremony, were also raging successes. In addition, WLA hosted several happy hours, including the Domestic Violence Awareness Kick-Off Event, and a night at the Magic House for parents and their kiddos.

Our final event of the 2008-2009 year, the Annual Meeting and President's Picnic, will take place in the South Shelter at Shaw Park on Thursday, August 6, 2009 from 5 – 9 p.m. Please feel free to bring your children and, of course, your party hats!!! And even if it rains, we will still have each other to stand by.

BRAGGIN' RIGHTS

Our mothers were wrong. WLA encourages everyone to submit your own or your colleagues' accomplishments so we can recognize you here and inspire others to keep plugging away.

WLA could not be more proud of long-standing member Doreen Dodson for her recognition as the 2009 Distinguished Lawyer by BAMSL. The BAMSL luncheon was also a day worth remembering for Colleen McNitt Ruiz of Lathrop & Gage, Annette Slack of Rabbitt, Pitzer & Snodgrass, and Susan Ward, of the Law Offices of Susan Ward, who all received the BAMSL President's Award.

We've known for a long time that everything's better with a women in charge but we're glad others are finally catching on! So "Congrats" also to Lynn Travis, who was named bankruptcy coordinator for LSEM's new Foreclosure Defense Project; to Jennifer A. Schwesig, named Leader of Armstrong Teasdale's International Practice Group; and to Christina Lewis, named Vice-Chair of the ABA Young Lawyer's Division Committee on Ethics and Professionalism. Two, and sometimes three, heads can be better than one, so we're rooting for Joanna Owens & Maryanne Newman who have just joined forces with Owen & Newmann, LLC.

Finally, congratulations to our own 2009-2010 President Nicole Colbert-Botchway, whose nomination to the Gender and Justice Joint Committee of the Missouri Bar and the Missouri Supreme Court was recently approved by both groups. Well done!

It's always great to see women lawyers and WLA members doing great things and it is our pleasure to show off their accomplishments. For those whose announcements we've missed, congratulations and please email us at wla@wlastl.org so we can be sure to give you your due.



Doreen Dodson



Colleen McNitt Ruiz



Annette Slack



Susan Ward



Jennifer A. Schwesig



Joanna Owens and Maryann Newman



Christina Lewis



Nicole Colbert-Botchway

PREPARING FOR PRESIDENCY AND REFLECTING ON MY ROLE MODEL – ATTORNEY MARGARET BUSH WILSON

- by Nicole Colbert-Botchway with support from Sheena Hamilton

As I mentally prepare for being installed at the first African American President of the Women Lawyer's Association on September 2, 2009, at the Historic Robert's Mayfair Hotel, I think about those on whose shoulders I stand and those to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. There are many African-American female attorneys who have made significant contributions to the legal community. I admire and am grateful to all of those women. There are a few who I have heard about all my life and whom I consider "SHEROS." The first African-American woman admitted to the Missouri Bar was Dorothy L. Freeman; although I never met her, Margaret Bush Wilson reflected on her legacy when she served as the keynote speaker for WLA's First Annual Brown Bag Lunch in Honor of Black History Month. (See WLA spring 2007 newsletter <http://wlastl.org/documents/spring2007newsletter.pdf>)

It was the first time WLA had officially recognized Black History, and Margaret Bush Wilson were honored at this event. Margaret Bush Wilson is my personal inspiration, role model and sister. We are connected in many ways and being Natives of North St. Louis, I believe I have walked in her footsteps literally and figuratively. She is a trail blazing woman and lady of distinction. I could only hope that I can make a difference in the lives of others as she has made a difference in mine.

At the Luncheon I told her I would be the President of WLA one day and she encouraged me to move forward toward my destiny. She spoke very candidly about the obstacles African-American women in particular face in the legal community and was pleased WLA was attempting to embrace diversity in a significant way. For example, under the leadership of Lynn Ricci as President, we established the Diversity Committee. In addition, we have created a bridge with the Mound City Bar Association and now sponsor a joint event annually in honor of Black History Month.



The speech Ms. Wilson gave at that luncheon was incredibly inspiring. Here is "HERSTORY."

Margaret Bush Wilson was born on January 30, 1919 in St. Louis, Missouri, to James Thomas Bush and Margaret Bernice Casey Bush. She graduated from Sumner High School in 1935. Thereafter she attended Talladega College, receiving her B.S. degree in economics. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. During her senior year in college, she was selected as a Juliette Derricotte Fellow, which awarded a travel study fellowship with a trip around the world and several months study at Visva Bharati College in India, founded by Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Ms. Wilson attended law school at Lincoln University Law School (now merged with the University of Missouri School of Law). In *Gaines v. Canada*, 305 U.S. 337 (1938), the United States Supreme Court ordered that Lloyd Gaines be admitted to the University of Missouri for law school or that separate but equal education be provided for African-American students. This decision prompted the founding of Lincoln University School of Law. After her graduation, Ms. Wilson was the second African-American woman admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1943. The first was Dorothy Freeman in November of 1942.

Aside from serving as a U.S. Attorney and the Assistant Attorney-General of Missouri, Ms. Wilson has worked for the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Electrification Administration and the Real Estate Brokers Association. Ms. Wilson spoke humbly of her time with the Real Estate Brokers Association, when she assisted in obtaining a ruling in the case of *Shelley v. Kramer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), which invalidated racially-restrictive covenants on property. In the Shelley case, the J.D. Shelley family had moved to North St. Louis from Starkville, Mississippi, in 1930, fleeing from racially-motivated violence. After renting for a time, in 1945 the Shelleys sought to buy the house at 4600 Labadie in the Fairgrounds Park neighborhood. The house was sub-

(continued on page 7)

Opening on the 21st Circuit Judicial Commission for St. Louis County

- By *Genevieve Nichols*

Now's your chance to support Missouri's Non-Partisan plan, enhance the quality and diversity of the judiciary and ensure a level playing field for all lawyers and litigants by running for the up-coming opening on the St. Louis County's Judicial Commission.

For those who don't know, the 21st Circuit Judicial Commission is part of the Missouri Non-Partisan Court Plan which is an important tool in protecting the independence of our judiciary. The Commission's members are: the Chief Judge of the Eastern District Court of Appeals, two lay members appointed by the Governor, and two lawyers elected by lawyer-residents of the 21st Judicial Circuit. The Commission is responsible for interviewing candidates for judicial openings and sending a panel of three candidates to the Governor. In the ordinary course, the Governor then fills the opening from the panel of three chosen by the Commission. The Commission's Mission is to "To select the best qualified applicants for appointment to judgeships in a non-partisan, merit selection process."

A spot on the commission is a pretty important position and WLA wants its members to have all the information they need to consider running. For all of you out there who might consider running here's a quick checklist to help get you started:

- *Make sure you qualify – the only qualifications to be a lawyer-member of the commission are to be a member of the Bar in good standing and a resident of St. Louis County.
- *Check your schedule - nominating petitions are due **October 8, 2009**, 30 days before the election; the election will be held on November 7, 2009, for a term beginning January 1, 2010.
- *Get your friends & family involved – your nominating petition must be signed by at least **20** members of the Bar in good standing residing in St. Louis County.
- *Consider who else is running – to date, Rick Wuestling (Wuestling & James), Matt Rossiter (Rossiter & Boock), and Amy Hoch Hogenson (Paule Camazine & Blumenthal) have thrown their hats in the ring.
- *Consider the time involved – as a commission member you would be required to attend meetings and interview candidates. The Governor's Office estimates that the time commitment could range up to 25 hours per vacancy and you could expect up to 6 vacancies per year. If elected, you will serve a 6 year term.
- *Consider the money involved – you should expect to send out at least one mailing to the potential voters but donations can be accepted to help defray the cost.
- *Lawyers are lawyers, after all, so be sure to read Missouri Supreme Court Rule 10 which governs the commissions and elections.

Not so bad, right? It's a great service to the St. Louis legal community and a wonderful way to get involved. Also, remember that back in 2005, WLA helped sweep the Commission elections and three women (and WLA members) were appointed to St. Louis area Commissions – Nancy Mogab was elected to the Eastern District Appellate Commission; Mary Anne Sedey was elected to the St. Louis City Commission; and Debbie Champion was elected to the St. Louis County Commission. If you still aren't sure, you might call one of these ladies to find out more about their experiences. For other questions about the process, contact Paul Fox, St. Louis County Director of Judicial Administration at 314-615-2666. Good luck ladies and be sure to let WLA know what you're up to!



Upcoming 2009 WLA Events

- Wed., September 2, 2009:** **Annual Installation Banquet and Past Presidents Reception**
 5:30 p.m., The Roberts Historic Mayfair Hotel
 RSVP to kporter@midwestlitigation.com
- September 20-25, 2009:** **Missouri Bar Annual Meeting**
- September 25, 2009:** **Annual Networking Breakfast**
 Sponsored by Midwest Litigation Services and hosted by the Women Lawyers' Association of Greater St. Louis, Association for Women Lawyers of Greater Kansas City, and Women Lawyers' Association of Mid-Missouri
 7:00 – 9:00 a.m., Midwest Litigation Services
 (Trolley service provided from Hilton Ballpark)
 RSVP to dweaver@midwestlitigation.com
- September 25, 2009:** **Women Lawyers' Association Annual Golf Tournament**
 1:00 p.m.— Registration
 2:00 p.m.—Shotgun Tee Off
 5:00 p.m.— Drinks, Appetizers, Awards & Prizes
 Norman K. Probstain Golf Course in historic Forest Park
 Co-chaired by the Honorable Nanette Baker and Maribeth McMahon. Registration information will be enclosed with conference packet or contact our Executive Director Debbie Weaver at dweaver@midwestlitigation.com.
- October 9, 2009:** **Red Carpet Fashion Show —raising money for Domestic Violence Awareness**
 6:00—10:00 p.m., St. Louis City Hall's Grand Rotunda
 See www.wlastl.org for more information
- December 10, 2009:** **WLA Holiday Party and Charity Auction**
Save the Date!

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship and wants help, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE, or visit <http://www.mocadv.org/members/> to find a domestic violence program in your area.

- In 2007, law enforcement agencies in Missouri reported 37, 215 incidents of domestic violence.
- 35 domestic violence homicides were reported in Missouri in 2007.
- In 2007, 25.7% of the victims of domestic violence related homicides were the wives or girlfriends of the perpetrator.
- 6,155 incidents of domestic violence involving blood relatives were reported in 2007.

(Taken from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's website, <http://www.ncadv.org>, Missouri State Facts Sheet.)

Margaret Bush Wilson, con'd

ject to a 1911 covenant that prohibited the sale of the house to anyone of the "Negro or Mongolian race" for a fifty year period. At the time they purchased the home, the Shelleys were unaware of the covenant. The Shelleys were sued by the Louis D. Kraemer family, owners of other property on the street, to restrain the Shelleys from taking title to the property. While the trial court ruled in favor of the Shelleys, the decision was reversed by the Missouri Supreme Court in 1946. The Shelleys appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1947. The U.S. Office of the Solicitor General, for the first time in a civil rights case, filed an *amicus curiae* brief in support of the Shelleys. The May 3, 1948, decision invalidated all racially-restrictive covenants on the grounds that they violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Supreme Court consolidated the case with a Detroit, Michigan, case about racially-restrictive covenants, McGhee v. Sipes, for oral argument. One of the attorneys who argued the case for the McGhee's was Thurgood Marshall. The Shelley house at issue in the case was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1990. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shelley_v._Kraemer)



Because of Margaret Bush Wilson's efforts in that case and others, my father, Ronald Colbert Sr., was able to purchase our home in North St. Louis in January of 1967 and give his family a better life. For this I owe her a debt of gratitude.

Additionally, she began her own firm here in St. Louis, Wilson and Wilson, with her husband, Robert E. Wilson. Currently Ms. Wilson is a senior partner at Wilson & Associates in St. Louis. Ms. Wilson is also a leader in the community. She has served on several boards of directors, including Augustine's College, Talladega and Mutual Insurance Company of New York, and various non-profit and for-profit boards. She also works with the CLEO Institute.

Further, Ms. Wilson has worked as a legal services specialist, with War on Poverty and with community services and continuing education programs. She followed in the footsteps of her parents and became active in the NAACP. She has been a leader in that organization, president of the St. Louis chapter in 1958, of Missouri in 1962, and national chair from 1975-1984. Recently she received a lifetime achievement award from the NAACP. She has also served as trustee-emerita of Washington University in St. Louis and Webster University.

As I prepare to serve as President of WLA, I look back, in the spirit Sankofa, at the path Ms. Wilson and others have laid for me, and walk in their footsteps.

Editor's Note: Margaret Bush Wilson passed away on August 11, 2009, after this article was written and submitted.

Congratulations to WLA's new Board of Directors for 2009-2010!

President Nicole Colbert-Botchway
President-Elect Jessica Liss
Vice-President Jamie Boyer
Secretary Kristine Bridges
Treasurer Melanie Knies
 (2nd year of 2-year term)

Members-At-Large:
 Kathleen DuBois
 Amy Gunn
 Bridget Hoy
 Jessica Kennedy
 Christalyn McCloud
 Maribeth McMahan

Women Lawyers' Association of Greater St. Louis

P.O. Box 1428
St. Louis, MO 63188
Email: wlastl@wlastl.org



WLA Mission Statement. Our mission is to:

- Promote and assist women in obtaining positions of influence and leadership within their workplace, the legal profession, the judiciary, and the community.
- Raise awareness of and combat biases against women within the community at large, the legal profession, and under the law.
- Advocate for diversity, equality, and justice under the law and within the legal system.
- Support women lawyers in their personal and professional lives.
- Provide opportunities for volunteerism and advocacy on issues affecting women.
- Collaborate with other individuals and organizations to improve the status of women.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!



RED CARPET
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS
FASHION SHOW FUNDRAISER

Friday, October 9, 2009

**St. Louis City Hall's
Grand Rotunda
6:00 p.m.—10:00 p.m.**

***Raising Domestic
Violence Awareness***

See www.wlastl.org for
more information.

Sponsorship opportunities
still available!

Please contact: Nicole Colbert-Botchway nicole-colbert@sbcglobal.net
or
Deborah C. Weaver dweaver@midwestlitigation.com