

Western Association of Legal Assistants

Winter 1989/1990 Edition

NOVEMBER '89 MEMBERS' MEETING

Without a doubt, our last members' meeting was a great success. Our guest speaker, Stephen Nash, presented a proposal whereby his lawyer placement agency would establish a division that would place legal assistants as well as lawyers. Mr. Nash is impressed with the qualifications of WALA's members and, because of this, he proposes that only members of WALA will be able to apply for the positions that become available to his agency. As well, only WALA members will receive the regular mailing of job openings. We anticipate that this new relationship will result in a larger membership which will give us more weight in the legal community when promoting "legal assistants"

Many members were also impressed with being associated with an agency that does not place secretaries (or other paralegal anomalies) and with someone who knows the duties a legal assistant is capable of performing. Mr. Nash is a lawyer having an extensive background in the practice of law. Most of us have had the unpleasant experience of being interviewed and placed by a "secretarial" agency -- it is a welcome change.

A date ~~as to~~ when this service will be implemented cannot be given at this time, although it ~~can~~ probably ~~be~~ safe to say that it should happen by this Fall. ^{1/5}

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have on this proposal which we could also have an informal discussion on at our next members' meeting. Feel free to call Terry Wilson at 631-3179 with your comments.



OWEN BIRD CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year's party was held in the Gazebo Room at the PanPacific. There was a four-course sit down dinner followed by an anonymous gift exchange. Mrs. Clause even put in an appearance. Entertainment was provided by the articulated students and there was dancing 'til dawn.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This is the first of what we hope will become a regular column in our newsletter. Each issue will feature a fellow member, eventually helping us all get to know each other a little bit better.

This issue's "Spotlight" concentrates on Fran Brett.

Many of our members may already know Fran as she has been actively involved in the Association since joining in 1983. Fran resigned last year as a Director of WALA, but ~~still~~ continues to be involved in the Education Committee.

Fran has worked at Bull, Housser as the Director of Corporate Services for the past nine years. Prior to that, she lived in Ontario where she worked as a Law Clerk in small law firms mainly in Corporate law, but also touching on Small Claims court work and real estate. In addition, she was ~~also~~ a Director of the Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario from 1978 - 1980.

After being a legal secretary for a few years, she became a Law Clerk in the mid-seventies, by completing a two year evening course sponsored by the Institute of Law Clerks.

Fran's efforts and time spent for the Association are very much appreciated and we wish her well in her future endeavours.

we



OUR MEETING WITH CAPILANO COLLEGE

On October 31, 1989, Terry Wilson and Sylvia Kern (President and Vice-President) attended Capilano College to meet with the first year students. The primary purpose was to promote the Association, recruit new members and to field questions on areas of concern. We are pleased to report that since this meeting 20 students have become new members. Not surprisingly, areas of concern included use of the title Legal Assistant, "uneducated" legal assistants, ability to obtain practicums, quality of work and salary (to name only a few). It was emphasized that the intent of the Association was (and is) to promote the abilities of its members. Through this incredibly large ~~step~~ ^{understanding} will hopefully flow recognition of an educational requirement, resulting in title recognition, quality work and a "professional" salary level. Our new student members obviously concur with this strategy and the directors take this opportunity to welcome all our new members -- their names are published elsewhere in this newsletter.

FERGUSON GIFFORD XMAS PARTY

The annual Christmas party at Ferguson Gifford again proved to be a big success for both lawyers and support staff. The evening began with a wine and cheese at our offices and we then adjourned to Le Meridien Hotel for more festivities. We were treated to a gourmet buffet, entertained by our students' skits and danced into the wee hours of the morning.

B.C. TEL LEGAL DEPARTMENT XMAS PARTY

We had a luncheon on December 15th, at Tommy O's on Commercial. Superb Italian food! There were only about twenty of us, some lucky people were already off on their Christmas vacation. We have it on good authority that grand plans are already in the works for Christmas 1990.

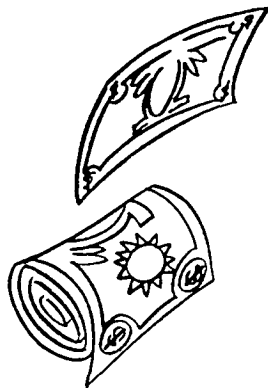
A PRIMARY INTEREST OF OUR MEMBERS IS SALARY SO DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND, WE DECIDED TO CONDUCT OUR SECOND INFORMAL, ANONYMOUS SURVEY. SURPRISINGLY THE RESULTS OF OUR FIRST SURVEY WERE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC -- ONLY 12 MEMBERS RESPONDED. WE HOPE THAT MOST, IF NOT ALL, LEGAL ASSISTANT AND PRACTICUM MEMBERS RESPOND THIS TIME.

SALARY SURVEY

Return To: P.O. Box 4127, Main Post Office,
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3Z6

1. Number of lawyers in your firm: 150
2. Your area of specialty: litigation
3. Date (approx.) practicum commenced: _____
Alternatively, date started as legal assistant: June 1977
4. Practicum salary or initial starting salary: _____
5. Subsequent increments and dates:

6. Present salary: _____
7. Benefits: _____



FIRM SPOTLIGHT

Another new regular feature we would like to place in the newsletter is a profile on a lawfirm from a legal assistant's point of view.

This issue spotlights Alexander Holburn Beaudin & Lang ^{which occupies} ~~It is~~ a lawfirm consisting of 42 lawyers ~~and takes up~~ two floors in the TD Bank Tower. The firm moved a couple of years ago from the 18th Floor to the 27th and 28th floor of the "Tower" into very impressive offices. The offices are the filming location of the CBC weekly TV show, Legal Wise.

The firm ~~has~~ traditionally ~~been~~ a litigation firm, concentrating mainly on different types of insurance litigation, ~~it~~ ^{is} however rapidly expanding into ~~more~~ ^{other} areas of law.

The firm has five legal assistants, three in litigation, one in conveyancing and one in commercial debentures. All legal assistants have inside offices.

The conveyancing legal assistant is the supervisor of a conveyancing department which consists of one assistant and, during busy periods, two.

The commercial debentures legal assistant is very self-contained. She is extremely independent from the rest of the firm and has a very extensive computer system to assist her.

The litigation legal assistants work in three different areas, ICBC insurance, general insurance litigation and commercial litigation. All litigation legal assistants have secretaries. The ICBC legal assistant supervises the running of all the ICBC files in the office and works with approximately six lawyers in the firm. The general insurance litigation legal assistant works with the insurance litigators and is presently working on a few very large files. The commercial litigation legal assistant works in a department consisting of two commercial litigators and the work consists of construction, securities, debt and corporate litigation. A great many of the files are received from solicitors in the department whose clients have a litigation problem.

Legal Assistants have varying hourly rates and the litigation legal assistants have a yearly budget similar to junior associates. It is an open minded firm and a pleasant place to work.

EPSTEIN WONG & LOGIE XMAS PARTY



The Christmas Party for Epstein Wong & Logie was held on December 15, 1989, at Fiascos Nightclub commencing at noon. The entire firm of approximately thirty members attended. Lunch consisted of salad, salmon, chicken, ribs and desert, and an unlimited supply of cocktails. Needless to say, when it ended at 5:00 p.m., a good time had been had by all.

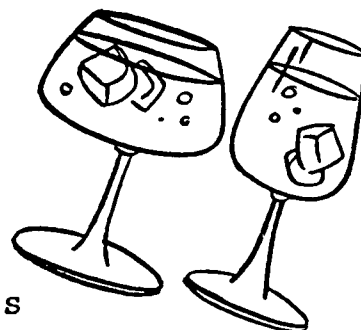
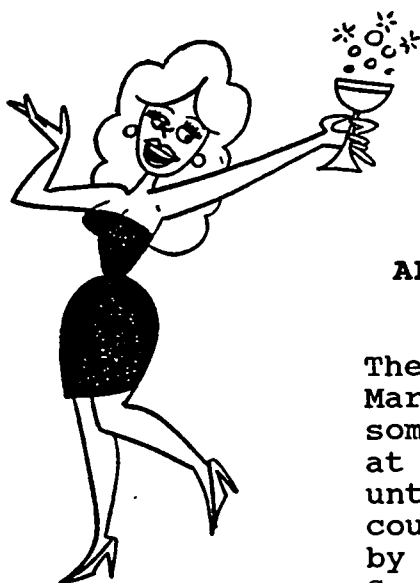


RUSSELL & DUMOULIN XMAS PARTY

HARPER GREY EASTON XMAS PARTY

There are very few places that could hold our newly merged 400+ firm. Our 1989 Xmas party was held at the Commodore Ballroom on December 15th. Everyone (and more) attended. Drinks preceded dinner following which came the student skits fortunately displaying many more talents than their knowledge of the law. After dinner the firm band "The Lex Pistols" played most of the evening with everyone's encouragement. Needless to say far too many cocktails and liquors were consumed by everyone. Those needing assistance took cabs home at the firm's expense. It can safely be said that the evening was a huge success -- one tough to top in 1990.

The Harper Grey Easton Christmas Bash was a great success this year. It was held at the Capilano Golf and Country Club in West Vancouver. Cocktails began at 6:30 p.m. and dinner was at 7:30 p.m. The main course was a choice of Beef Wellington or Salmon. The articling students performed a skit on the nativity scene. Later, dancing took place and the drinks really began to flow..... The party ended at 1:30 a.m. and then everyone trooped off to the after party where there was a jacuzzi tub and the drinks still continued to flow.... and flow.... and flow....



**ALEXANDER HOLBURN BEAUDIN & LANG'S
CHRISTMAS PARTY**

The Alexander Holburn "Annual Marathon" or Christmas Party as it is sometimes called began at 11:30 a.m. at Le Meridien. Cocktails were served until 1:00 p.m. at which time a three course lunch was served. After skits by the students and support staff, Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived to hand out presents and abuse. This portion of the party ended around 5:00 p.m.. Taxis arrived to transport everyone to part two of the party, the top floor of the Unicorn Pub. Dinner consisted of nachos, chicken fingers, zucchini sticks, etc. but by that time nobody cared! Music was supplied by the pub's local band and the annual Xmas bash finally came to an end about 1:30 a.m.



EDITORIAL

The November 1989 issue of Canadian Lawyer featured the question "The Paralegal: Villain or Hero?". This feature follows the Canadian Bar Association's 1989 Annual General Meeting held in Vancouver. At the meeting the C.B.A. passed a resolution calling for amendments to provincial legislation to ensure that only lawyers, and those under the supervision of lawyers, deliver legal services to the public.

While the C.B.A. expresses the need to restrict the practice of unsupervised paralegals, the Benchers of the Law Society (B.C. Branch) encourage the training and employment of legal assistants. Viewed together, these two policies beg the question: what is a paralegal and what is a legal assistant?

Marsha Kideckel, a freelance writer, authors the "villain" part of the Canadian Lawyer feature, she writes:

...all sides agree that if the questions of standards, training and regulation can be decided, the issue of how far paralegals can go will be easier to handle. But the issue has no middle ground and will probably never be settled to everyone's liking.

But a middle ground can be achieved if there were a strict standard as to who could call themselves a legal assistant, or a paralegal for that matter. The issue should be resolved on the basis of qualification and competence rather than simply on the basis of arbitrary whim. Just as in any recognized professional there is a standard of competence one has to achieve in order to legitimately call themselves a member of that profession, so too should it be for legal assistants.

Also, it must be clear that legal assistants by definition assist lawyers while under the supervision of lawyers, they do not replace lawyers. In this vein B.C.'s legislation is already in line with the C.B.A.'s recommendation.

Hopefully, the C.B.A.'s resolution is the first step in carving out a definition for the legal assistant profession.

(Back issues of Canadian Lawyer are available at the Courthouse library.)



Education Committee:

Letters were sent out to a number of U.S. and Canadian schools to obtain information regarding their Legal Assistant programs. One response, from the Blackstone School of Law in Texas, has been received to date.

Inquiries have also been made at B.C. and Alberta law schools as to whether the credits toward the Legal Assistant Certificate would assist in gaining acceptance to law school.

V.V.I. has no Legal Assistant program operating at the present. There may be a part-time course starting in September 1990, but no details are available yet.

Membership Committee:

We've had quite a few new members join since the Fall newsletter:

Beverley Petersen	Wendy Scarett	Kathleen Scharf
Marie Shaughnessy	Sarah Hanna	Lisa Boyd
Jo-Ann Maryk	Linda Lawson	Sandra Cameron
Natalie Harpin	Katy Gnoato	Sherry Broten
Valerie Bigelow	Gayle Weiss	Jennifer Janits
Beverly Koeckerctz	Jan Miles	Linda Montgomery
Michelle Suchow	Carol Monteith	Jacqueline Choboter
Susan Bauer	Shelby Williams	Patti Van Winkle
Heather Stewart	Lynne Knights	

Total membership is now at 77. If you know any potential members, contact Moira Hofstedt at 687-3216 who will forward an application.

Only 10 questionnaires for the membership directory sent out with the Fall newsletter has been completed and returned so far. Another copy of the questionnaire is attached. Please take the time to fill it out and return it to the association if you have not already done so.

QUESTIONNAIRE

As mentioned in the Members Committee Report, interest has been expressed in compiling a directory of practising members. Such a directory would assist in discovering who we are and could prove to be a great resource for members.

Please take a moment to complete the questionnaire below and return it to the Association at your earliest convenience.

NAME: _____

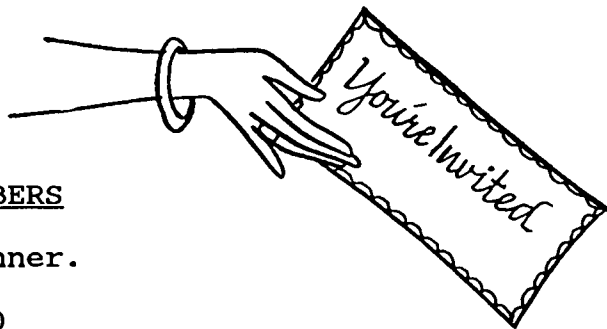
EMPLOYER: _____

PHONE NO: _____

NO. OF YEARS IN
CURRENT SPECIALTY: _____

AREA OF SPECIALTY: _____

PARTICULARS OF PREVIOUS SPECIALTY (IF ANY) _____



ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

YOU ARE INVITED to attend the Annual WALA Dinner.

DATE: Tuesday, February 6, 1990
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
PLACE: Kingsland Chinese Restaurant
987 Granville Street
Vancouver, B.C.
PRICE: \$15.00 per person
(Buy your own drinks at the restaurant)

Reserve your space now (no tickets at the door)
Requests for reservations must be received NO LATER THAN JANUARY 31, 1990.

_____, will attend the Dinner Meeting on
Tuesday February 6, 1990, at Kingsland Chinese Restaurant. I can be reached
at _____. Enclosed is my \$15.00.

Return request and cheque to:

Viviane Dufrane
c/o Harper Grey Easton
3100 - 650 West Georgia St.
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4P7

OR

Thora Arnason
c/o Russell & DuMoulin
15th Flor, 885 West Georgia
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 3H7

QUESTIONS? Call Viviane (687-0411)

Thora (685-6000)

