

FROM THE PRESIDENT PROUD TO BE A LAWYER

As a first-generation lawyer, I entered law school relatively naive to criticism of lawyers and chomping at the bit to enter this honorable profession. Twenty-five years later I love our profession, fully acknowledging the reality of our shortcomings, both corporate and individual, but celebrating the enormous contributions of the Mecklenburg County Bar to our profession and our community.

Our Bar was truly blessed to have **David Hamilton** as our president. His love of our profession, his representation of our Bar to the community, his ability to implement programs and ideas with consensus and speed made him a great president of our Bar. I hope that he will continue as my mentor well beyond the coming year.

Other of our cherished colleagues and mentors are off leading our profession on the national and state levels. My first mentor, **Ozzie Ayscue**, is currently president of the American college of Trial Lawyers and along with Justice Anthony Kennedy will lead an Anglo-American exchange of lawyers and judges to Scotland and England this fall. To this day every memorandum and brief in my practice goes through the mental checklist I would need to use if Ozzie were about to read the document. No one is surprised that he has been tapped to lead, enlighten, train and inspire the best trial lawyers in America.

Neill McBryde is president-elect of The American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. Always at the cutting edge, he leads nationally as we confront the multidisciplinary practice issues facing our profession. Neill has mentored a host of practitioners who have buzzed and grown and stretched as they tried to keep up.

Ace Walker continues his extraordinary service to our profession through his work with the American Bar Association. He has been in the House of Delegates for nearly 20 years and on the Board of Governors for three. He continues the robust practice of law, firm governance and mentoring young lawyers on practice and professionalism issues. **Bill Claytor** is just beginning his service as our delegate to the ABA and we know he will do a wonderful job.

Our Executive Director, **Mary Howerton**, serves on the Board of the National Conference of Bar-Executives. It is not surprising that she has been asked to share her vision and wisdom in this important leadership role.

Closer to home **Bob Sink** is president of the State Bar. We are lucky to have his experience, forthrightness and well-honed ethical perspective as we confront so many challenges to our profession. The hours this year and in the years leading up to this position have been enormous. I am grateful to his firm (Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson)



Nancy Black Norelli
1999/2000 President

as well as the corporations and firms that send our State Bar Councilors to Raleigh for what totals four weeks per year out of the office.

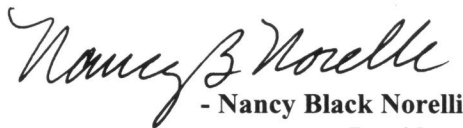
Last year Chief Justice Burley Mitchell assembled a Task Force on Professionalism. One of the few at-large positions went to **Jerry Parnell** who will continue his insightful guidance of our profession's ethical course. He chaired the committee that produced the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct.

Isabel Day is into her second year as president of the North Carolina Association of Public Defenders. This outstanding, committed professional will lead this group which helps assure adequate funding for the defense of indigents.

I am proud of the contributions -- past and present -- of Mecklenburg lawyers to our state and community. A recent review of the Board of Elections records showed that 80+ Mecklenburg lawyers have served in elected public office over the last thirty years. U.S. Congressman **Mel Watt** is a past president of our Bar and Chairman **Parks Helms** of the County Commission is actively practicing and volunteering in our profession even as he works long and hard for our community. Senator **Fountain Odom** has been a champion of access to justice issues in the NC Senate. Longtime community leader **Dan Clodfelter** is a freshman in the NC Senate having replaced the retiring **Leslie Winner**. **Margie Markey** serves on the County Commission and is helping our community to confront the problems of expansive growth. **Molly Griffin** and **John Lassiter** bring guts, perspective and impressive legal backgrounds to their service on the School Board. **Tim Sellers** serves ably on our City Council and **Lee Myers** has served for many years as mayor of Matthews.

The Bar's involvement on community, church and school committees must rival that of any other group in the city. I observed on one occasion that the head volunteer leaders (Senior Warden, Head Deacon, Chair of Executive Board, Clerk of Session and President) of five of our city's most influential religious institutions were or recently had been lawyers -- beyond that they were all from the same firm (James McElroy & Diehl). The United Way, Chamber, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Hospice, and Habitat all continue to need Mecklenburg lawyers and we respond!

Please join me and BE PROUD to be a lawyer and SAY THANKS to David and Mary and Bill and Ozzie and Ace and Bob and Neill and Jerry and Isabel and Parks and Fountain and Lee and John and Molly and Mel and Margie and Dan and Tim and Leslie. My thanks to *all* the mentors out there who show the rest of us the way.


- Nancy Black Norelli
President