



21st Anniversary in the 21st Century

by Aaron Thompson

Recipient of Utah's 2010 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award

Each year the Utah Bar Paralegal Division ("Paralegal Division") convenes on the third Thursday in May to honor a paralegal who, "over a long and distinguished career, has by their ethical and personal conduct, commitment and activities, exemplified for their fellow paralegals and the attorneys with whom they work, the epitome of professionalism; who has also rendered extraordinary contributions," in promoting the efforts of the Paralegal Division.

On May 20, 2010, the Paralegal Division and the Legal Assistants Association of Utah (LAAU) gathered together at the Sheraton hotel in Salt Lake City to celebrate the 21st anniversary of Paralegal Day. The history of this gubernatorial declaration dates back a little over two decades to June 15, 1989, when it was signed by Governor Norman Bangert. Over the years Governors Michael Leavitt and Olene Walker made additional declarations in 1994 and 2004, respectively.

The attendees of this year's event had the fortunate opportunity to hear from Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker who instilled a wealth of advice as he spoke on the topic, "Lifelong Leadership Beyond the Legal Profession." Mayor Becker recalled the various stages of his non-traditional career route of putting his legal education to work serving the residents of Utah, by balancing his life through leadership in the Utah Legislature, while working as an advocate for governmental reform, and as a college educator in Environmental Assessment and Planning. The 5th Annual Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award was also presented at this luncheon. The award this year went to a paralegal who has equally served the local and legal communities as a cornerstone of the Utah paralegal profession since 1989. This year's award naturally found its rightful place in the hands of Sanda Flint.

Sanda is a paralegal with the law firm of Strong & Hanni working



Sanda Flint – Paralegal of the Year

primarily in the areas of insurance defense, personal injury, construction litigation, and products liability. She received her paralegal certification from the School of Paralegal Studies, Professional Career Development Institute with a specialty in litigation. She was Chair of the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar from 2003–2004. She served as the Paralegal Division's first Bar Liaison, sitting as an ex officio member of the Board of Bar Commissioners of the Utah State Bar from 1996–2000. Sanda has worked as a paralegal for twenty-one years. Throughout these years, Sanda chaired the CLE committee several times, educating the State's paralegals through various brown bag luncheons and Bar Conference breakout sessions, among many other seminars and other events.

Over the years since my graduation from Westminster's paralegal program in 1997, I have been professionally motivated by Sanda's collaborative nature, magnetic optimism, and exemplary service to the Paralegal Division and to the Utah paralegal community. With her years of instrumental participation on the Paralegal Division's Board and many events, it is difficult not to attribute, in part, years of our Division's growth and success to her tireless dedication. Only a small cadre of paralegals have ever served as long, as often, or in as many capacities on the Board as Sanda. I believe that part of Sanda's secret to success lies in her constant hunger to always pursue continued legal education and her unwavering ability to not be afraid of change. Sanda has always

AARON THOMPSON is a paralegal specializing in diverse commercial insurance exposures and risk management with Headwaters Incorporated and is the current Chair of the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division.



been eager and excited to adapt to new methods of promoting and accomplishing the purposes of our Division. Sanda will be sorely missed on the Board as she will be assuming a brief hiatus on June 18th.

Sanda was nominated for Paralegal of the Year by her attorneys and fellow paralegals. The following are a few excerpts from the nomination forms.

“Sanda brings a high degree of professionalism . . . and is a very strong advocate for the Paralegal Division.”

Chair Farewell Message

This past year as the Chair of the Paralegal Division has been very rewarding. I am extremely proud of our Board members, their accomplishments this year, and the arduous discussions we have had in the attempt to best serve our membership. These discussions have provided me with the fortunate opportunity to learn a great deal about the passions of our members. With the recent addition of some new Board members we have experienced a diverse balance of recommendations that has led us to improve our processes and renew our fiscal stewardship to our membership, all while experiencing a renewed enthusiasm to proactively participate in the progress of our Division.

Within this past year we have seen the implementation of state electronic court filings, the Bar’s acceptance of credit card transactions, and integration of attorney online license membership renewal. Our Board members have worked exhaustively to follow the Bar’s lead by implementing similar 21st-Century developments into our website. In part, the Utah State Bar Staff and Commissioners should receive some credit for our Division’s innovative changes. As a Board, we followed their model to move to plastic membership cards to save publishing costs and paper waste. Much like the Bar’s goal to find a better resource to effectively communicate its efforts and initiatives, we have been implementing new methods to engender a larger identity and awareness of our Division’s initiatives through the promotion of our new logo on our various forms of Paralegal Division communications.

The greatest lesson I have learned this year is that the paralegal community will change around us whether or not we are willing to adapt to it. To quote the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, “the only constant is change.” It is my hope that every member will always be eager to adapt and implement innovative methods, to always be

“Sanda has enhanced paralegals’ participation in public service . . .”

“Sanda always goes out of her way to ensure people feel welcome and included and leads not just through procedure and professionalism but by example.”

“If all paralegals could model their careers and professional and personal dedication to making a difference . . . this profession will continue to grow in size, respect, professionalism, and continue to make great contributions . . . in this state.”

genuinely collaborative and absorb non-traditional recommendations, and equally strive to match Sanda’s dedication to continued education and inherent stewardship to our Division members’ development and progression in the Utah paralegal community.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time serving with Utah Bar President Steve Owens and the Bar Commissioners. It has also been a great pleasure to serve as Chair of the Paralegal Division, working to anticipate and serve the dire needs of our members in a suffering economy. On June 18th, at the Annual Meeting, we will see the induction of our new Chair, Heather Finch. Heather is the head litigation paralegal with the firm of Howard, Lewis & Petersen, P.C., where she works in the areas of civil litigation, plaintiffs’ medical malpractice, plaintiffs’ personal injury, and plaintiffs’ product liability. She has worked as a paralegal since 1989 and has been employed with Howard, Lewis & Petersen since 1995. I am very excited about turning over the reins to Heather who has such a diverse set of expertise to successfully carry our Division even further with the adoption of other 21st Century innovations. I know she shares in my belief that it is essential to continue to reach out and engage new members, encouraging them to take a proactive role in the Board’s leadership and on its committees to shape the future of our Division. I am confident that through principles of diverse collaboration, mentoring the next generation of Board leaders, and adoption of 21st century innovations, we will see our membership significantly increase as well as ensure the longevity and growth of the paralegal profession in Utah.

The members of the Paralegal Division and IAAU wish to congratulate Sanda Flint on all of her accomplishments and on being named Utah’s 2010 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year.