The First PBA Employee

Twenty-five years after its founding, the PBA hired its first employee. Her name was Barbara Lutz. She was hired as the association’s executive secretary in 1920 and served an incredible 48 years in the role.

By 1920, the PBA had grown to 1,570 members. The decade opened with the PBA agreeing on a draft of uniform rules to submit to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, a task first begun 13 years earlier. (The pace of the court in acting on the proposal was no swifter. It was not until 1937 that uniform rules were finally adopted by the court.)

It was during the 1920s that the PBA moved into the first office of its own on the 14th floor of building at 1612 Market Street in Philadelphia. Until that time, the PBA was relegated to the corner of the professional quarters of one of its elected officers.

Lutz’ previous employers had been a theater booking agent and then a law firm.

Lutz was the entire PBA staff for many years, except for an occasional assist she received from her sister, Elizabeth, when the workload demanded. Lutz survived the lean years of the Great Depression and enjoyed the surge of membership growth in the decades after World War II.

In the 1995 Special Centennial Edition of The Pennsylvania Lawyer magazine, 1965 PBA President William W. Litke said Lutz was “very dedicated and loyal. When her day’s work was done at the office, she would take suitcases home filled with correspondence.” Litke added, “She was the heart of the association.”

Judge Geneviee Blatt (1913-1996), who served on the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania from 1972 to 1993, recalled that she met Lutz soon after arriving in Harrisburg as a young lawyer.

“I didn’t know too many people. Barbara took me under her wing. She was a wonderful person.”

In the mid-1960s, under the guidance of 1967 PBA President Gilbert Nurick, the PBA was reorganized to meet the challenges of change and continued growth. Allen Levinthal, who later would serve as the executive director of the Dauphin County Bar Association, joined the PBA staff in 1966. Levinthal was chief assistant to Frederick H. Bolton, who in January of 1967 began his 10-years of service as the association’s first executive director.

The sources for this information are a history about the PBA written in 2010 by PBA Executive Director Emeritus Executive Director Emeritus Theodore Stellwag for The Pennsylvania Lawyer magazine and a 1995 history written by Don Sarvey, editorial director of the magazine.

The PBA: 125 Year Tradition of Civil Discourse

PBA President Anne N. John wrote “A 125 Year Tradition of Civil Discourse” for the January 2020 issue of the PBA Quarterly. A link to the article is available on the PBA’s 125th anniversary webpage (www.pabar.org/pdf/2020/PABAR-JohnJan2020RevD.PDF).

John said the charter of the PBA was approved by the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County on July 1, 1895, calling upon its members, inter alia, “...to cultivate cordial intercourse among the lawyers of Pennsylvania...” The history of the PBA reflects that while the impetus for organization was a legislative concern, its roots are grounded in the desire for the lawyers of Pennsylvania to unite and form an organization that would enable lawyers across the commonwealth to speak with one voice, John wrote.

“A tradition of civility and professionalism is embedded in the foundation of the PBA,” she wrote. The original bylaws of the association provided for five standing committees, one of which was the Committee on Grievances.

At the 50th anniversary meeting of the PBA, Judge William H. Keller, president judge of the Superior Court, delivered an address. “His informative recollection of the first 50 years of our existence as an organization included his expression that we should recognize the importance of our interactions with one another, stating that, ‘I am sometimes fearful that in the hurry and bustle of our modern state bar meetings...we are apt to overlook the very important purpose of social intercourse between members of the bar from all sections of the state and the mutual good that flows from it.”

The tradition of civility and professionalism continues. The PBA Committee on Professionalism wrote eight Working Rules of Professionalism that the PBA adopted. The recently formed Civility in the Profession Committee will plan and present CLEs and other programs to promote courtesy and respect for others and reinforce the commitment to the Working Rules of Professionalism and the Pennsylvania Code of Civility.

John wrote, “The PBA leads by example in recognizing the importance of civil discourse. Ultimately, the way we treat each other, whether lawyers, jurists, clients or those with whom we come into contact in our daily lives, is a reflection of this profession.”