

Dwight Schwab, 1967-68

Don Marmaduke interviewed Dwight Schwab in April 2005 (at age 92). Portions of that interview appear below.

Beginning of presidency

Dwight told of the "inauspicious" start of his term as president of the MBA in 1967. The annual meeting, at which he was to be handed the gavel, was set for a date in January. The date conflicted with a scheduled trial date of a case he had in Gold Beach before (then circuit court) Judge Belloni. He called the judge and explained the conflict with his installation as president of the MBA. The judge granted a set over.

Dwight appeared in Belloni's court on the new date. The judge took the bench and in front of a full courtroom and Dwight's client and opposing counsel, he gave Dwight "hell." The judge said he was tired of "big city lawyers" rearranging his trial schedule and tongue-lashed Dwight for about five minutes before proceeding with the trial. At the end, the judge gave Dwight's client the prevailing judgment, and as people were leaving the courtroom, he invited Dwight into his chambers. Dwight anticipated a resumption of the tirade, but instead, the judge said that Senator Wayne Morse had recommended him to be a federal judge, so he wanted to know where Dwight thought he could find good places to live in Portland and for help in finding them.

MBA staff and offices

There was no MBA staff during his tenure. The MBA office was the office of whoever was that year's president.

Board members

Jack Hay was first vice president, Cliff Olsen second, John Gilberston was third and Julia Boston was secretary. She was not officially a member of the board, but Dwight said that she was "wonderful." There were no board members other than the officers, and no minorities.

Historical events

Dwight recalls speaking for the MBA at Bill Dale's installation as circuit judge. Somewhat earlier, he recalls, Jim Landye was elected president of the MBA, probably, he thinks, between 1946 and 1950 (Note: the MBA is missing records from this era.). Within an hour of him taking over as president, he sat at the bar to have a drink and suddenly died of a heart attack.

MBA programs

Dwight recalls three types of events during his term. 1) The MBA held a "smoker" event with the Multnomah County Medical Society which was intended to improve relations between lawyers and physicians. It was well attended and everybody had a great time. It brought the two professions closer together. 2) The MBA sponsored some mock trials before the membership which were quite popular. They had four or five of them during the year, dealing with personal injury cases, which in those days comprised the largest volume of court cases and trials on the court's docket; something that is no longer true. 3) Dwight also suggested the formation of a press relations committee to meet with representatives of the press. The press reports of trials often cast trial lawyers in an unfavorable light, which he felt was due to reporters' ignorance of why attorneys did what they did. The MBA committee had several meetings with news representatives and the meetings worked quite well.

Principal challenges

The principal challenge Dwight faced was the lack of involvement of the MBA members. There were no committees (other than the one mentioned above). The officers ran the organization. He thinks members were willing to help, but they were never asked.

Funniest moment

The "smoker" Dwight mentioned above was the funniest thing that happened during his administration. He was involved in defending attorney Phil Weinstein before the OSB trial panel in a disciplinary proceeding connected with accusations that Weinstein was unethically paying runners for personal injury clients, so he got a couple of "dandy" jokes from one of his doctor friends and told them at the smoker. The jokes made fun of lawyers and the doctors loved it.

Proudest presidential moment

Dwight's proudest moment was participating in an MBA-sponsored 25th anniversary celebration banquet honoring circuit Judge Charles W. Redding, a longtime presiding judge in Multnomah County. The chief justice was present, as well as the editor of the Salem newspaper and many circuit judges from all over the state. It was a very impressive program.

MBA then and now

There is a "world of difference" between the MBA then and now. Then, the annual dues were only \$5 per year. He persuaded the membership to raise them to \$10 per year. There were no committees then. Today, with the numerous committees, the active members and the helpful staff, the MBA can do a lot more than it could then. Back then, Joe Sparkman, now deceased, volunteered to put out a monthly newsletter, which he paid for personally and distributed.