

President's Message

Interview of 2016-17 President E. Jane Sherman

Interviewed by 2016-17 Secretary Amanda Wood Barnett

Barnett: Tell us about yourself and your family.

Sherman: Although a native of Monroe, I earned my undergraduate and JD degrees at LSU and moved to Baton Rouge. I am happily married going on 28 years to Dr. Stephen L. Sherman, a practicing orthodontist of Sherman & Balhoff, Orthodontics, in Baton Rouge. Of our four children, three aspire to be dentists like their father, but I am proud to say one has an interest in law, like his mother. Obviously, we are not very creative with careers in our family, but we are happy knowing our children are each pursuing great career paths. Our four children were each born on holidays, so celebrations are big at our home! Our oldest Stephen, age 26, is a May 2016 graduate of the LSU School of Dentistry, who is beginning his orthodontic residency at University of Oklahoma Health Science Center. Kramer, age 25, anticipates graduation from the LSU School of Dentistry next year and also seeks an orthodontic specialty. Bennett is a junior finance major at LSU in Baton Rouge, with an interest in law. Finally, a girl (the first in the Sherman family in over 100 years!), Elizabeth is a sophomore biology major at LSU aspiring to be a pediatric dentist. My family and faith are always first in my life.

Barnett: How did you get involved with the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF)?

Sherman: Life is a circle and I am a prime example. It's like the lyrics of folk-rock composer and philanthropist Harry Chapin's "All My Life's a Circle." He writes, "All my life's a circle . . . It seems like I've been here before. I can't remember when. But I got this funny feelin' that I'll be back once again." In 1988, I served on the first Grants Committee of the LBF, and thus began my passion for the LBF and its services. As chair of the Young Lawyers Section, I became an LBF charter member in 1987 and served on the first Grants & Criteria Committee for the IOLTA grants



Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson, far left, administered the oath of office to the incoming Louisiana Bar Foundation officers. From left, Secretary Amanda W. Barnett, Treasurer W. Michael Street, Vice President Valerie Briggs Bargas and President E. Jane Sherman. Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

program in 1988. Throughout my law practice, I remained involved in civil legal aid services, such as coordinating "The Law & You" newspaper and TV projects, serving on the board of the former Capital Area Legal Services, and serving with the Baton Rouge Bar Association Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committees. It is a dream to believe that, after 25 years, I would return to the LBF board and become its president. It is truly an honor and humbling privilege.

Similar circles have occurred in my legal career. I practiced law for 10 years with Mangham, Hardy, Rolfs & Abadie in Lafayette and Baton Rouge, and then for 10 years with Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P., in Baton Rouge doing regulatory, real estate and corporate litigation. In 2001, I looked up and, with four children within five years of age beginning their teen years, it was time to put a temporary halt on my full-time law practice. I maintained my passion for service work as well as my law license in private practice representing various corporate entities, both commercial and non-profit. My youngest child graduated high school last year, and I am excited to say that, after a 15-year hiatus, I renewed my relationship with Phelps Dunbar as a senior counsel in

its Baton Rouge office effective April 1, 2016. Life is a circle.

Barnett: What role does the LBF play in promoting access to the justice system?

Sherman: The LBF plays the greatest role in Louisiana in ensuring access to civil justice. It is sadly a little known fact to our profession about the tremendous services provided by the LBF. The LBF was established to advance justice and law-related education. The LBF is currently the largest state funder of civil legal aid to indigents. With federal funding cuts over the last several years of more than 40 percent, the LBF's funding is more crucial now than ever to maintain access to civil justice for the impoverished. Imagine having your children or home taken away or being the victim of domestic violence, and you can't afford a lawyer. Unlike criminal proceedings, there is no constitutional guarantee to civil representation. The LBF provides funding for civil legal services in all 64 parishes of Louisiana to indigents who fall below the federal poverty guideline. Civil legal aid is the life-saving oar to people facing life-changing problems. Investing

Continued next page



Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson with President E. Jane Sherman and her husband Dr. Stephen L. Sherman. Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

in civil legal aid not only offers indigents a way out of poverty, but also provides positive economic and community impact by keeping families together, reducing domestic violence and incarceration, reducing evictions, and saving tax dollars.

Barnett: Tell us about the LBF’s initiative: Louisiana Campaign to Preserve Civil Legal Aid.

Sherman: The Campaign’s importance is twofold. First, it is to raise awareness within our profession of the presence and work of the LBF. More importantly and related, it is to raise funds for the continuation of civil legal aid in our state. In 2015-2016, the LBF awarded \$5.3 million in social justice initiatives to those who would otherwise go unrepresented. While admirable, these funds were sufficient to serve only approximately 25,000 of the estimated 161,000 Louisiana households in poverty. The challenge of the Campaign will be to raise funds to sustain and expand funding to our civil legal service programs.

Barnett: Why is this Campaign so important?

Sherman: The time for action is now. A study by the Jesuit Social Research Institute of Loyola, reported on March 17, 2016, announced, “Louisiana is dead last in U.S. social justice.” The Loyola researchers stated, “Low-income families, immigrants and workers of color are worse off in Louisiana than anywhere else

in the nation.” The average low-income household in Louisiana was \$11,156 in 2014, as compared to \$15,281 nationally, and as compared to the estimated \$45,840 needed for a two-person family to afford basic necessities. But, as the study reports, “it is well within the power and the duty of citizens in Louisiana to change the current reality for the common good.” The LBF is taking steps to make this change.

Barnett: How can Louisiana lawyers help the LBF?

Sherman: The answer is so easy! Become a Fellow of the LBF. Of the 22,407 licensed attorneys in Louisiana, only 1,786 are currently LBF Fellows. Each of us is asked to contribute to various charitable organizations annually, and these needs are compelling. I urge you also to consider supporting the charitable works of your legal profession by the LBF as one of your priorities this upcoming year. As a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity, the LBF is the visible public service organization of Louisiana attorneys. Become a part. Become a Fellow. Email LBF Development Director Laura Sewell at laura@raisingthebar.org, or visit the website, www.raisingthebar.org. Annual Fellows fees are as affordable as \$200 annually and \$100 for young lawyers. Help our LBF to continue to provide access to justice to all in the civil legal arena. You also may go online and donate to the Campaign at www.raisingthebar.org/campaign. U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger said, “Concepts

of justice must have hands and feet to carry out justice in every case in the shortest possible time and the lowest possible cost. This is the challenge to every lawyer and judge in America.” I urge you to join the LBF’s efforts to be the hands and feet of providing access to civil justice for all.

Barnett: What are your goals and vision as LBF president?

Sherman: My goal is to continue the works of the great leaders of the LBF before me. I seek not only to find funding sources for the many civil legal aid providers throughout our state, but also to streamline those services to ensure that the funds are used efficiently to provide services to the most clients possible. Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson recently implemented the Access to Justice Commission. Our task of increasing funds and ensuring the best economic use of our grant money will be better achieved through the coordinated works of the LBF with our new Access to Justice Commission, the Louisiana State Bar Association and all interested civil legal aid providers working together to expand and enhance the civil legal aid services available in Louisiana.

Louisiana Bar Foundation Announces New Fellows

The Louisiana Bar Foundation announces new Fellows:

Hon. William Gregory Beard..... Alexandria
 Alaina E. BrandhurstNew Orleans
 Hon. Barron C. Burmaster..... Harvey
 Hon. Aisha S. Clark Monroe
 Hon. Lilynn A. Cutrer..... Lake Charles
 Gordon L. James Monroe
 Hon. Madeline Jasmine Edgard
 Hon. Theodore M.
 (Trey) Haik IIINew Iberia
 Hon. F. Stanton Hardee..... Kaplan
 Hon. Pammela S. Lattier Shreveport
 John L. Luffey, Jr. Monroe
 Hon. Timothy S. Marcel..... Hahnville
 Hon. Sharon Ingram Marchman Monroe
 Deidre Deculus RobertBaton Rouge
 Hon. C. Sherburne Sentell III..... Minden
 Hon. James B. Supple..... Franklin
 Hon. Lala B. Sylvester.....Natchitoches
 Hon. Kirk A. Williams..... Baker
 Ta-Tanisha T. Youngblood.....Baton Rouge