

# TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN...



BY: REBECCA SCHAFER, YLD CHAIR

One of the young lawyer's most valuable resources are members of the bar and their cumulative body of experience. Asa "Pete" Gullett, the executive vice president and chief operating officer for Lawyers

Mutual Insurance Company of Kentucky ("LMICK"), grew up in Hazard and had a legal practice there for 28 years. He has tried between 500 and 1,000 cases. He started out with title work, mostly mineral rights in Eastern Kentucky, then moved on to insurance defense work, and finally plaintiffs' cases. He even handled some criminal defense. Everything but tax. And for 17 years in his role with LMICK, Mr. Gullett has helped provide guidance and support to new and experienced lawyers alike.

Some of Mr. Gullett's advice to young lawyers includes the following gems:

- When you first get a case, expend a fair amount of due diligence researching the legal nuances specific to the facts of that claim (e.g. statute of limitations, administrative remedies, elements of the action, potential defenses, etc.).
- Implement rigorous office procedures. Malpractice claims based on statute of limitations, or other deadlines such as expert witness identification, are 99.9 percent avoidable. In Mr. Gullett's own practice, he required that every time a staff member or attorney handled a document that referenced a date (e.g. hearing, deposition, meeting, deadline, etc.); they confirmed it was on the firm calendar.
- You are going to be a lot happier if you are not moving from crisis to crisis. To avoid doing so, exercise extreme discipline, do what you least want to do first, and maintain a strict routine.
- Accept that you do not have control over the facts, personalities, people, or jury. And even when some or all of those factors may be working in your favor, your results are to an extent still random. Reflecting on a particular vote fraud case he tried, Mr. Gullett can state from experience that you can believe in a case, do the very best you can, and go broke in the process. But still lose the trial and your friend goes to jail. And you can come back from an experience like that—still alive, still a lawyer, and in fact, a much better lawyer.
- You will be a better lawyer if you understand that there is no reason why you can't advocate for your client, work hard, and yet still be friendly and professional with your adversaries.
- He learned from a doctor in Elkhorn City that weekends don't really help all that much with stress and recharging—your blood vessels don't start to relax until after two days. After a scare with depression and anxiety early in his career, Mr. Gullett began the healthy habit of taking nine day trips, two or three times per year, and doubts that he would have survived without those breaks.

Not only is LMICK the only professional liability insurance company created by Kentucky lawyers for Kentucky lawyers, it is also an invaluable sponsor of the KBA Young Lawyers Division ("YLD"). The ongoing support of LMICK enables the YLD to present two CLEs at the Kentucky Law

Updates this fall, and free web based CLEs through its member website, [www.kbayld.org](http://www.kbayld.org). At this year's bar convention, the YLD was able to host 10 CLEs, as well as a reception in honor of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and its annual luncheon with over 75 guests in attendance. On Feb. 24, 2017, in Louisville and March 14, 2017, in Lexington, the YLD will be sponsoring day-long CLE seminars in coordination with the local Legal Aid Societies—not only providing practical skills for new lawyers, but also encouraging *pro bono* practice.

The YLD Disaster Legal Services program provides immediate temporary legal assistance to disaster survivors at no charge, and Voices Against Violence trains volunteer lawyers in Kentucky to assist domestic violence survivors with obtaining Domestic Violence Orders. In 2017, the YLD will be launching a new community outreach program, along with the Kentucky Association of Food Banks and Attorney General Beshear. Law firms, legal offices, and law schools in Kentucky will compete to raise over 600,000 pounds of food for Kentucky's food banks. The winning law firm or organization will be presented with the Attorney General's Cup at the 2017 KBA Convention in Owensboro.

The YLD, with the support of LMICK, continues to encourage diversity in the legal profession. The Why Choose Law/Pipeline program that will be held on April 6, 2017, in Lexington will provide high school and undergraduate students with an introduction to the legal profession. An introduction they may not have had otherwise. The YLD also awards the Nathaniel R. Harper Diversity Award annually, along with the Outstanding Young Lawyer, Young Lawyer Service to Community, and Service to Young Lawyers Awards in recognition of the many contributions made by Kentucky lawyers to improve the legal profession.

As part of education outreach, YLD volunteers present the U@18 and BullyProof programs at high schools and middle schools across the Commonwealth. In the law schools, YLD presents the Road Less Traveled, a panel of lawyers who have taken alternative career paths. There are \$2,000 in bar study scholarships awarded each year, and networking events to provide law students with the opportunity to interact with attorneys. There are also annual networking events planned by the YLD District Representatives and a reception hosted as part of the New Lawyer Training Program.

All of this, and so much more, would not be possible but for the support of YLD's amazing sponsors—LMICK and National Insurance Agency. For their guidance and support, as well as that of Mr. Gullett, and so many other experienced members of the bar like him, who are willing to give their time to mentoring new lawyers—the YLD is ever grateful.