

PARTING THOUGHTS

I thoroughly enjoyed my year as bar president and feel good about what was accomplished. Hopefully, no harm was done.

Though I did my very best, some might believe that my style and background were not the best match for an organization whose members have no choice but to belong and whose interests include getting along well with people in positions of power. Public support of Linda Lingle, though prior to my term as president, reportedly irritated the governor, lieutenant governor and others. The Broken Trust essay reportedly outraged the justices. Criticism of the judicial selection commission and support of judicial evaluations didn't exactly win a spot for me in the hearts of judges generally.

It would be a shame if any of this were to adversely affect the HSBA or the interests of lawyers generally.

Perhaps related to this, I am totally convinced that lawyers should not be required to join the bar association. "Unification" was crammed down the state bar's collective throat in 1990. It was a bad idea then. It's a bad idea now.

Legal restrictions placed on mandatory organizations like ours occasionally made me feel this year like I was wearing a straitjacket. More importantly, a key mechanism of accountability is lost when an organization can force its members to belong and pay dues. Voluntary payment of dues provides a much stronger sense of individual ownership and responsibility.

Lest you get the wrong idea, I want quickly to acknowledge "another side." For many years, HSBA consistently has accomplished more, with less, than most lawyers realize. Working this past year with bar presidents from around the country and comparing our respective strategic plans and operations have convinced me that no other state bar association runs as smoothly, or is as focused, as is HSBA.

This surely is because of the many lawyers in Hawaii who for years have generously contributed their time and talents. It also is because Coralie Matayoshi is either incredibly good at hiring, training and supervising people, or uncommonly lucky. Either way, Coralie is a treasure, and her staff is nothing short of terrific.

My hope and expectation is that “de-unification” would lead to even greater participation by members and not require major cut-backs in staff.

I almost feel guilty that this year has been so much fun and so personally rewarding. Words cannot convey how much I appreciate the support and encouragement of so many fellow lawyers. To them and to HSBA’s terrific staff I say MAHALO and ALOHA.