



## Winter 2015

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## WCLA Young Lawyers Bring Children Joy

Washington Irving once wrote, “Christmas is a season for kindling the fire for hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.” The fire of hospitality burned brightly in the halls of many law firms this holiday season as part of the WCLA Letters to Santa Program. Each year, young children write letters asking for Santa to bring gifts to them for Christmas, when many would otherwise go without gifts. The kids ask for treasures such as hats, gloves, a soccer ball or a stuffed toy of their favorite character. With the good work of Direct Effect Charities and members of the WCLA, 206 Letters to Santa were answered bringing joy to many children and families. The genial flame of charity is strong in the hearts of many of our WCLA members! Thank you to the YLS branch of the WCLA for your sponsorship of this program!





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# 2015 EVENTS

## MEDICAL SEMINAR

April 28 - 1:30 - 4:30 PM  
 JRT Assembly Hall

## GOLF OUTING

August 7  
 3500 Midwest Road, Oak Brook

## MEDICAL SEMINAR

September 18 - 8 AM - 12:30 PM  
 Palmer House Hilton, Chicago

## APPELLATE CT LUNCHEON

October - University Club

## NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

November 12 - 3:00 PM  
 Petterino's, Chicago

## HOLIDAY PARTY

December 4 - 5:30 PM

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

December 10 - 3 PM  
 Petterino's, Chicago

## BROWN BAG LUNCHES

**PROGRAMS** will be held in the JRTC Assembly Hall which is the auditorium on the Concourse (basement) level of the James R. Thompson Center (State of Illinois Building) at 100 W. Randolph in Chicago. All programs begin at 12:00 noon and end at 1:00 pm. Upcoming dates are as follows: April 9, May 6, June 4, July 14, August 12, September 10, October 20, November 18, December 17.

Visit our website for up-to-date event information and membership renewal.



## “I AM JUST ALICE”

Anyone that has practiced at the Chicago Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission for any length of time knows Alice, the energetic, helpful woman eager to answer our questions. She is the first person we see as we walk past the elevators onto the 8th floor. She hands us our approved contracts, gives us directions and assists us in finding other attorneys that we might not be familiar with.

To many, her included, she is simply, Alice. But Alice is much more than our lovely smiling face and friend at the Commission. I took a couple of hours to sit with Alice and find out more about the woman behind the big Commission counter.

Alice Thompson has been assisting our colleagues and Commission staff for 50 years this year. She was originally hired as a temporary employee. She was so good at her job that the Chairman at the time kept her there even through some political turmoil with respect to staff hiring. From the beginning, everyone knew how much of an asset she is to the Commission.

She was born in Washington D.C. Her father was in the marines and moved them to Chicago when she was 5 or 6. She has been in Chicagoland ever since. She had two children and has one grandchild, but her family does not stop there. The relationships she has built with many of our colleagues while working for the Commission transcend the working relationship and even friendship. She refers to the Commission and the friends she has made over the years as her “family”. Her friendships did not stop with the attorneys; she was also friends with their families and was frequently invited to their homes to share meals, a weekend, shopping, or just hanging out.

When tragedy struck in her life it was her friends and family from the



Commission that were there for her. She smiles as she recalls her mother’s funeral and says, “[f]our lawyers carried her casket into a Catholic church.” Every seat in that service was filled largely with her Commission “family”. The lawyers and their families, with whom she developed relationships with over the years, are so much more than just her friends - they are her family. This was a thought she frequently repeated throughout our conversation.

Alice then recalls when she was in the hospital for throat cancer. She remembers that the majority of her visitors were attorneys. The hospital staff kept whispering about how important she must be, given all the people in suits that were coming to see her. She said, “I kept telling them I’m just Alice, but they did not believe me!” To appease them, since they refused to believe the truth, she told them she was Oprah’s cousin. She laughs as she tells me that this they believed. Her Commission friends and attorneys - her family - got her through that rough time.

Her support network from members of the bar of our practice has been her world, her joy and her family for the last 50 years.

She becomes emotional talking about the death of her daughter. She said every seat at the funeral service for her daughter was filled. She chuckled as she told me her friends asked her if she had any black friends as the service was completely full of attorneys. She spends times talking about how difficult it has been for her, and that her friends at the Commission and their families have been her rock through this very difficult time.

She tells me her family is not only there for her time times of hardship. They had so much fun as well. She fondly remembers the days when she would go to shows with attorneys, eat thanksgiving dinner and sometimes, just hang out. She begins to tell me of one of the many people she was friends with, Richard Bogusz. He was known as “The Polish Prince”, and Alice was known as “The Black Queen”. When he arrived on the 8th floor Alice would introduce him. She would say, “Mr. Bogusz has arrived.” She would then detail for everyone listening what he was wearing as he would strut around. She recounts weekends away with a friend and his wife, whose neighbor used to ask for Alice and her grandson to come over because they enjoyed her company as well. She is moved

thinking about just how much respect everyone treated her with, and just how fun her job has always been.

Those that have been around for some time may remember the treats Alice used to put out for everyone, a practice that continued until recently due to rule changes. She tells me she was eating cold cuts for lunch at the counter. An attorney came by and as he was eating them commented on how good they were. She asked him why he was helping himself to her lunch. He got so embarrassed and told her he thought she put it out for everyone. That was when she began putting out cookies and crackers for everyone. As she is telling that story she says her days at the Commission were the “best years of my life”. She tells me that she always felt so appreciated, respected and useful at the Commission.

Alice has devoted half of a century to the Commission and along the way has left her mark on all of us. Everyone knows Alice and if anyone needs information about anything, we know that Alice is the one to ask. She has touched our lives both personally and professionally. It is an honor to get to know the woman that has touched so many lives with her kindness.

In asking Alice what words of wisdom she would bestow upon the community, she pauses and thinks for a second. She said, “[y]ou never know how small the world is; be kind and respect people.” Such wise words from a woman that has impacted so many of us in more ways than can be counted, but in the end, she insists that she is just, Alice.

## WCLA YLS SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE THANK YOU!!

Thank you for everyone who participated in this year’s WCLA Young Lawyers’ Section School Supplies Drive. This year we gathered over 1,500 pens, 135 notebooks, 350 folders, 880 colored pencils, 2,400 pencils, 3,300 crayons, 1140 markers, 75 rulers, AND over 19,895 sheets of loose leaf!!

Overall the drive was an AMAZING success and the Young Lawyers’ Section would like to thank each and every one of you who participated. Keep a look out for next year’s drive which will begin in July/August.

The YLS would like to give a special thank you to the Veugeler family. Kevin and his son collected over 5 large banker boxes of supplies!! Thank you for your dedication and participation!



## IN MEMORIAM

### JAMES C. SERKLAND

(October 8, 1939 - November 11, 2014)

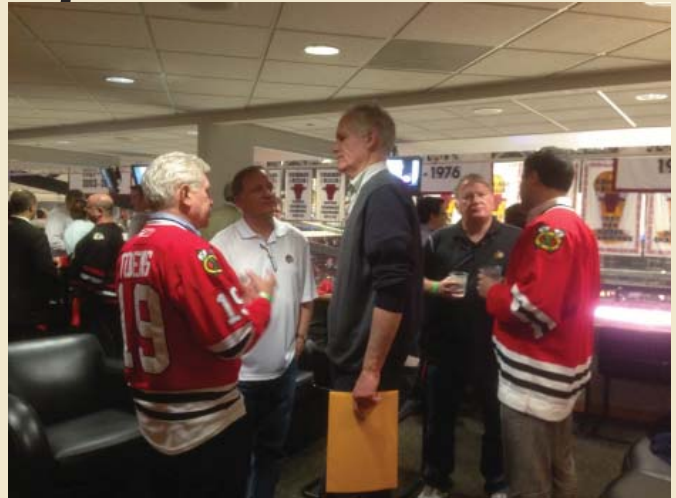
Mr. Serkland started his workers’ compensation law practice over 45 years ago. Many members of the workers’ compensation bar recall Mr. Serkland litigating a variety of cases some of which required appearance before the Illinois Supreme Court and some of which resulted in creating new case law.

Mr. Serkland graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1966. After a successful and precedential workers’ compensation practice he eventually was appointed by the Governor of Illinois to serve as a Commissioner at the IWCC, a position he held until his retirement from the practice of law. Many stories arose out of the illustrious career of Mr. Serkland and he is well known in the practice by his reputation as an attorney well versed in the law, indefatigable, but with a sense of humor.

Mr. Serkland’s legacy continues as both of his sons are successful attorneys and you may know John C. Serkland as a successful worker’s compensation attorney associated with the firm of Corti & Aleksy, P.C.



# 2014 Scrap Book



# Holiday Party



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# Meet The New Arbitrators

## STEPHEN J. FRIEDMAN

### Home town:

Currently Glenview, raised in Waukegan

### Education and Accolades:

BA in English literature from University of Illinois  
JD University of Illinois, Order of the Coif

### Tells us a bit about your career before becoming at Arbitrator:

After a very short foray into general practice, I began handling Workers' Compensation defense with Rooks, Pitts, Fullagher and Poust. I was a founding partner of Stevenson, Rusin & Friedman-now Rusin & Maciorowski. I have handled the defense of complex claims including occupational disease cases such as alleged radiation and asbestos exposure. I believe I may be the only defense attorney in Illinois to defend two cases of injury caused by a Bengal tiger.

### What is your favorite hobby or how do you spend your free time?

I enjoy bicycle touring including Charity rides for the American Diabetes Association and Respiratory Health Association and vacation trips throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. I also enjoy travel, cooking and fantasy novels.

### What is something interesting or extraordinary about yourself or something that you would want (or don't mind) everyone to know about you?

My undergraduate studies were Renaissance and pre renaissance drama. I can still recite portions of the Canterbury Tales in the original Middle English.

An article on my Hungarian bike tour was featured in Adventure Cycling Magazine and my picture appeared as the centerfold of the issue.

### What is the best, surprising, or interesting thing you have learned about workers' compensation since becoming an Arbitrator?

The best thing, but not really surprising is that everyone at the Commission (Chairman, Commissioners, Arbitrators, staff, practicing attorneys) has been so welcoming and helpful.

## MARIA S. BOCANEGRA

### Home town:

I grew up in Aurora, and moved to Carol Stream around 5th grade

### Education and Accolades:

Quincy University – BA  
DePaul University College of Law – JD

### Tells us a bit about your career before becoming at Arbitrator:

Before life here on the 8th floor, I practiced workers compensation law for Katz Friedman, et al. There, I also handled wage/hour matters and personal injury cases. Before Katz and law school, I worked for a judge at the Denver District Court in Colorado and was an administrator for the United States Bankruptcy Court in Denver.

### What is your favorite hobby or how do you spend your free time?

I really enjoy the gym and any physical activities – bike riding, the driving range, golf and adventure type races (i.e. Warrior Dash, the Great Urban Race) I also enjoy thrift shopping and browsing antique stores – you'd be surprised what you can find!

### What is something interesting or extraordinary about yourself or something that you would want (or don't mind) everyone to know about you?

I am very good at coupon clipping and getting my grocery bill down to barely anything. I enjoy the challenge that comes with trying to see how much money you can save! I once got my entire purchase for free!

I also recently took up collecting old maps - my first was a 1901 Rand McNally CTA map I purchased while rummaging at a collectibles store in Boulder, Colorado.

### What is the best, surprising, or interesting thing you have learned about workers' compensation since becoming an Arbitrator?

I still haven't figured out where I can get a box of Kleenex around here. Anyone?



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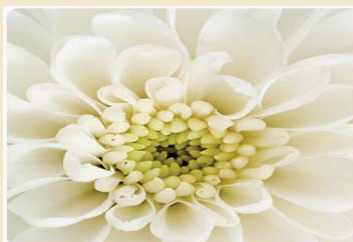


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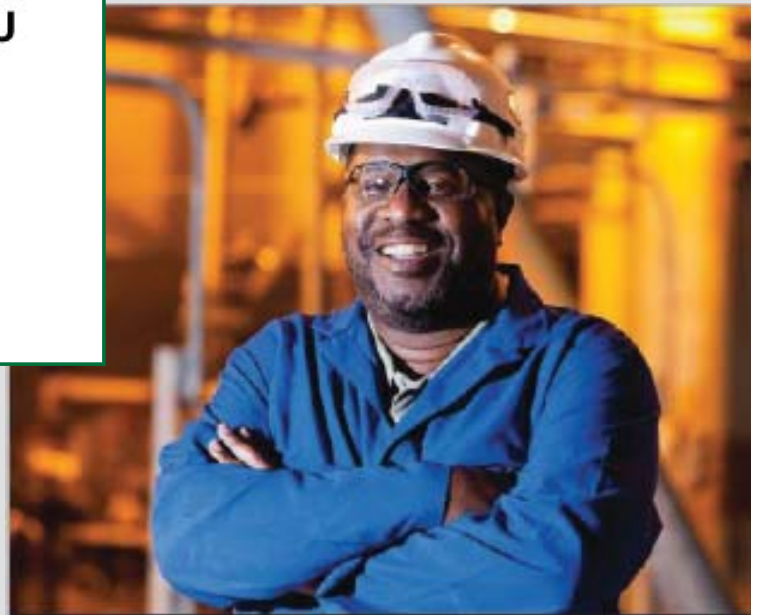
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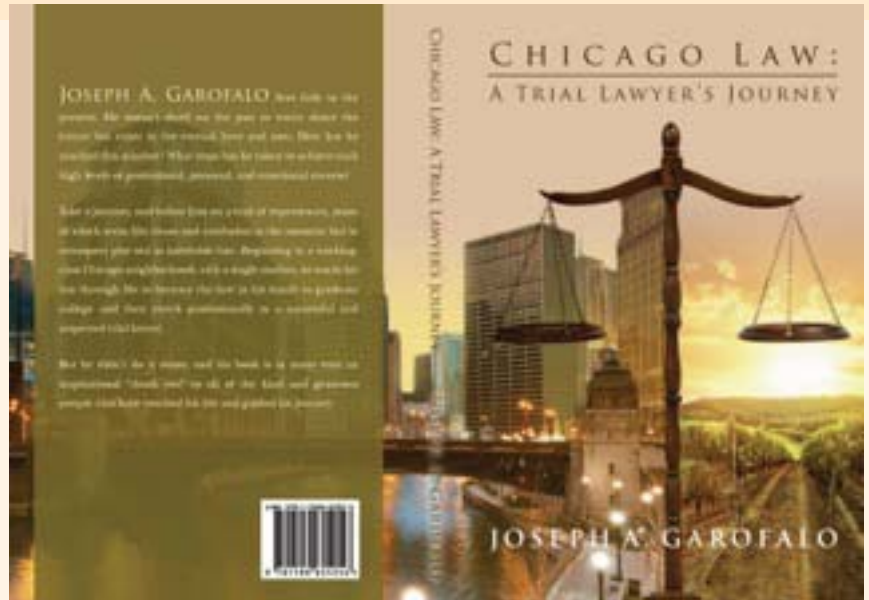
# Chicago Law: A Trial Lawyer's Journey

## by Joseph A. Garofalo

### A Book Review by John J. Castaneda

Autobiographies tend to create a variety of reactions in the reader – some result in a sense of voyeurism where secrets or hidden stories/skeletons are revealed. Other autobiographies result in a sense of incredulity – such as reading about the latest guitar god and a fascination that the author lived to tell the story (though many didn't).

In a Trial Lawyer's Journey, Mr. Joseph Garofalo presents his personal story - but one which many of us will not find incredible nor embarrassing - but a story that we can identify with and appreciate the struggle, discovery and surmounting of whatever obstacles and set backs we experience on our way to our station in life. Notably, a story of a workers' compensation attorney, juggling a career, while still maintaining a home and recreational life.



The book is divided into many chapters, almost vignettes, which at times seem too short, but instead propel you into the next chapter to find out where it all ends. I personally identified with one particular war story – but I am sure many will identify with the various dealings Joe encountered as he developed his firm and his practice. Joe is not afraid to tell us his story and who he encountered along the way in reaching many of his personal goals – yet making time for those he loved. One trial lawyer's journey that reminds us how our lawyers' life can be vibrant, difficult, tedious but privileged and wonderful.

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