



# *Santa Barbara* **LEGAL SECRETARIES ASSOCIATION**

## POINTS & AUTHORITIES

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### SBLSA'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, MARCH 25, 2009

At the Law Offices of  
**Reicker, Pfau, Pyle & McRoy, LLP**  
1421 State Street  
**The Penthouse Conference Room**

5:30-6:00 p.m. Check in-Socialize  
6:00-6:30 p.m. - Program  
6:30-7:30 p.m. Meeting

#### SPEAKER:

**Martine Dupuch/ Awakening Awareness**  
"Stress Relief Through Exercises: the  
Feldenkrais® Method"

**DINNER IS FREE-JUST RSVP!**

**SEE FLYER INSIDE**

**SBLSA MEMBERS NEED TO ATTEND**

### MARCH MEETING-The Promise of Spring and All Things New

SBLSA's Annual membership meeting is scheduled just days after the vernal equinox, when the sun crosses directly over the equator. Equinox means "equal night," when the entire earth experiences the same amount of nighttime. The Great Sphinx in Egypt was built so that it points directly toward the rising sun on the vernal equinox; the first day of spring marks the Persian New Year, rooted in a 3,000 year old tradition of Zoroastrianism; and Easter is celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon after the

*SBLSA—A Must On Your Resume!*

first day of spring. It is a time of renewal and looking forward, and is an auspicious time for our changing of the guard (alias the Executive Board) at SBLSA.

After a hard day's work, every legal secretary in town should head to **Reicker, Pfau, Pyle & McRoy's penthouse conference room** (go just to see that!) on March 25<sup>th</sup> to mingle with friends and other professionals, and have a bite to eat. Our speaker, **Martine Dupuch, a certified Feldenkrais® practitioner**, will teach us how to unwind, literally. This practice re-educates your mind and body with regard to habitual patterns of movement to alleviate chronic back, neck, shoulder, hips and/or leg pain. I've seen dramatic results using this therapy on horses that have become fearful and cranky after injury. With horses it's done by re-establishing a beneficial connection to the injured limb or area through maneuvering the limb in such a manner for them that they wouldn't or couldn't for themselves, or through touching them in such a way that their fear or habitual reaction is bypassed, creating an "aha" moment. Imagine how much more restoration can be done on a human being who understands the rationale and can gauge the results?

You should also come to the meeting because we need your vote, both on the new officers for 2009-2010, and our LSI Annual Conference delegates. The slate of officers and delegates is listed in the President's Letter in this newsletter. It will also be the only chance we get to publicly recognize our past Board members for their hard work in guiding SBLSA this past year. "Spring is sprung, the grass is riz" don't make us wonder where da secretaries is (adapted from the poem *Ode to Spring*, attributed to Ogden Nash, also considered Brooklyn's anthem).

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## **L'OSCAR AWARDS FOR 2008- NINE NOMINEES FOR SECRETARY OF THE YEAR!**

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What do **Teri Collier Stringer, Dyan Dilly, Lynda Hansen, Betsy Wright, Susan Anderson, Noemi Vasquez, Elizabeth Kapp, Terry Utterback** and **Lisa Bautista** all have in common? They are great legal secretaries who were nominated for 2008 Legal Secretary of the Year!

For those of you who didn't know, our 2008 *L'Oscar* awards were changed to include a cash prize of \$250 to the winner and \$100 to the first runner up, along with "*L'Oscar*" trophies and a certificate of appreciation. Our method of judging was changed also, combining the best elements of 2007 and previous years.

The nominations were made by submission of a short paragraph about why the nominee deserved to be

"Secretary of the Year." Those paragraphs were posted on our website, without including the name of the secretary or the firm, so that the voting could take place based solely on merit, and could still be done via email by the entire community, rather than a panel of judges. Some of our nominees received more than one nomination, and in those cases, the different submissions were combined into one entry on the website.

On December 10, 2008, we celebrated the *L'Oscars* at Stateside Restaurant, located in the La Arcada, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Attorneys and staff poured into the banquet room to the left as you enter, ready to feast on the buffet of salad with organic mixed greens, truffled goat cheese, blueberries, and smoked paprika croutons, main courses of angel hair pasta in lemon chardonnay olive oil sauce with capers, kalamata olives and

fresh herbs, grilled salmon drizzled with Grand Marnier orange butter sauce, and pan seared bone-in-chicken breast, covered lightly in a whole grain mustard cream sauce accompanied by saffron scented basmati rice, haricot verts and rainbow baby carrots, and finishing with platters of mini pastries and assorted cakes.

A silent auction table was set up in the middle of the room, which offered up interesting items to bid on, several of which caused quite a bidding war between a number of guests. All of the funds go toward the costs of putting on our educational events throughout the year and our scholarship program for high school seniors, re-entry workers and those changing fields of practice who need financial assistance to participate in educational programs.

So after all that, who won? **First runner up is Dyan Dilly, of Archbald & Spray, LLP.** Her firm wrote:

*The four partners of this firm nominate their one and only legal assistant extraordinaire. This nominee serves as legal secretary to each of them, as well as handling other essential duties for the office. It is commonplace, these days, for a legal secretary to handle the secretarial needs of more than one lawyer. However, doing so for four partners should be recognized as very rare, if not unique. To further compliment this nominee's abilities, she handles her secretarial responsibilities at the highest levels of competence, resourcefulness and efficiency. If she did not have such talents, she could not make each one of her attorneys feel as if she worked exclusively for each one of them. This nominee is truly a special employee, not just because of the nominee's competence, but because*

*she is reliable, trustworthy and always has the interests of our clients and reputation of the firm as her top priorities. This nominee is, without doubt, worthy of your honor this year, which she earns day in and day out working for us as a true professional in this challenging business.* Signed by attorneys Douglas B. Large, Kenneth L. Moes, Marcus J. Kocmur and Trevor D. Large.

Dyan was unable to attend the L'Oscars to receive her awards in person as she was out of town that week. However, she mailed us a thank you note acknowledging the honor and returning her check to be used for scholarship purposes. Thank you, Dyan, for your generous spirit.

**2008 Legal Secretary of the Year and Winner of this year's grand prize is Susan Anderson, of Howell, Moore & Gough, LLP.** Her firm wrote:

*Simply stated, this nominee is the most reliable, loyal and effective secretary, assistant and legal assistant we have ever encountered. Several of us first knew this nominee as one of the top secretaries at our old firm, which she joined in 1982, and she has been an integral part of our law firm since our formation in July 1996. This nominee is not only a "triple threat" – secretary, assistant and legal assistant – she also serves as office manager, equipment repair guru, notary and den mother. If there is ever a problem in our office, this nominee has the solution. She has yet to meet a challenge, in her work or in her life, that she has not dealt with and overcome, always with grace and poise. This nominee never misses a day of work. She never makes a mistake. She thinks of everything, down to the smallest detail. She is trusted and*

*respected not only by all of us, and our clients, but also by all of those with whom she worked at our old firm. In every sense, this nominee represents the model Legal Secretary of the Year. We are proud to join in nominating her.* Signed by attorneys Joe Howell, Ed Moore, Brian Gough, Kim McDaniel and Rick Battles.

Susan seemed overwhelmed by all the fuss bestowed on her. Practically her entire firm had arrived with her to await the outcome of the awards. We hope

she enjoyed the evening in spite of all the attention, and that she had fun spending the prize money.

It was a privilege to read all the testimonies sent in regarding the above nominees. You can read the rest on the SBLSA website by clicking on the L'Oscars page. We know that all legal secretaries are an important facet of their firms, and hope even more firms will participate in 2009. Start thinking about your nominee now!

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## LAW BOWL 2- BOWLING FOR DOLLARS!

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**HEAR YE! HEAR YE! ALL RISE FOR THE HON. JAMES E. HERMAN, EMCEE of SBLSA's Second Annual LawBowl** at Zodo's Bowling and Beyond to benefit Fighting Back's Teen Court. The event is scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2009, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. SBLSA is again working in conjunction with SB Paralegal and SB County Bar Associations, SB Women Lawyers, Barristers and the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse to organize this fundraiser. All are welcome to participate by creating teams, obtaining pledge money, being sponsors, donating draw prizes, and helping publicize the event. Please check out our website [www.sblegalnet.com](http://www.sblegalnet.com) for information and registration forms or contact Mary Carralejo at [mcarralejo@rppmh.com](mailto:mcarralejo@rppmh.com) for assistance with sponsorships and details. **Look for an in-depth article coming out in the April 2009 issue of Santa Barbara Lawyer Magazine.**

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## FILING SYSTEMS-A LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP

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The myth of Sisyphus, about a man toiling day after day to push a huge boulder up a mountain, only to find it back at the bottom the next day, is akin to the legal secretary faced with putting files in order and back where they belong, all the while more and more paperwork pours in, through the mail, through the fax, and through the computer.

Filing is truly a heroic task, one which should bring great rewards, like the Prince of the kingdom in marriage, riches beyond conception, or at the very

least a handsome bonus for knowing where everything is and being able to present a file or document with a flourish within moments of being requested to fetch it.

Every secretary has been faced with searching for a file through piles on the desk, the credenza, the floor, the briefcases, moving from office to office, checking the library, conference rooms, the attorney's car (!) and back to the secretary's desk. At those times our jobs seem more like a Greek tragedy, with the chorus being groans of frustration

and yips of glee on finding the accursed item.

Recently, our office moved from our heart of downtown location to a more modern, though smaller, facility. Thirty years of accumulation in one place had to be sorted through, deciding what to keep, what to discard, and configuring the new office space. We looked at it as an opportunity to design a work center that would be efficient and compact, yet allow multiple people to do different tasks at the same time in a relatively small area. Fortunately, we succeeded.

Wearing my office administrator hat, I also decided it was a chance to take a good hard look at our filing system. We had down-sized over the years from a mid-size firm to a two-attorney office, but we wanted to make sure our file retrieval system was state-of-the-art—one that anyone could figure out with just a glance. So off I went to do research.

First stop—a call to my sister-in-law, Andie, who worked for a huge PI firm in Phoenix, Arizona. First thing she said was, “we never let the attorneys touch the files.” “Really?” I said, amused. She was adamant. “We have a whole crew of file clerks who do nothing but make sure every document and file is indexed properly and its location documented—in the file or checked out or copied to an attorney. Attorneys may not put anything away or take anything out, they have to give it to their secretary, who gives it to the file clerk with appropriate indications on the document if it isn’t blatantly obvious where it goes.” Wow, I thought, yearning for full time file clerks.

Interestingly enough, that same sentiment was echoed at a large multiple-city firm that has a location right

here in Santa Barbara. “Oh no, the attorneys aren’t allowed to go into the files. They have to request them,” the office manager said, flourishing a request slip in front of my face. By that time I was laughing out loud. It’s a great idea, but not necessarily workable in a small office like mine. My initial reaction was yes! This is the way to go. I’ve ridden many a bucking horse before, so I believe in control, but then again, I like to think that it’s through controlling myself that the horse will be pacified. Hmm, I’m going to have to pursue that Zen thought further in terms of filing systems and attorneys. Right now, though, back to research.

I went to my Legal Secretary’s Resource Notebook, created by Legal Secretaries, Inc. and published by Parker & Son Publications, Inc. The notebook has a whole section entitled ‘Guide to Law Office Filing Systems’ written by Ursula T. Gibson. Admittedly, my book was last updated in 1991, but the information is so detailed on the different types of systems available, with the advantages and disadvantages of each, and pitfalls to watch out for, that it is just as relevant today, at least regarding hardcopy filing.

To begin with, the sole object of a filing system of any kind is being able to find something when it is needed again. In a law office, you have everything from firm form files, client files, tickler files, active and inactive files, closed files, a destroyed files data system, billing and vendor files, tax and business records, and systems that are alphabetical, numerical, or a combination of the two, say, alphabetical while active, numerical when closed. While electronic systems have made some things easier, they have also added elements to take into regard, especially with e-mail filing & production considerations.

To handle client files and different matters for each client alphabetically, you identify the file by putting last names first on the label, and having a matter description title, thereby filing by clients' last names alphabetically, and then sub-filing by their matter descriptions alphabetically within that client's set of files (i.e. "John Doe, Vandal UD" and "John Doe, Business entity" would be filed under the last name alphabetically, with the Business entity file before the Vandal unlawful detainer).

When filing by number, some firms assign a client a main number and then a sub number for new matters, i.e. 26000.000 for the first client file opened, and then 26000.001 for the next matter opened for that client. The next new client would be 26001.000, and so forth. Or you can just assign the next consecutive number to whomever you open the next file for, i.e. John Doe, Vandal UD is 26000001, Elmer Fudd, Personal Injury is 26000002, John Doe, Business entity is 26000003 and so on.

Sometimes numbers are assigned when the file is opened, and not used for filing until the matter is closed, at which time it is filed numerically in a separate section for closed matters. Other firms do not assign a number until the matter is closed, which may be easier as files close in different lengths of time, and by assigning the number at the time of closing, saves you having to reserve space in the drawer or shelf where that number will eventually go if you assign the number at time of opening. In my research I have come across a firm where inactive matters are filed alphabetically and numerically, i.e. putting the John Doe inactive file in the "Do - E" area and then filing all that

client's matters numerically under the client heading.

In order for a filing system to begin to work, there have to be some standards to naming files and subfolders so they are easily accessible and so that you don't have to look in a myriad of places. This is the key to the whole project and your sanity.

Generally, alphabetical filing is more efficient, because we tend to think in terms of names, rather than numbers, but it does mean that someone has to know the alphabet in order to make the system work! On the other hand, filing by number is a two step process; you have to look up the name to find the number of the file, and if the document is noted with only a number, you have to look up the number to be sure it corresponds with the name of the client. "This means two things to look for instead of one, and two ways in which errors can become time-consuming (because if you misread the number, you will be looking for the wrong file, have to go back and check again, and start your search over)" according to Ms. Gibson.

Cross-referencing is important, in that there may confusingly be more than one name to a file, but everything, especially on the computer, should go under the main name. The file may alternately be referred to by the client name, by the opposing party name, by the matter name, or by the short title of the litigation, which may not include any of the above. By putting a cross-reference in your data system, even by just making up a new card or computer folder that says something like, "Sunny Sunshine (See Doe, Vandal UD)" and "Doe, John, see also Vandal UD, Sunshine" etc., will help you to know

where to file documents regarding that file.

Redwells, or expando files, are convenient for grouping sub-files and pleading/discovery “clips,” or backings, within a matter. They should be labeled with the client’s name and matter description and have an index of what items are held in it and what volume it is (i.e. Vol. I of III is useful).

I am a big fan of backings within a file—for pleadings filed chronologically with an index on top numbering each document, giving a title or description, the date of filing or serving, the name of the attorney generating the document and each document having a number tab corresponding to the index. Discovery can be set up in similar fashion, skipping a space in the index for the response to be entered when it is received, and an indication on the index description of the document which party is propounding, and which party is responding. Backings are also useful for trust administrations within a trust file, probates, leases and their amendments, transactions, etc. Some prefer binders, or may use a combination of the two. With backings, you can separate those matters from the correspondence and initial client documents, but still have them in the same folder or redwell. Binders are a bit more difficult to handle and store but have their uses and are sometimes easier for attorneys to use while preparing responses and doing research. In either case, an index is necessary. Separate pleading backings can be created for complex matters to track the many parties and cross-complaints. Summary judgment motions and large discovery productions can be stored on separate backings, but noted on the index of the main backing and stored in close proximity. A separate

binder or folder is usually made for trial preparation, however for trial it is better to make separate copies of documents and to keep the pleading backings or binders intact chronologically so that you always know the status of the matter, rather than robbing them for exhibits and having to put them back together later.

Some offices like to use subject files, meaning they might open all their trust files under that heading and then organize alphabetically by client or trust name or numerically within that heading. Back in the late 70’s, I ran a temp legal secretary agency through Troy Harris and his Associated Attorney Services. I prided myself in being able to do a quick scan of the filing system and office set up in order to get up to speed when replacing the regular legal secretary (hard shoes to fill). At one firm I was immediately asked to prepare some corporate documents. I looked in the form file and everywhere else I could think to find the form I needed to fill out, only to have to go back to the attorney empty handed. “Did you look under “B?” he asked. I was at a loss. There was no “B” in the title of the document or in any reference to the type of document that I could think of, so I stammered, “Why would I look under B?” “B for blank form,” he stated simply.

Ms. Gibson put it wryly: “Human beings will try anything they can think of that looks reasonable at the beginning.... Once an awkward filing system is installed, it is the work of a genius to replace it with something more practical, less expensive and better for the purposes it must serve. You will find yourself for most of your career, stuck with the filing system that is in use at the office you work in.... However, you must know about possible solutions to filing

problems, because the occasion may arise when you can contribute to the solution of your firm's filing problems, and thereby become that rare genius who supplants an irrational system with a rational one." Lucky for me, our filing system works just great the way it is.

Lest you find yourself at your wits end, take a deep breath, look at your filing system, and see if the task is organized in the most efficient manner for you and the boss. At the end of the day, it is the

legal secretary who is responsible for seeing that everything is in its place (unless you have a battery of file clerks!). If you do not have a *Legal Secretary's Resource*, I recommend you get one from [www.lsi.org](http://www.lsi.org) pronto. It is invaluable. The explanations of how to set up and organize the myriad files and indexing systems alone make it worth the price.

By Lindsey Parks

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SBLSA lunchtime Board Meetings are the second Wednesday of every month except August at Reicker, Pfau, Pyle & McRoy, LLP.** Upcoming meetings are April 8, May 13, and June 10, 2009

**March 25, 2009 Annual Meeting 5:30-7:30 p.m.** Dinner is free for members, \$5.00 for guests. Please RSVP early! e-mail [nvasquez@rppmh.com](mailto:nvasquez@rppmh.com) or call 805-966-2440.

**MCLE Learning at Lunch 2009 – Come to our Annual meeting for future plans.** Registration forms and info will be placed in Anacapa Division Will Call, sent by e-mail to members, and available on our website, [www.sblegalnet.com](http://www.sblegalnet.com). For a minimal price tag, SBLSA provides a delicious lunch that includes salad, sandwiches, fruit, cold beverages and dessert. The speakers are excellent and you get an opportunity to network face-to-face with your peers.

**April 4, 2009 - LSI Legal Specialization Spring Regional Workshops** (MCLE), at the Hilton, Irvine. Registration extended to

**3/25/09.** Schedule and registration forms can be downloaded from [www.lsi.org](http://www.lsi.org) and at [www.sblegalnet.com](http://www.sblegalnet.com)

**April 28, 2009—KIDS' COURT-5:00 – 6:00 p.m. in Dept. 6, Santa Barbara Courthouse,** 1100 Anacapa St. Bring your favorite stuffed animal and get a signed adoption certificate signed by Judge deBellefeuille.

**May 14 - 17, 2009: LSI ANNUAL CONFERENCE** at Long Beach Hilton. Hotel and Registration forms can be downloaded from [www.lsi.org](http://www.lsi.org). It's always a treat to meet with fellow professionals, and these women are all high caliber. Get inspired to take your career to the next level!

**May 16, 2009- SECOND ANNUAL LAW BOWL FOR FIGHTING BACK'S TEEN COURT** at Zodo's Bowling & Beyond, 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. See LawBowl page for details and to download registration forms. Form your team now, get pledges, donate to our draw prizes, sponsor a lane, be a part of a great cause! Stay up-to-date—check our website regularly for additions or changes.

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## LETTER FROM THE SBLSA PRESIDENT

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Dear SBLSA Members,

Well, it's hard to believe that our fiscal year is almost over and that Election Time is upon us! The Nominations & Elections Committee is happy to present the following Slate of Officers for our new fiscal year (which runs May 1, 2009 – April 30, 2010):

**SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2009-2010 FISCAL YEAR:**

Co-Presidents:	Elizabeth Kapp & Mary Carralejo
Co-Vice Presidents	Noemi Vasquez & Lisa Bautista
Governor	Julie Ybarra
Treasurer	Mary Carralejo
Secretary	Trina MacCosham
Executive Advisor	[VACANT]

SBLSA also hopes to send 3 delegates to the LSI Annual Conference in Long Beach the weekend of Fri., May 15 – Sun., May 17. Up to 6 delegates can be nominated, but only 3 are elected and attend the Conference.

**DELEGATES TO LSI MAY 15-17 CONFERENCE (up to 6 Delegates can be nominated):**

1. Julie Ybarra	4. (VACANT)
2. Lindsey Parks	5. (VACANT)
3. Elizabeth Kapp	6. (VACANT)

Any member of SBLSA may attend the LSI Conference (hotel and travel expenses are reimbursed by SBLSA). The Committee is hopeful that there are more members who would like to attend the Conference and who will agree to add their name to the list. Delegates to the LSI Conference will be elected at the March 25 meeting. Please contact Elizabeth Kapp, the Nominations & Elections Committee Chairman ([ekapp@rppmh.com](mailto:ekapp@rppmh.com) or 966-2440), to add your name to the Delegate list.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that our Annual Election Meeting will be held Wed., March 25, from 5:30-7:30 pm, in the upstairs Penthouse Conference room at Reicker Pfau Pyle & McRoy, 1421 State Street.** Beverages and a light supper will be served. The admission for SBLSA members is FREE! We will have a wonderful speaker on the Feldenkrais Method, an effective and successful approach to help you become aware of unconscious muscular tensions and movements that are affecting your health and your ability to move freely. Draw prizes too!

*SBLSA needs its members, now more than ever, to attend this Annual Election Meeting and cast your vote to approve the Slate of Officers as presented and to elect the 3 Delegates who will represent Santa Barbara at the LSI Annual May Conference. Also on the agenda is a discussion of the upcoming new year and how SBLSA can contribute programs and educational opportunities to the S.B. legal community.*

I look forward to seeing you on March 25! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Mary Carralejo, SBLSA 2008-2009 co-President  
[mcarralejo@rppmh.com](mailto:mcarralejo@rppmh.com)  
966-2440, ext. 447

*SBLSA—A Must On Your Resume!*

**Career Day at Santa Barbara High School is scheduled for March 26, 2009 – SBLSA will be there, with Co-President Mary Carralejo and Vice President and alumnus Lisa Bautista making a presentation at each of the four sessions to be held that morning. Over 175 speakers in 80 fields are participating. According to Michelle Magnusson, of the Center for Community Education at the SB County Education Office, the event is an exciting way for students to learn more about career opportunities and helps them to better plan the classes and educational choices they will make in the future. Speakers in the legal field are always in high demand. Other smaller Career Days will be held at La Cuesta on May 8 and at the Los Prietos Boys Camp on June 3, 2009. Students will be given our outreach brochure entitled **“So You Want A Career In The Legal Field? Before You Spend A Lot Of Money On Law School, Check Out Your Other Options,”** a copy of which can be downloaded from our website-- just click on the “Information” button on the left side to reach the page where it is located. **SBLSA is committed to bringing newcomers into the profession and providing education and support through classes, networking and scholarships.****



P. O. Box 2103  
Santa Barbara, CA 93120-2103

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**NOTE: DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED  
OPEN WITHOUT DELAY  
Next Points & Authorities due out early June 2009**

**Office Managers,  
Please Post or Distribute.  
Thank you.**