



OCDLA Comes of Age

by Greg Hazarabedian

2009 marks the 30th anniversary of OCDLA. Let's pause for a minute and reflect on where we've been and where we are now.

Thirty years ago a small group of Oregon public defenders came together and "founded" what was to become OCDLA. Bob Larson of Eugene and Jim Hennings of Portland were key players in establishing the organization. And with the help of a little seed money from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration our first executive director, John Potter, was hired. Under the direction of a five-member board, the new association embarked on sponsoring its first "Annual Conference" and membership drive.

We enter our 30th year with over 1300 members, a far cry from the less than 30 of 30 years ago. We remain the largest voluntary organization of lawyers in Oregon, and our ranks include many nonlawyer criminal defense professional members as well.

We are far and away the premiere provider of CLEs for the criminal defense practitioner in Oregon. We will offer thirteen different educational opportunities in our 30th year, many more than just a few years ago. The fact that we are nationally known as a high-quality CLE provider is largely due to the dedicated members who have served on the Education Committee over the years. We have also been fortunate in having a series of excellent Education Committee Chairs, including Ryan Scott, Laurie Schertz, David McDonald, Michelle Burrows, Bob Thuemmel, Tony Bornstein, Lane Borg, and Ed Jones.

Another way we help educate our membership is with our publications. Look for these new publications in 2009: a revised DUII Trial Notebook, a completely revised Major Crimes and Defenses manual, a long-awaited mental health manual, , and updated versions of our Search and

Seizure Manual and Felony Sentencing in Oregon manual.

Our most difficult educational task is, of course, trying to educate our elected representatives in Salem. We have worked hard for many years to establish ourselves as a major player in "the building," and are the "go to" group for many legislators with questions relating to criminal or juvenile law.

We began this effort in 1981 with a group of volunteer members to "lobby" issues in the legislature. Much of our time then was spent just tracking bills and staying abreast of the legislative process. This year we are fortunate enough to have Gail Meyer as our full-time substantive issues lobbyist on a 24-month contract – a first for OCDLA. We are also well represented by Mark Nelson as our fiscal issues lobbyist, helping us secure funding for public defense in Oregon.

While a lot has changed, we still rely on a core group of volunteers to review legislation and provide policy guidance – a special thanks to the hardworking members of the OCDLA Legislative Committee.

Your Board of Directors has decided to recognize OCDLA's coming of age by leaving the youth of renting for the adulthood of property ownership. We are in the process of creating a permanent home for OCDLA in downtown Eugene. More on this later.

Congratulations to all of us as we enter OCDLA's 30th anniversary year. Please make an extra effort to attend this year's Annual Conference in Bend June 18–20—should be quite a party! ☺

*OCDLA Life Member **Greg Hazarabedian** is the Association's President. He is the board liaison to the Legislative Committee, and also serves on the Capital Defender, Law School Outreach, and Website committees. Greg is director of Public Defender Services of Lane County in Eugene.*