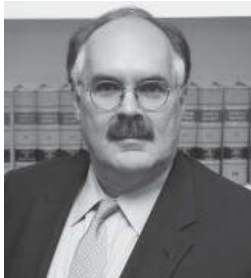


by Willard E. Lee



An Energizing Conference Experience

I wondered, briefly, how *welcome* I would be at an ALA Regional Conference held in a *different region than my own*. You see, I am a member of the Atlanta Chapter, which is part of ALA's Region 3, and I serve on the *Chapter's Board of Directors*.



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But I am also a member of the Cyber Chapter – ALA's online "virtual" Chapter – which the Association considers part of its Region 1.

My attendance at ALA's 2008 Region 1 Educational Conference & Exposition – held in Portland, Maine – came about in a unique way. During one ALA Annual Conference, Keith Bovey was lucky enough to win a scholarship to the Region 1 Conference. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend the Region 1 event, so he asked the Cyber Chapter to send someone in his place. That person turned out to be me!

While I was initially unsure how welcome I would be in Region 1, I stopped and remembered that ALA brings out in its members a sense of camaraderie, connection and community that bridges geographic borders. Everyone I met at the Conference made me feel very welcome, especially the Region 1 Management Team.

When I was lucky enough to be asked to attend the event as the Cyber Chapter's representative, I jumped at the chance for several reasons. As a longtime ALA member, I am always looking for opportunities to attend functions that allow me to gain additional knowledge of our profession and to network with fellow administrators. I also had never visited the Portland area, and as an avid sailor, I welcomed the chance to visit a part of the world in which water and boats are integral parts of the scenery.

The Regional Management Team, ALA headquarters staff and local Chapter members put together a wonderful Conference featuring many first-class educational sessions. The session I enjoyed the most was "Going Green in Your Law Firm – It's Just Good \$ense." All of the sessions and speakers were great, and I brought back many excellent new ideas to my firm.

“I strongly urge everyone to take advantage of the Conferences and opportunities offered to us by ALA.”

I also spent ample time in the Exhibit Hall and made it a point to speak with each business partner who was there. Without the support of our business partners, ALA could not afford to offer these outstanding educational opportunities at reasonable prices to its members. I've learned over the years to thank each business partner for supporting ALA. I also give each one a few minutes of my time to find out what its products or services are and how they might benefit my firm. In many instances, a company may not have a service or product

I need at that moment, but I always file away the information I learn. You never know when you may need something you originally learned about in the Exhibit Hall at an ALA event.

And, let's not forget the Lobster Bake! It was a well-organized event that provided the perfect opportunity for me to network with fellow administrators and ALA's many business partners.

I've attended many ALA events over the years, and this Conference experience was one of the most worthwhile. By attending an ALA Conference, I got a break from the daily grind of managing a law office. It rejuvenated me, and I returned to my firm energized. I strongly urge everyone to take advantage of the Conferences and opportunities offered to us by ALA. ♦

Note: The next ALA Conference is the Annual Conference & Exposition in Boston, Massachusetts, in early May 2010. Visit www.alanet.org/conf for more information.

DID YOU KNOW that ALA's Cyber Chapter exists as an online "virtual" Chapter and offers additional educational and networking opportunities for Association members? The Cyber Chapter has approximately 120 members from all six ALA Regions and is officially considered part of Region 1. Learn more at www.cyberala.org.

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