
JOSEPH R. RE

AIPLA President's Report

Becoming President has provided me the opportunity to reflect on my own experiences as a longtime AIPLA member and hopefully to show why active participation in the Association is so worthwhile and rewarding. I first began attending AIPLA meetings to keep in touch with my fellow law clerks at the Federal Circuit back in the mid 1980's. I had no idea how those AIPLA visits would spawn hundreds of very special relationships. People often ask me whether they should join AIPLA. My answer is, only if you want hundreds of life-long relationships, and to be part of such a wonderful community.

I must acknowledge and thank some of the people who encouraged me to be active in AIPLA, many of whom are no longer with us. First, I thank Howard Markey, the first Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit, who brought me to this very luncheon while I was his law clerk. I witnessed him entertain a large luncheon crowd. Back then, however, the organization was dominated by white men. Fortunately for all of us, that is no longer the case, as the membership and leadership has grown to include so many wonderful women and ethnically diverse leaders, some from all around the world. I applaud the Association's efforts to diversify the profession. That commitment was so nicely reflected by many of the diversity programs presented at this year's Annual Meeting.



Joseph R. Re
Partner, Knobbe Martens

I want to thank Charlie Baker, who as chair of the patent litigation committee, asked me to volunteer for my first AIPLA assignment, to write a white paper. That paper led me to my next assignment, to write an amicus brief before the Federal Circuit sitting en banc. That was a wonderful experience, as I was supervised by former AIPLA President Jack Goldstein and Professor Don Chisum. I am so thankful to former President Jerry Lee, who appointed me to the amicus committee, a committee that kept me fully engaged in the Association for so many years. Participating in that committee also showed me just how influential this Association can be in the courts on complicated issues affecting intellectual property. That is one of many ways this Association helps influence the law.

But the person who led me best by example was my law partner and career mentor, Don Martens, President of the Association in 1995. In 1987, Don escorted me and other young associates from my firm to the Annual meeting. Among us was another future President, Bill Rooklidge. I witnessed Don and his lovely wife Jan selflessly lead this organization with style and grace for so many years well past his presidency. I hope to live up to their example and ideals. We all miss Don, who passed away last year, but he is still a guiding force in my life to this day.

Coincidentally, I later served on the Board when Bill was President and then served under Mel Garner, our first African American President. I hope many of you had the chance to hear Mel's inspiring talk at our inaugural 'Titans of the IP Bar' during the Annual meeting. He spoke along with our first female President, Meg Boulware, and Circuit Judge Alan Lourie. If you did not, you can still hear them because the program was recorded. I also encourage you to listen to some of the other programs presented at the conference, including an inspiring talk by Judge Jimmy Renya of the Federal Circuit.

I also want to thank my other partners at Knobbe Martens, who always encouraged me to do whatever my heart desired. Never did my firm tell me no. They gave me the time and resources to fully participate in any organization I pleased. And of course, I want to thank the only love of my life, my wife of 34 years, Heather, and my children, Domenic and Maggie Ann. I could not imagine life without any of you. Thank you so much for your love and support and tolerating the life of a hyperactive trial attorney.

AIPLA is a very special organization. The people are what make this organization so great. The challenges of the global pandemic have crippled, if not destroyed, many bar associations. And obviously it presented serious challenges for us at AIPLA. But this organization, under Barbara Fiacco's steady leadership, has responded to the enormous obstacles presented by the global pandemic. The Association quickly adapted, readjusted its budget and priorities, and made some very difficult decisions. It continued to do what it does best, connecting people who are interested in a common goal -- to advocate for a strong and fairly balanced intellectual property system, so innovators, creators, and investors can feel confident the law will protect the fruits of their labor and their investments.

AIPLA could not function without its dedicated staff. Many thanks go to our Executor Director Vince Garlock, and Chief Operating Officer Meghan Donohoe, as well as the rest of the faithful staff who continued to provide so many services for our members. This past year has been truly challenging and extraordinary. I have great confidence that we will overcome the challenges of this pandemic and hopefully reflect back that we navigated its obstacles and challenges to the best of our abilities. I have faith in the leadership of this Association that, when this pandemic is over, we will become stronger than ever.

To the hundreds of lawyer and patent agent volunteers who keep this organization functioning and always moving forward. Thank you! We cannot forget that the Association and its members are all volunteers. Special thanks also go to my fellow officers and Board members, especially the Board members who joined with me three years ago and whose terms are now expired, Matt Wagner, DeAnn Smith, Tim Meigs, and Troy Grabow. I also want to thank our Immediate Past President Sheldon Klein who has also left our Board and Executive Committee. Barbara and I and the rest of the Board have greatly appreciated your leadership over the years. Also, thank you to the new volunteers who stepped up to take on new leadership and board positions.

Over the past three decades or so, I have been so fortunate to pursue cases for some of this country's great innovators and innovative companies. I have seen first-hand the importance of a strong and balanced intellectual property system. I have seen how that system was directly responsible for life-saving technologies and the creation of new companies and thousands of jobs. I will not accept the unfounded criticism that our IP systems have outlived their purposes or are a drag on the economy and even hurt innovation. I have not witnessed that during my participation in the system for the past 35 years. If anyone doubts this, please take some time to listen to Judge Lourie's speech he gave during the Annual Meeting, and how he has witnessed the patent system has evolved over the years to meet the needs of our most complex society. So I applaud the AIPLA's efforts to support the entirety of our country's IP systems, while recognizing their shortcomings, as we all continue to strive to achieve the best way to fulfill the patent and copyright systems' constitutional purposes of promoting the progress of science and the useful arts.

Bringing people together is tremendously important, especially in this new digital world. Bringing people together is what the AIPLA does best by cultivating life-long personal and professional relationships. I encourage you to step up and be active in the Association. We need your help. I also ask you to encourage junior or younger lawyers and patent agents to join AIPLA. To the younger lawyers and agents out there, you may be pulled in many different directions as to where to invest your time and energy at this moment in your career. I encourage you to make a small commitment to the AIPLA - now. This small commitment can spawn a lifetime of personal and professional relationships that you will reflect back on with gratitude, just as I do now. Also we need your talents to continue to diversify and grow this great organization. To the more senior lawyers, I ask that you encourage your law firm's leadership to support the participation of younger lawyers in the AIPLA, just as Louis Knobbe and Don Martens did for me. The relationships that AIPLA participation offers are meaningful and strong. And what could be more important than relationships and the community that binds us?

I look forward to serving you as this Association's President and working with its dedicated Board members and leaders. Please come join us and be a part of this wonderful organization.