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The last letter I wrote to the members of the Alabama State Bar was penned deep in the woods in Buck's Pocket, located in northeast Alabama on the DeKalb-Jackson County line. Most of you know that Buck's Pocket is the legendary place where those who have lost an election go to lick their wounds, and that's what I was doing in 2005 when I wrote that letter.

It occurred to me that as I, for the second time, have decided to seek the office of the President of the Alabama State Bar, that perhaps I could decipher some lessons which would contribute to a different result the second time around. Otherwise, I may be remembered as the William Jennings Bryan of the Alabama State Bar.

I stated back in 2005 that I had come to realize that those of us who live and practice in rural settings and in small or solo firms have every bit as much opportunity to serve the State Bar, shape its policies and participate in its activities as do those who live in large urban areas and practice in large firms. Since I became involved with the State Bar in 1986, I have been blessed with the experience of serving on the Bar Commission for twenty (20) years, on four executive councils, as president of the Alabama Law Foundation for two years and a member of its board for much longer, and on various and sundry other committees and advisory panels. Those opportunities and my ability to work in those capacities with other lawyers of extraordinary commitment and abilities has been the most professionally rewarding aspect of my life.

In addition to being rewarding for me personally, it has given me an opportunity to acquire a broad and deep understanding of the commitment of those who work in the State Bar, and the assets available to each of the over 17,000 members of this most unique organization.

A recent, and distinguished, president of the Bar made a profound observation toward the end of his term. Through the years there have been divisions in this Bar: plaintiff/defendant, gender and race. His statement was, however, that at this point, the largest division in this Bar was between the rural and urban lawyers, or, more, precisely, solo and small practitioners and those in large firms.

I want to be president of this Bar because I know, as a rural, small-firm lawyer, that that chasm is one of perception, not reality. The resume which is attached demonstrates that I have been given an opportunity to serve in any capacity that I was willing to take on.

Each year, the president of the Bar adopts a theme. If I am fortunate enough to be elected, the theme for 2016-2017 will be THIS BAR IS ONE. Based on the experience that I've had working in this Bar, and my status as a rural, small-firm attorney, I am convinced that the camaraderie, friendship and respect that I have enjoyed between the lawyers of this state for the last forty years can become the norm of the Alabama State Bar.

I thank all of you for the opportunities that I have been given in the past to serve this Bar, and ask you for the opportunity to continue to do so.

WATSON & NEELEY, LLC

W. N. WATSON

WNW/mk

Bar Activities

- Bar Commissioner of the Alabama State Bar: 1986-1987; 1993-2003; 2006-present
- Alabama State Bar Executive Committee: 2000-2001; 2011-2014
- Vice President of the Alabama State Bar: 2011-2012; 2013-2014
- Member of the Alabama State Bar Disciplinary Commission: 1994-2000; 2001-2003; 2006-present
- Chairman of the Alabama State Bar Disciplinary Commission: 2002-2003; 2012-present
- Member of the Chief Justices Alabama Judicial System Study Commission
- Alabama State Bar Liaison for Redrafting Judicial Inquiry Commission Rules
- President of the Alabama Law Foundation: 2011-2013
- Trustee of the Alabama Law Foundation: 2003-2009; 2013-present
- Selected as Fellow of the Alabama Law Foundation
- Selected as Fellow of the American Bar Foundation
- Charter member of the Atticus Finch Society
- Currently serving on the Finance and Audit and Personnel Committee of the Alabama State Bar

For questions, please feel free to contact Rocky at rockyforpresident@watsonneeley.com.

W. N. (Rocky) Watson

W. N. (Rocky) Watson was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama while his father was attending law school after World War II. Rocky was raised in DeKalb County, Alabama where he graduated from the public schools of the city of Fort Payne and Fort Payne High School in 1967. After high school, Rocky attended Auburn University, where he graduated with honors in 1971. Subsequent to his graduation from Auburn, Rocky attended the University of Alabama School of Law on scholarship, graduating in 1974.

While attending law school, Rocky participated in the John A. Campbell Court Board, and served as chairman of the Board during the 1973-1974 school year. Rocky was also selected to the Order of the Coif and the Order of Barristers. Additionally, he served on various student-faculty committees while at the law school.

Rocky entered the private practice of law with his father in 1974. W. W. Watson had been practicing since 1950 in Fort Payne, Alabama. Rocky and his father continued to practice together until his father's death in 1994. Subsequent to that time, he participated in the formation of the firm of Watson, Gillis & Carver with Terry Gillis and Sheri Carver, that firm was Watson & Gillis after Sheri Carver was elected to the bench. The firm is now Watson & Neeley, and his daughter and son-in-law (Tamara & Aubrey Neeley) joined the firm October 1, 2011.

After having served two years as the President of the DeKalb County Bar Association in the late 1970s, in the mid 1980s, at the urging of William D. (Bill) Scruggs, Rocky became active with the Alabama State Bar. He served one year as the Bar Commissioner from the Ninth Judicial Circuit (1986-1987) while Bill Scruggs vacated that seat to serve as President. Upon Bill's retirement as a Bar Commissioner in 1993, Rocky served an additional ten year stint as Commissioner of the Ninth Judicial Circuit (1993-2003). Rocky returned to the Bar Commission in 2006 and is currently serving.

Rocky has served in several other capacities with the Alabama State Bar, including as a member of the Executive Committee (2000-2001 and 2011-2014) vice-president of the Bar (2011-2012 and 2013-2014), Member of the Disciplinary Commission (1994-2000; 2001-2003; 2006-present), and has been Chairman of the Disciplinary Commission since 2012. He is currently serving on the Finance and Audit Committee as well as the Personnel Committee of the Alabama State Bar. He has also served as a Member of the Chief Justices Alabama Judicial System Study Commission, the Alabama State Bar Liaison for Redrafting Judicial Inquiry Commission Rules, and was a charter member of the Atticus Finch Society. Additionally, Rocky was the President of the Alabama Law Foundation from 2011 – 2013, served on the Board of Trustees for the Alabama Law Foundation in 2003 – 2009 and again from 2013 – present.

Legal honors received by Rocky include selection as a Fellow of the Alabama Bar Foundation and Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, and receipt of the Alabama State Bar President's Award for services rendered to the State Bar in 2002-2003.

During his time in Fort Payne, Rocky has been active in many religious, civic and community organizations, including as two time President of the Fort Payne Chamber of Commerce, President of the DeKalb County Arts Council, member of the DeKalb County Economic Development Authority, and as a Sunday School teacher at his local church, the First United Methodist Church of Fort Payne.

Rocky's practice can only be described as the practice of a country lawyer. For almost forty years, he has handled civil and criminal trials, domestic relations, business matters, including the representation of various local banks. He has represented the City of Fort Payne since 2000 and the Water Works Board of the City of Fort Payne since 1984. Additionally, Rocky is a qualified mediator and serves in that capacity when called upon.

Rocky is married to Donna M. Watson and they have three children, Alyson, Tamara and Derek. In addition, he is a doting grandfather to four delightful granddaughters, Libba, Kady, Braelyn and Finley.