

**The President's Two Cents on
A Successful Seminar in Sunny New Britain Connecticut**

The American Counsel Association, of which Gerard McDermott is a past President, cosponsored with the Connecticut Bar Association an exciting program entitled "Global Perspectives in Appellate Law" at the Connecticut Bar headquarters in New Britain (near Hartford) on April 3, 2009. Approximately 50 appellate lawyers, mostly but not entirely from Connecticut, attended the seminar, and the many comments I received afterward were uniformly raves. ACA member Kim Knox and I were the co-chairs.

Four ACA members – Gerard McDermott from England, Bernard Amyot from Montreal, Buddy Menton from New York City and Pam Bresnahan from D.C. – were the stars of the show. Gerard talked about his work before the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords in London and the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Bernard talked about the appellate courts of Canada (ah, the joys of arguing in two languages). Pam and Buddy talked about their work before state and federal appellate courts around the United States, with Pam explaining her take on how to get the U.S. Supreme Court to take a case, and Buddy explaining some of the bizarre practices of handling an appeal in New York (where you can appeal as of right from almost any ruling) and Virginia (where you can appeal as of right from almost no ruling).

After their speeches, the chief justice and two associate justices of the Connecticut Supreme Court reacted for over an hour to their presentations. For example:

Chief Justice Rogers: "So tell me, Mr. McDermott, we would give you half an hour for oral argument in Connecticut; how much time do you get for oral argument in the Court of Appeal?"

Gerard: "Up to five days."

Chief Justice: "You what?"

Gerard: "Well, we don't always ask for five days."

Chief Justice: "What could you possibly be saying by the third day?"

Bernard: "Could I interrupt? I understand you can take five days in Connecticut to pick a jury. In Canada we do it in half an hour."

Chief Justice: "Touché."

And so it went for the amusement and edification of the experienced appellate lawyers in the room.

I am pleased to say that in addition to our four ACA speakers, there were eight ACA members in attendance, including Livia Barndollar, the President of the Connecticut Bar Association, and Bruce Ramsey, our long-time member and Past President from Boston.

Thank you, Gerard, Bernard, Pam and Buddy, for taking the time to come to sunny Connecticut (it was raining so hard at one point that it was difficult to hear) to share your experiences with other appellate lawyers. In the process, you raised considerably, and in a very positive way, the visibility of our Association.

Wesley W. Horton
President
American Counsel Association