



The Paragraph

Georgia Association of Paralegals Quarterly Newsletter
Charter Member of the
National Federation of Paralegal Associations

November, 2004

GAP'S 2004 YEAR IN REVIEW

In This Issue

Pages 1 & 17

GAP's Year in Review

Page 2

From The President

Page 3

August GAP Meeting Report

Page 4

*Corporate Sponsor Members
2005 GAP Meeting Dates*

Page 5

New GAP Members

Page 6

NFPA Region III Meeting

Page 7

October GAP Meeting Report

Page 8

GAP 2005 Statement of Interest

Page 9

*The History of GA Paralegals
and the Bar*

Page 10

Certificated or Certified

Page 12

A Truly Superconference

Page 13

*Setting The Pace &
Member Spotlight*

Page 15

Paralegals & OT Rules

Page 16

*Announcements &
Member Spotlight*

Page 18

From The Editor



Please go to page 17 for a
recap of GAP's 2004 year

2004 Board of Directors

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Immediate Past President / Board Advisor

Jennifer Kirkland

jennkirk18@yahoo.com

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Position Available

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Position Available (reports to Newsletter Editor)

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beth.magee@onity.biz

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Kevin Fogle

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New Member Reception

Position Available

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Speaker's Bureau Coordinator

Lyza Sandgren

lsandgren@mckennalong.com

Executive Administrator

Norene Quinn

gaparalegal@mindspring.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Marcus C. Li, President

Georgia Association of Paralegals

As I write this message, I find it hard to believe that we are in the last quarter of the year. It is amazing how quickly we have gone from greeting ghastly trick-or-treaters to preparing for holiday visits with family and friends. I hope that time will stand still just long enough for you to remember some of the highlights from our GAP meetings and events from the past nine months as you flip through the pages of this newsletter.

We still have some association business to take care of in the next couple of months before bidding final farewells to 2004. Please add the following items to your "I Need to Hurry and Get It Done List":

- Apply for one of the two Paralegal Advance Competency Exam (PACE) Scholarships sponsored by Paramount Staffing;
- Nominate your employer for GAP's Employer of the Year Award;
- Nominate a deserving Paralegal for GAP's Pro Bono Service Award;
- Submit a Statement of Interest to volunteer with GAP in the capacity of either a board member, coordinator or special assignment volunteer and;
- Make plans to attend GAP's Annual Holiday Dinner on December 14, 2004.

All awards and recognition of service will be presented at the annual holiday dinner. The incoming board will also be installed at this festive event.

As the year draws to an end, I would like to leave you with this thought. The Paralegal profession remains to be one of the fastest growing industries in this country, thereby yielding constant changes. As we have seen lately, these changes can be summed up in three main categories: fantastic, unfortunate, or even indifferent to practitioners in our field. By being an active, dues paying GAP member, you are also a member of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, NFPA. This unique dual membership ensures a professional voice on local and national paralegal issues such as paralegal schooling requirements, regulatory issues, wage and hourly laws, and the roles of paralegals. All of which impact and mold our profession.

It has been both an honor and a pleasure to serve as your President this year. I am looking forward to continued service in 2005.

Cheers,
Marcus

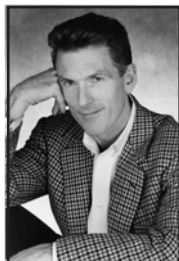


REPORT ON AUGUST GAP MEETING

By: Christina Weeks

Our August meeting was sponsored by Special Counsel, Lex Business Solutions and Daticon. Thanks to our great sponsors we were able to have a lovely dinner at Anthony's as usual as well as enjoy a fun guest speaker.

"Everything that the public knows about lawyers, they learned from the movies" was our introduction to Mr. Judson Vaughn of JurisPerfect. He then went on to explain that his company teaches lawyers, clients and witnesses how to direct emotions. He is able to do this through his knowledge of how non-verbal communication is the most powerful tool you have to direct emotions.



He explained that some people just have charisma and those are the people we like and we trust. And since trust is an essential element of communication, being charismatic is to your benefit. One way to add some instant charisma is to become asymmetrical. According to Judson Vaughn standing in an asymmetrical posture is more inviting and more trustworthy. Have you ever seen a politician put his foot up on something and then lean in a little closer to the audience? He was trying to earn your trust through asymmetry.



Additionally personal space is also a factor in directing emotions. Mr. Vaughn illustrated this with a volunteer. Getting right up in someone's face as illustrated in the photo below created repulsion and is not what you want to do when you are trying to win someone over to your side. Mr. Vaughn's discussion was very informative as well as entertaining we greatly enjoyed having him as our speaker.

There were also some great door prizes at the August meeting, below are some photos of the prizes given away by our August meeting sponsors.

Barbara Pylant won Tickets to a Falcon's game and a tail gate party, given by Robert Draper of Lex Business Solutions.



Brandy Richardson won a gift certificate for a half a day at Spa Sydell given by Robert Draper of Lex Business Solutions.

Jeannie Tucker won a \$50.00 American Express gift certificate given by Keisha Hudson of Special Counsel.



Alison Lynch won Falcons tickets, given by Jerry Burke of Daticon.

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2005 GAP MEETING DATES

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Tuesday, June 14, 2005

Tuesday, August 9, 2005

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

WELCOME NEW GAP MEMBERS

Ryan Boulware
Desiree Evans-Wilson
Vito de Gennaro
Latosha A. Giles
Allyson F. Lyles
Amy Yvonne Nqurukie
Joe L. Parks
Lisa Slappey

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CarMax Auto Finance
Azuka Edeh

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Barbara Ambus
Lora J. Billinger
Tricia N. Brooks
Sandra Holoman-Stevens
Alicia C. Lee
La'Shawn H. Williams
Alicia N. Williams

City of East Point
LaShaunda Douglas

Cozen O'Connor
Irene Jean-Brice

**DeKalb Technical College,
Clarkston Campus**
Queen Young

**Department of Defense, Navy
Recruiting District Atlanta**
Leanora Erica Mims

Estrin Professional Careers
Chere Estrin

Fellows Johnson & LaBriola, LLP
Marlissa N. Crawford

**Fidelity National Title Insurance
Co. NTS Division**
Cicily V. Mitchell

Greenberg, Traurig LLP
Chiquita Layne

Hasty, Pope & Ball, LLP
Michelle Cheri Pierce
Michelle K. Stone

**Joseph R. Neal, Jr. P.C. /
Trial Lawyer**
Margaret J. Fountain

Levy, Ehrlich & Petriello, P.C.
Stephanie Gaskin

**Mexican American Legal Defense
and Educational Fund (MALDEF)**
Diana L. Eraydin

Plichta, West & Associates, P.C.
Sybil Wagner

**Powell, Goldstein,
Frazer & Murphy LLP**
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Vera Tsalwa

Rowe, Rowe & Thomas, LLC
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Stewart Title Guaranty Company
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Jon Mize
Wynne Pearson
Dan Powell

Titan Corporation
Paula G. Johnson

TransPerfect Translations, Inc.
Alex McDonald
Kevin Obarski

Weathersby, Howard & Kuck
Elizabeth Howard

Webb, Tanner & Powell, LLP
Leslie Trimmer

Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco, PC
April Stancliff

6th ANNUAL GAP HOLIDAY PARTY



December 14, 2004 • Anthony's Restaurant
3109 Piedmont Rd

Cocktails 5:00 • Dinner 6:00

Installation of the 2005 Board of Directors

Sponsored by:

**Document Technologies, Inc. (DTI)
Alexander Gallo & Associates
Paramount Staffing**

NFPA Region III Meeting

Gina S. Farley, CP, Senior VP and NFPA Primary

The meeting was held in Lexington, Kentucky on October 2, 2004, hosted by Greater Lexington Paralegal Association and conducted by our Region III Director, Irene Yakovlevich. GAP sent its President, Marcus Li and Primary, Gina Farley, as representatives.

Presentations were given on marketing your association, financial management and keeping adequate reserves, the NFPA budget, fundraising, the definition of "substantive legal work", pro bono, and public relations. There was also plenty of discussion of these subjects as well as other issues affecting each association.

There was a great deal of discussion about a proposed dues increase by NFPA. The proposed increase would raise dues at all levels of membership, including a \$5 per year increase for voting member dues. NFPA has not raised dues since 1992

and is very reluctant to do so. However, in order to maintain membership benefits and build reserves, they feel it is necessary. It has not yet been decided if this will be a resolution to the delegates at next year's convention, but it would definitely have to be approved by the delegates before going into effect.

Another topic of discussion was the definition of "substantive legal work" and NFPA's efforts to clarify with more specificity its paralegal definition. In the same manner that NFPA was not able to make a definitive statement regarding exempt/non-exempt to the Department of Labor, we find that it is also difficult to come to an agreement on this definition. There are so many different types and levels of paralegals, areas of law and work environments that it is difficult to decide on a definition that will encompass all of us without being too generic.

Although nothing definitive was decided on these topics, it was a reminder to me how important it is that GAP has a forum for involvement in these issues and a voice along with paralegals across the nation through NFPA. For almost any topic or predicament that GAP may wrestle with in the future, there are associations that have dealt with them before us and are happy to share their experience with us and vice versa.

The meeting lasted a full day and included discussion of many more matters and sharing of ideas and advice to take back to our respective associations. We were also provided with a CD prepared by Ms. Yakovlevich containing a wealth of NFPA reference materials. It was a day filled with camaraderie with paralegal professionals who are concerned and dedicated to furthering our profession in the appropriate directions.

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REPORT ON OCTOBER GAP MEETING

Our October meeting dinner sponsors were Document Resources and CT Corporation. Our first door prize of the evening, a lovely plant, was a "New Members" only drawing sponsored by Dotty Pritchett of Andrew Grace & Associates.

The speaker was Evelyn Ashley. She spoke to us about her career, what she's doing now and how she got there. She is currently an attorney and has her own law firm, Trusted Counsel (for more information on Evelyn's background go to <http://www.trusted-counsel.com>). She is also co-founder of Red Hot Venture Consulting, a strategic consulting firm for technology businesses and she is co-founder of Public Art Events.



Speaker's Bureau Coordinator, Lyza L. Sandgren with Speaker Evelyn Ashley and GAP member



Speaker Evelyn Ashley founder, Trusted Counsel Ashley LLC

Do not be afraid to follow your dreams is what keeps running through my mind as I reflect on the evening. As Evelyn discussed her career she told us what she accomplished in the position but; she also told us what she learned from each experience, and how she used her new found knowledge and applied it to her next adventure.

One thing that really fascinated me about Evelyn is that she is the only lawyer I have ever encountered that not only says she loves her job but it appeared to me that she is not just saying it and that she actually loves what she does. She has made it her own and created her own path.

In addition to her amazing accomplishments as both a paralegal and an attorney she has learned a great number of lessons that can be applied to many different careers and aspects of life in general. Some such lessons include:

- Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.
- Leadership is not reserved for the CEO. Take responsibility for yourself and your actions, regardless of your position.
- Treat people with respect and interact with them with self-assurance. Confidence can lead over time to trust.

Evelyn Ashley is an inspiration and I have to admit I have reflected on her words every day since I heard them; I have even put some of those thoughts into action.

As usual we had some fun door prizes at our October meeting. A gift certificate to Anthony's Restaurant from Document Resources and a Spa Sydell gift certificate from CT Corporation were given to two of our luckiest members.



New GAP members are welcomed by Pamela Starr, Vice President - Membership (far right)

**The Georgia Association of Paralegals, Inc.
is now recruiting for 2005 Board of Directors**

Nominations are accepted in writing so that qualifications can be reviewed. Nominations will not be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Charter Member of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations

1199 Euclid Avenue, N. E. Atlanta, GA 30307-1509

(Phone) 404-522-1457 (Fax) 404-522-0132

STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Name of GAP Member: _____

EMPLOYER: _____

DAY PHONE NUMBER: _____

EVENING PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL: _____

Available Board And Coordinator positions: V. P. Membership, Secretary, Treasurer, NFPA Primary, NFPA Secondary, Newsletter Editor, Pro Bono Director, CLE Director, Speakers Bureau, Advertising Coordinator (Directory or Newsletter), Student Growth, PACE Ambassador (must be an RP), State and Local Bar Liaison, and Web Design Coordinator. (Note: President, Vice President, NFPA Primary and NFPA Secondary require past service on the GAP board of directors.)

LIST BELOW THE POSITION(S) YOU ARE INTERESTED IN:

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS: (This can include volunteer work in GAP or any other organization or just an interest to volunteer!) _____

WHAT IDEAS WILL YOU BRING TO THE POSITION? _____

Do you have a suggestion for a new coordinator position? ☐ yes ☐ no

NEW POSITION I WOULD LIKE TO CREATE: _____

Description of responsibilities of this new position: _____

GOAL: To have 2005 board of directors, committee chairs and coordinators appointed by December 1, 2004. The new leadership team will work with the previous leadership team to ensure a smooth transition into the new year.

**FAX OR MAIL THIS SHEET TO GAP OFFICE BY
NOV. 30, 2004 DEADLINE – FAX TO 404-522-0132**

THE HISTORY OF GEORGIA PARALEGALS AND THE BAR

By: Kevin Fogle

In the past 30 years there has been several advisory opinions issued by the State Bar of Georgia and the Supreme Court of Georgia regarding paralegals. Within these opinions, the word “paralegal” is defined and paralegal duties, as well as ethics are discussed. The State Bar of Georgia defines the term “paralegal” as “any lay person, not admitted to the practice of law in this State, who is an employee of, or an assistant to an active member of the State Bar of Georgia or to a partnership or professional corporation comprised of members of the State Bar of Georgia and who renders services relating to the law to such member, partnership or professional corporation under the direct control, supervision and compensation of a member of the State Bar of Georgia.” Unlike the definition of a paralegal, the definition of the practice of law in Georgia is very broad; however, Georgia looks at the delegation of activities to paralegals which ordinarily comprise the practice of law as proper providing that the lawyer maintains a direct relationship with the client, supervises and directs the work delegated to the paralegal and assumes complete ultimate professional responsibility for the work product produced by the paralegal as found in the Rules of the State Bar of Georgia. Below are the advisory opinions issued by the State Bar of Georgia and the Supreme Court of Georgia in the past 30 years along with the website addresses for more detailed information:

- 1975 – Advisory Opinion No. 19 was issued by the State Bar of Georgia Disciplinary Board permitting a paralegal in the employ of a member of the State Bar of Georgia to correspond concerning “legal matters” on the law firm letterhead under his/her own signature. www.gabar.org/fao19.asp
- 1977 – Advisory Opinion No. 21 was issued by the State Bar of Georgia Disciplinary Board giving guidelines for attorneys utilizing paralegals. www.gabar.org/fao21.asp
- 1989 – Advisory Opinion No. 86-5 was issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia regarding ethical guidelines of lawyers delegating to non-lawyers the closing of real estate transactions. This opinion stated that the closing of real estate transactions constitutes the practice of law and would be ethically improper for a lawyer to aid a non-lawyer in closing real estate transactions; however, the paralegal being charged of engaging in the unauthorized practice of law may be avoided if the delegated work is directly and constantly supervised by the attorney and the attorney assumes complete ultimate professional responsibility for the work product produced by the paralegal. www.gabar.org/op865.asp
- 2000 – Advisory Opinion No. 00-2 was issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia regarding the question of, is a lawyer aiding a non-lawyer in the unauthorized practice of law when the lawyer allows a non-lawyer member of his or her staff to prepare and sign correspondence which threatens legal action or provides legal advice? The Supreme Court’s answer was, yes. This opinion also stated that “...a lawyer should never place a nonlawyer in situations in which he or she is called upon to exercise what would amount to independent professional judgment for the lawyer’s client.” www.gabar.org/op002.asp
- 2003 – UPL Advisory Opinion No. 2003-2 was issued by the Standing Committee on the Unlicensed Practice of Law regarding the question of, is the preparation and execution of a deed of conveyance considered the unauthorized practice of law if someone other than a licensed attorney prepares or facilitates the execution of said deed for the benefit of the seller, borrower, and lender? The short answer to this question is, yes; however, this opinion provides the exception of paralegals working under the direct and constant supervision of the attorney. www.gabar.org/UPL_opinions.asp



CERTIFICATED OR CERTIFIED – PLEASE USE THE TERM CORRECTLY

Beth Magee, RP, PACE Ambassador

You received a certificate from a paralegal studies program, or have an associate's or bachelor's degree in paralegal studies. You took courses, studied and took tests to receive the certificate so now you're a certified paralegal, right?

Well, not so fast . . .

More correctly you're a **certificated** paralegal. To become a certified paralegal or legal assistant, or Registered Paralegal you must go through another step, obtaining voluntary certification.

Certification is generally defined as a voluntary process by which a nongovernmental agency or association awards a credential to an individual who has met criteria specified by the agency or association. Meeting certain education requirements may be part of the criteria, but certification usually also requires that the individual meet other criteria such as having a certain number of years' experience working as a paralegal and passing a certification exam.

You do not need to be a certified or certificated paralegal to work in Georgia. Georgia has no mandatory licensing requirement nor guidelines for the type of education, experience or testing a person must have to work as a paralegal. However most employers will require that you have paralegal experience and

many employers also require that you have the certificate from a paralegal studies program. Some will also require that you be "certified," but again they're more likely asking for someone who is certificated.

If you want to give them a certified paralegal or PACE Registered Paralegal as a candidate to consider, taking the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE) to obtain certification may be easier than you think. It's an exam which tests a combination of what you learned in your paralegal studies program and the things you can only learn once you begin doing the job. There are many resources to use in studying and as GAP gains more RPs, mentors to assist you in studying. Plus other members studying just like you who can use a study buddy or someone for moral support.

Choose almost any day during the year to take the exam and four hours later you'll know that you've received that voluntary certification and now may correctly say you're certified and use the PACE Registered Paralegal or RP credential.

For more information about certification or PACE contact me at beth.magee@onity.com or 770.582.8093.

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A TRULY SUPERCONFERENCE

Gina S. Farley, CP

The Paralegal SuperConference, an Estrin LegalEd Event, was held at the Omni Hotel CNN Center in Atlanta on October 7-8, 2004. The conference was well attended by paralegals from Georgia and many from out-of-state.

The conference was made up of general sessions and breakout sessions comprising various "tracks" or areas of practice and professional development. The kick-off session was conducted by "The Stress Doc", Mark Gorkin, who taught us the warning signs and strategies for handling our stress levels. It was a very interactive session that ended with a chance to express ourselves artistically by drawing posters that represented our major stressors.

Other general session topics included a review of the recent case law affecting E-discovery, E-mail do's and don'ts with excellent examples of how employees have caused major trouble for their companies by forgetting that delete does not mean destroyed, and best practices for imaging documents and working with your vendor to get the end product you desire.

The quality of the speakers at the conference was outstanding. Each was very knowledgeable of the subject matter and had the ability to present the information in a way that was fresh, not simply reading from a PowerPoint presentation (haven't we all experienced some of those?). The course materials were provided on a CD, a big improvement over getting that bulky booklet that requires you to later decide, "how long do I keep this?"

GAP worked with Chere Estrin to promote the conference to our members as an opportunity for continuing education. We were provided an exhibitor's table at the conference that was manned throughout the day by GAP Board Members and Coordinators. I had the pleasure of meeting many of you that stopped by our table and I hope you enjoyed the conference as much as I did. If you missed the conference, don't make the same mistake if it comes around next year!

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SETTING THE PACE

Susan Draeger Coker, RP

Susan received GAP's 2001 PACE Scholarship and became an RP(PACE Registered Paralegal) in 2002. As time comes for her to renew her credential she shares some thoughts about why she values being an RP.

Many RPs have written and spoken about the rewards they've experienced in becoming an RP, such as more challenging work assignments, a salary raise, or greater respect from the attorneys and clients with whom they work. For me, the best part of being an RP is my own personal satisfaction in achieving the RP designation.

I attended paralegal school on a competitive scholarship, and worked hard to graduate with honors. I spent a number of years working in law firms, learning as much as I could and taking every opportunity to increase and demonstrate my level of skills and professionalism. Aside

from the information contained in my resume, however, there was no actual documentation or standard for proving the progress I had made over time.

Successfully completing the PACE exam enabled me to not only achieve the goal of becoming an RP, but allowed me to complete my legal education to the highest standard, while at the same time providing an outward indicator on which others may rely to ensure they are dealing with a truly competent professional. To me, the satisfaction I feel in seeing "Susan Draeger Coker, RP" on my correspondence and business cards, is the best reward of all.



Member Spotlight

Predictably for someone in the legal profession, Linda Sloope remembers the exact date of the O.J. Simpson criminal verdict. But the memory has nothing to do with her experiences as a paralegal.

Keeping up with the Simpson case on the car radio Oct. 3, 1995, Sloope and her husband, Kim, were also trying to outrun Hurricane Opal bearing down on the Gulf Coast as they moved from Houston, Texas, to Atlanta. "We were trying to outrun the storm and the car lost an axle," recalls Sloope. "It was awful. We went back a week later to get the car, and I got a chicken bone caught in my throat. I had to go the emergency room, where I waited four hours. I told my husband I was never moving again."

As long as she doesn't have to pack all her belongings, Sloope does enjoy going places. She's visited Scandinavia and London in addition to touring quite a bit of the United States. Her next big trip? "Probably Alaska. I also want to go back to London. There's so much to see and do."

Sloope is in her second year with the real estate law group at Home Depot, which employs about 80 attorneys and 80 paralegals in its corporate office. Her specialty is lease administration for the western part of the country. She deals with lease-related financial issues, including rent increases, options to extend leases, and various issues involving landlords and other business partners.

"One of the biggest challenges is lease interpretation," Sloope says. "So many are written in legalese. It is often difficult to figure out what the lease is saying."

The most satisfying part of her work involves "dealing with landlords and other business partners, helping them through issues they have. I like the people aspect of it."

Sloope grew up in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, but quickly fled to the South. "I love it down here," she says. "I grew up in the snowbelt. I much prefer the sun."

Sloope studied speech and language pathology and received a bachelor of arts degree from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. She wound up working for a real estate company in Houston, where she earned a paralegal certificate from Southwest Paralegal Institute. "It was the only American Bar Association-approved program in Texas at the time," she says.

Working in real estate is akin to traveling in Sloope's view. "You're always learning something new. You work with all kinds of different people. And you wear many different hats during the work day."





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PARALEGALS & OT RULES

Charles Cromwell

Paralegals are specifically mentioned in the new overtime pay rules that took effect in August. Generally speaking, paralegals are entitled to overtime pay.

New rules in the Fair Labor Standards Act are the first major overhaul in more than half a century. One aim was to limit workers' multimillion-dollar lawsuits claiming they were cheated out of overtime pay for working more than 40 hours a week.

"There has been a big fight over this issue for a long time," said Mary Ann Oakley, who specializes in employment law for Holland & Knight LLP in Atlanta. "A lot of law firms, especially small ones, classified paralegals as exempt when they are not."

An exempt employee is not eligible for overtime pay. Major "white-collar" exemptions are provided for executive, professional and administrative employees.

Paralegals are generally not considered exempt under the professional designation, the new rules state, "because an advanced specialized academic degree is not a standard prerequisite for entry into the field."

"I find it personally a little bit unsettling to classify everybody in the paralegal field as nonexempt when some of them are basically functioning as attorneys," Oakley said.

White-collar exemptions are subject to a salary test. Employees paid less than \$455 a week (\$23,660 a year) are

guaranteed overtime regardless of their duties or job titles.

Paralegals could qualify for the professional exemption if they "possess advanced specialized degrees in other professional fields and apply advanced knowledge in that field in the performance of their duties." The regulations use the example of an engineer hired as a paralegal to provide expert advice on product liability cases or to assist on patent matters.

Paralegals could qualify for an executive exemption if their "primary duty" is management and they regularly direct the work of two or more full-time employees and have significant input into hiring and firing decisions.

The U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate Appropriations Committee voted in September to overturn the new rules. House Republican Whip Roy Blunt (R-Ohio) predicted those efforts would fail.

The Department of Labor has a new Web site, titled FairPay, at www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/fairpay/main.htm. Complete regulations as published in the Federal Register April 23, 2004, can be accessed at www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a040423c.html. Click on Wage & Hour Division for a text or pdf version.

Announcements

- **REMEMBER** — if you took PACE in 2004 or will take it by the end of the year please contact Beth Magee, RP, PACE Ambassador by December 31. We're compiling annual statistics on PACE inquiries and applicants for NFPA and need to submit the information in January. Thank you.
- **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF PARALEGAL ASSOCIATIONS 2005 CONVENTION, "VIVA LAS VEGAS"** proudly hosted by the Paralegal Association of Southern Nevada - April 28-May 1, 2005 at the fabulous *Golden Nugget* in downtown Las Vegas. For more information, <http://www.paralegals.org>.
- Have you been thinking about becoming more active in GAP? Go to the Volunteer section of the GAP website to find out what opportunities the future may hold for you. Please contact any current Board member if you would like to become more involved!



Susan Draeger Parker wed Curtis David Coker on May 7, 2004 in Athens, Georgia. The couple honeymooned in Prague, Czech Republic. Mrs. Coker is a PACE Registered Paralegal with Fortson, Bentley & Griffin, P.A. in Athens.

Her husband is a chemical engineer turned software developer. The couple resides in Athens, Georgia.

Continued on page 16

Announcements



June Sloan and Charles R. Mingle were married Saturday, September 18 at the Avondale Pattillo United Methodist Church in Decatur GA.



Christina Elizabeth Sheets and Dr. Eric R. Weeks were married Saturday September 11, 2004 at the Old Courthouse on the Square in Decatur GA.

Congratulations on your recent nuptials to all our GAP newlyweds!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



While majoring in journalism at the University of North Carolina, Beth Magee found herself in a law and ethics course that she “really enjoyed.” That’s why, more than 20 years later, Magee finds herself writing contracts instead of stories for publication.

“I was in a dorm with a woman who was going to paralegal school,” Magee said. “I looked at the material and liked what I saw.”

Magee enrolled at the now-defunct National Center for Paralegal Training in Atlanta and obtained a certificate “with honors” in 1982. She is contracts administrator with Onity, an Atlanta-based company providing integrated control systems and services such as the electronic room locks used in hotels.

GAP members may know her better as the organization’s representative for the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam, or PACE. “On a lark,” Magee applied for a GAP scholarship that helps defray expenses of studying for and taking PACE. She passed and now serves as an ardent ambassador for the national certification.

Charlie Cromwell

“I do believe voluntary certification can be important to helping paralegals achieve goals, including being of more value to employers and clients and making more money,” Magee said. “And you never know when the state of Georgia might say, ‘If you’re going to call yourself a paralegal, you must have mandated certification.’ Some states have it.

“This also gives me an opportunity to give something back to the association and the paralegal field,” Magee said.

When not promoting PACE, Magee might be taking in a movie, listening to music – classical or rock, not country – or reading. “I like thrillers, political and military,” Magee said. “I want to think, but I don’t want to be a deep thinker. I always saw my dad or my mom reading. Reading good writing helps you learn to write well.”

And finding a new way to word contracts excites Magee in a way she never thought litigation or real estate could. “Litigation is what I thought was real boring,” she said. “I’d rather spend time reading contracts. Some people like looking at real estate descriptions. That’s one of the nice things about the paralegal field – there are a lot of different opportunities.”

In reviewing contracts from subcontractors around the country, Magee finds “a lot of interesting things come up. It does vary. I make sure the contracts protect our company’s legal rights and needs.”

GAP'S 2004 YEAR IN REVIEW



Thanks to our **Speaker's Bureau Coordinator, Lyza L. Sandgren** 2004 was filled with fun, interesting and informative speakers.

At our August 10, 2004 meeting we had really beautiful white roses at each table thanks to **Gus Cawley** of the **LawStaff Group**.

In 2004 we added color to our Newsletter thanks to **Legal Eagle**, our **Newsletter Sponsor**.



In 2004 we had a year filled with amazing door prizes from all of our great **GAP Sponsors**.

In 2004 GAP members donated money and supplies to **Genesis Shelter**.



We increased our **membership** in 2004!

GAP's **website** was revitalized in 2004, keep watching as we increase the content and capabilities of our website - www.gaparalegals.org



In April 2004 GAP co-hosted its first annual **pro bono conference** in conjunction with NFPA's ABA/EJC conference in Atlanta.

GAP had a great 2004. We know that the members enjoyed all of our meetings and events and that we will have an even better 2005.



FROM THE EDITOR

By: Christina Weeks

I would like to thank the members of GAP for trusting me with our newsletter for 2003 & 2004. In my two years as editor my main goals have been to increase the quality and quantity of our content and to improve the overall look and readability. I believe that I have accomplished these goals. In addition to giving the newsletter a facelift, I also headed up our project to update and maintain the look and content of GAP's website.


In looking forward to 2005, a different role on the Board of Directors is on the horizon. When Jennifer Kirkland left her position as NFPA Secondary it created a vacancy on our board that need to be filled for the remainder of this year as well as for next year. I applied for the position and was appointed as the NFPA Secondary for the remainder of 2004 and I plan to continue on in the position for 2005.

The one drawback to moving into the NFPA Secondary position is that it is going to leave a vacancy on our board as I am stepping down from my newsletter editor position so that I can more fully concentrate on the NFPA Secondary position. If you have any interest in being editor of *The*

Paragraph I challenge you to apply now. Becoming a GAP board of directors member affords you the unique opportunity to help steer our profession in the direction we wish for it to go.

Being the GAP newsletter editor is a rewarding challenge. It allows you a creative outlet in a profession that is often times limited on creativity. I know that there are members who are ready to become newsletter editor and to join the board. Don't worry you will not be left alone. I will be acting as advisor to the newsletter editor as a member of the newsletter committee. Additionally our entire board and newsletter committee have been very supportive and will continue to offer guidance and support to the 2005 GAP newsletter editor.

If you have any questions about becoming newsletter editor or applying for any of the other available positions on the GAP Board I would be happy to discuss them with you. Please email me at chrissy404@bellsouth.net or call me at 404-728-0220.



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