

## **Orlando Chapter History**

By Michael S. Vitale (Chapter President, 2012-13), and  
Kelly J.H. Garcia (President-Elect, 2016-17).

When an outsider thinks of Orlando, he or she probably associates the “City Beautiful” with sun, sand, and, of course, theme parks. One of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States, Orlando has a well-earned reputation for fun, for exponential growth, and for being the place to have a meeting or convention. Not surprisingly, the history of the Orlando Chapter of the Federal Bar Association demonstrates that it has been a microcosm for the City as a whole.

The Orlando Chapter of the Federal Bar Association was originally founded as the “Central Florida Chapter” in November of 1972, with about 30 charter members. The Chapter was founded thirteen (13) months after The Walt Disney World Resort first opened its gates to the general public. In 1973, the Chapter was renamed the “Orlando Chapter of the Federal Bar Association,” a title which it has held continuously in good standing since that date.

The inaugural president of the Orlando Chapter was The Honorable Edward J. Moloney, who served as chapter President from 1972 until 1975. Interestingly, Judge Moloney was a Florida state court judge who sat on the Seminole County, Florida bench in the 1970s, yet also took a keen interest in federal matters. The partnership of attorneys in the Orlando area working together for the good of the profession, in matters both federal and state, is a common theme which the Orlando Chapter has continued to this day -- as it partners with members of local organizations, such as the Orange and Seminole County Bar Associations, for certain events. In fact, many current and former presidents of the Orlando Chapter have served their terms as president while a law partner or colleague was serving simultaneously on the board of the Orange County Bar Association or another local bar association.

In 1981, the Orlando Chapter first amended its bylaws to ensure compliance with the constitution and rules of the national organization. Among the notable changes was the creation of a seven (7) member Board of Directors, a remarkably simple and stable corporate structure which remained in place for 32 years. Future leaders of the Orlando chapter continued the tradition of reviewing and amending the Chapter’s bylaws as needs dictated over the years, with the most recent amendment passing in the year 2014. The 2014 amendments encompassed organizational and administrative updates, as well as expanded the officer slate to accommodate increased demand for leadership roles in this dynamic and fast-growing organization.

Chapter leadership in the 1980s oversaw the creation and formalization of many traditions which have continued to present day. For instance, in the 1980s, the Orlando Chapter began the practice of having “Member Luncheons” at periodic intervals, at which chapter members and guests interested in membership could attend a lunch presentation and network with chapter leaders and other members. The first chapter luncheon officially advertised in our historical records was a March 1983 “Member-Guest Luncheon” at the Citrus Club in downtown Orlando. The guest speaker was Steve Salley, Esq. of the law firm Akerman Senterfitt, who spoke about tax law. The menu featured Chicken Divan, and was a bargain at \$8.25 per person.

Notable and historically significant events which took place in the 1980s include a joint conference with the National Contract Management Association in 1985, the Chapter hosting the Federal Bar Association's national Annual Meeting and Convention for the first time in 1986, the creation of a recurring seminar on Fraud in Government Contracting, and a seminar on "Missiles and the Law" which took place during the height of the Cold War in 1987.

The 1990s brought about tremendous growth for both the City of Orlando and the Orlando Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, which grew its membership numbers exponentially during this prosperous decade. The leadership of the Orlando Chapter in the 1990s was spearheaded by H. Manuel Hernandez and Robert DuChemin, prominent local attorneys, who each served for multiple years during this expansive decade.

The 2000s brought continued growth and modernization for both the City and the Chapter. In 2001, President Rosemary Cakmis commenced the practice of having brown bag lunches with local judges, recurring events which the Chapter still organizes today. In 2006, under the leadership of President Gary Wilson -- who worked closely with Orlando Chapter Member and the Chief Judge of the Middle District of Florida, Patricia C. Fawsett -- the Chapter officially incorporated under the name of the "Federal Bar Association – Orlando Chapter, Inc." Thanks to Chief Judge Fawsett and many others, the Orlando Division of the Middle District also built and inaugurated a new federal courthouse in the year 2007, a functional and picturesque complex on Central Avenue in Downtown Orlando which, up until this day, hosts most of the Chapter's regularly-scheduled events. Leaders during this decade also brought about several other historically significant milestones, including (a) the Chapter achieving 200 members for the first time in its history; (b) an increased partnership with the bankruptcy bar and events featuring Orlando bankruptcy judges, and (c) in connection with the Court, the hosting of periodic Congressional Breakfasts with local and state political leaders. In fact, the historical records of the association boast "Thank You" letters from important political figures such as Senator Bill Nelson, and others, thanking the Chapter for its hospitality at one such breakfast.

In the past decade, the Chapter has also worked to increase its participation with and membership rolls from the Orlando area's two local law schools – the Florida A&M University School of Law and the Barry University School of Law. In 2013, thanks to a generous grant from the Chapter Activity Fund of the Federal Bar Association, the Orlando Chapter gave away thousands of dollars of scholarship money to local law students in connection with a Legal Writing Program judged by several prominent local attorneys and federal judges. In addition, the Chapter's Board of Directors now has honorary (non-voting) seats for a representative from both law schools – a structure which has been duplicated by many other FBA chapters. Additionally, in January 2014, the Orlando Chapter welcomed the Board of Directors of the Federal Bar Association as it hosted a quarterly board meeting and CLE lecture. Finally, in December of 2014, the Chapter launched its Civil *Pro Se* Project, which has the goals of providing civil *pro se* litigants in federal court with the opportunity to have a meaningful consultation with volunteer counsel, and improving citizens' access to justice. In its first year, the Civil *Pro Se* Project was directly responsible for approximately 800 hours in *pro bono* representation.

Quality programming and working closely with our peers has allowed the Orlando Chapter to enjoy another recent growth surge. Today, the Orlando Chapter has approximately 290 members, and will soon hit the 300 member milestone – commemorating the Chapter growing by a factor of 10 from its inaugural charter membership roster.

As we look back over the years, the Orlando Chapter recognizes that its strength comes not only from its leadership, but from its members. To this end, the Chapter would like to recognize its longest serving member, Colonel William McKenna, who maintained continuous membership in the Chapter for forty (40) years from the 1970s until the early 2010s. In addition, the Chapter would like to recognize its longest current serving member, Mr. Jerald D. Stubbs, who has maintained continuous membership for thirty-six (36) years, from 1980 until the present day.

Finally, the Orlando Chapter gives special thanks to the individuals who had the foresight and courage to become the inaugural charter members of the Chapter, who are included in Appendix A below, and each and every Chapter President from 1972 to the present, who are included in Appendix B below. With the foundation laid by our predecessors, the future is indeed bright for this vibrant and diverse organization.

Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2016.

## **Appendix A – Inaugural Charter Members of the Orlando Chapter (1972)**

John P. Linehan  
S. Joseph Davis, Jr.  
W.W. Stokey  
William M. Hobby  
Keith Young  
Alphonso C. Chester  
Kenneth M. Leffler  
Norman E. Duke  
William Cauthen  
Bruce L. Barfield  
William F. Beemer  
Jacques H. Croom  
William B. Pringle  
Julian C. Renfro  
Warren E. Williams  
Stephen R. Magyar  
Stuart G. Green  
Gene R. Stephenson  
Joseph M. Murasko  
The Honorable E.J. Moloney  
Jacob Steinberg  
William M. Joyce  
Donald P. Dietrich  
Irvin M. Gottlieb  
David G. Mario  
Conrad D. Philos  
William S. Blalock  
Charles E. Davis  
Richard M. Harris  
C.E. Millek  
Eli H. Subin

## **Appendix B – Orlando Chapter Presidents 1972-2016**

1972-75 – Hon. Edward J. Moloney  
1975-76 – Dr. John C. Linehan  
1976-77 – A. Franklin Berry, Jr.  
1977-78 – Fred Langford  
1978-80 – Frederick D. Sarkis  
1980-81 – William M. Joyce  
1981-83 – Frank L. Schiavo  
1983-84 – James R. Ciaravino  
1984-86 – Robert W. Genzman  
1986-88 – John G. DeLancett  
1988-89 – Bernard H. Dempsey  
1989-92 – H. Manuel Hernandez  
1992-93 – James V. Etscorn  
1993-96 – Robert DuChemin  
1996-97 – James T. Skuthan  
1997-99 – C. Richard Newsome  
1999-01 – H. Manuel Hernandez  
2001-03 – Rosemary Cakmis  
2003-05 – T. Todd Pittenger  
2005-06 – Gary Wilson  
2006-07 – Robert W. Thielhlem, Jr.  
2007-08 – Jill S. Schwartz  
2008-09 – Richard Dellinger  
2009-10 – Marilyn G. Moran  
2010-11 – Drew Sorrell  
2011-12 – James T. Skuthan  
2012-13 – Michael S. Vitale  
2013-14 – Frederick “Fritz” Wermuth  
2014-15 – Coleman W. Watson  
2015-16 – Taylor F. Ford