



MAY 11, 2015

This would not have been the Monday to commit a crime at Rotary – so many lawyers and judges in the house to celebrate the annual Law Day! Not that we’re particularly concerned about the Rotary crime rate. So far, so good.

OH CRAP...SHE’S REALLY GONNA TALK ABOUT THE MAGNA CARTA

Not necessarily what you expect to hear about at a Rotary meeting but there’s no denying that the Magna Carta (Latin for “the Great Charter”) is an important foundation of both modern society and our legal system. The theme for this Law Day, an annual event dating back 60 years, was *Symbols of Freedom Under Law*.

We were reminded, with our Law Day program:

Our nation’s flag, a county courthouse and a voting booth are all symbols that represent important American freedoms that are protected by the rule of law and enshrined in the Constitution of the United States of America.

The Michigan Legal Milestones are important symbols of freedom under law. The Michigan Legal Milestones program was created in 1986 to highlight Michigan’s important cases, laws and individuals. Bronze plaques commemorating the history of each of the 39 milestones have been placed throughout Michigan. In 2013, the 38th legal milestone commemorated the 1839 Berrien County Courthouse, Michigan’s oldest existing county courthouse.

As we celebrate Law Day, the 2015 Law Day theme, Symbols of Freedom Under Law, calls on every American to think and reflect on the principles underlying these symbols of freedom under law that ensure all Americans have the opportunity to participate in our democracy.

Our keynote address was provided by Bridget McCormack, Michigan Supreme Court Justice. Justice McCormack joined the Michigan Supreme Court in January 2013. Previously, she was a law professor and dean at the University



of Michigan Law School and before that, a faculty fellow at Yale Law School. A graduate of New York University Law School, she spent her first five years of her legal career in New York with Legal Aid and then at the Office of the Appellate Defender.

Justice McCormack was also a cofounder of the Michigan Innocence Clinic in 2008. This clinic provides students with the

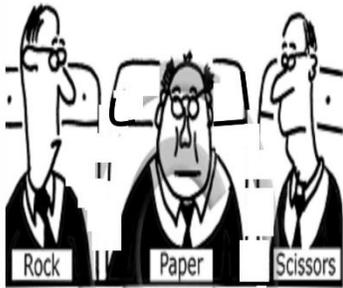
opportunity to represent wrongfully convicted Michiganders. What makes this program unique, however, is that it does not rely on DNA evidence; they focus on cases where there is no biological evidence. The clinic has yielded around 10 exonerations to date.

And yes...she really did talk about the Magna Carta. The first draft of the Magna Carta was signed in 1215 by King John of England to make peace with a group of rebel barons. It stated that power was not arbitrary and that the state had a responsibility to answer to its citizens. Pope Innocent III annulled the document the same year as neither side had stood by their commitments.

The Magna Carta was issued and reissued many times over the years with many revisions. It’s is, however, an exemplary document in that it was the first written constitution in European history and the bedrock of all modern law. The ideals of the Magna Carta can be seen in our most common legal understandings such as the concept of due process and trial by jury.

Joke(s) of the Week!

It's Law Day...how could we give you just one joke when there's so much material to choose from on the topic?



At the rate law schools are turning them out, by 2050 there will be more lawyers than humans.

A guy phones a law firm and says, "I want to speak to my lawyer." The receptionist says, "I'm sorry, but your lawyer died last week." The next day the same guy phones the law firm

and says, "I want to speak to my lawyer." Once again the receptionist replies, "I'm sorry, but your lawyer died last week." The next day the guy makes his regular call to the law firm and say, "I want to speak to my lawyer." "Excuse me sir," the receptionist says, "but this is third time I've had to tell you that your lawyer died last week. Why do you keep calling?" The guy replies, "Because I love hearing it!"

Q: Why have scientists started using lawyers for experiments instead of rats?

A: They don't become so attached to the lawyers.

A man walks into a bar. He sees a beautiful, well-dressed woman sitting on a bar stool alone. He walks up to her and says, "Hi there, how's it going tonight?" She turns to him, looks him straight in the eyes and says, "I'll screw anybody anytime, anywhere, any place,

it doesn't matter to me." The guy raises his eyebrows and says, "No kidding? What law firm do you work for?"

A lawyer was filling out a job application when he came to the question, "Have you ever been arrested?" He answered, "No." The next question, intended for applicants who had answered, "Yes," was "Why?" The lawyer answered it, "Never got caught."

The old man was critically ill. He called his lawyer. "I want to become a lawyer," he said. "How much for a quickie law degree?" "About \$50,000," the lawyer said, "But why bother?" "That's my business. Get me the course." Four days later the lawyer delivered the new law degree. Suddenly the old man was wracked with fits of coughing, and it was clear the end was near. "Please, before it's too late," said the lawyer, "Tell me why you wanted a law degree now?" As he breathed his last, the old man whispered, "One less lawyer."

A guy walks into a post office one day to see a middle-aged, balding man standing at the counter methodically placing "Love" stamps on bright pink envelopes with hearts all over them. He then takes out a perfume bottle and starts spraying scent all over the envelopes. His curiosity getting the better of him, he goes up to the balding man and asks him what he is doing. The man says "I'm sending out 1,000 Valentine cards signed, 'Guess who?'" "But why?" asks the man. "I'm a divorce lawyer," the man replies.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

- 5/18/15 – Speaker Lynn Kellogg, Back to Africa
- 5/25/15 – No Meeting – Memorial Day
- 5/30/15 – Makers Faire at Whirlpool Centennial Park

THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS

The winning Law Day essay by Nick Walsh of St. Joseph High School

It was early November, 2004, and my second grade self was thrilled--we had a random day off from school in the middle of the week.



"Everyone have a nice election Tuesday!" my teacher exclaimed.

Now, I had seen the Bush and Kerry signs plastered all through town, and I sort of understood the idea of Democrats vs. Republicans. But, I wasn't really sure what "election Tuesday was."

So on that Tuesday, my dad decided to take me along for a ride. We pulled up to the Sportsplex, our local recreation center. I assumed we would play some basketball or he would let me climb the rock wall. Pulling into the parking lot I was confused: there seemed to be an army of people passing out pamphlets and holding bright red, white, and blue signs.

"What's going on here?"

"We are going to go vote," he told me.

Walking inside, I noticed that the soccer nets had been replaced by small booths. We walked into one, closing the blue curtain behind us. The electronic screen lit up, displaying all of the choices. It began with local positions, trustees

and commissioners, eventually making its way to state offices as my dad made his selections. Finally, we made it to the last screen. *Please select a candidate for President of the United States.* My dad turned to me, "Go ahead, you pick." My eyes grew wide as my finger hovered over the screen. George Bush, John Kerry, a Green Party Candidate, and several independents made up my choices. Confidently, I made my selection, turning to smile at my dad.

"Congratulations," he said, "you just participated in democracy." Walking outside boasting an "I voted" sticker, a campaign worker for a county treasurer candidate thanked my dad for his vote and looked down at me. "I'll see you in 10 years buddy!" and he was right.

This past fall I celebrated my 18th birthday, and before I bought my first lottery ticket I found myself at the township hall registering to vote. Though it wasn't a presidential election, on election day I went to my polling station and cast my vote for various local positions, included our U.S. Representative.

"You know voting doesn't even matter, your single vote won't even make a difference," my friends told me, making fun of my decision to vote.

"Voting doesn't matter?" I questioned, "Voting is the *only* thing that matters--it's the *only* way to make a difference."

When we declared our independence in 1776, it was because Britain never had granted us the right to vote. The colonies had no representation, and no say in how their cities and states were governed. A small group of bold men convinced thirteen colonies to fight against the largest military force in the world based on the idea that we should have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. To this day, many people throughout the world lack the privilege that many Americans take for granted. Wars still rage on as people fight for the basic right to decide who will lead them. What makes America the land of the free and the home of the brave is our Constitutional privilege to choose who will govern us. And that starts in the voting booth. *There*, you choose your own representation. *There*, you can decide on issues. *There*, you have a voice.

While our monuments and memorials are beautiful and meaningful, if you're truly looking for a symbol of freedom, look no further than the voting booth. Set up in schools and churches throughout the country, these relatively unimportant plastic enclosures become vital to our democracy on Election Day. If you believe voting is a pointless endeavor, think of those that are still fighting for that right. Be thankful that we live in a country where we have a Constitution that guarantees such freedoms to us, and remember that as long as we can vote, freedom will persist throughout the land.

MAGNA CARTA (CONTINUED)

Justice McCormack stressed that symbols like the Magna Carta require our vigilance. We need to ask ourselves - does this exist to maintain the status quo or does it uphold the ideals of the radical English aristocrats who created it?

She reiterated that the Magna Carta went through many revisions and that there's still work to be done as times and technology change. Like everything, it's a work in progress. One example she shared was the concept of unreasonable fines and how an appropriate amount is determined. This is an area of interest because there are a disproportionate number of indigent in jail because they can't pay their fines for minor issues. A past example she shared was that there was a point in time where women were not able to testify against men.

In her Q&A, Justice McCormack was asked for what advice she would give to young people who are interested in pursuing a career in law. She advised that they should not do only pre-law between now and law school and that they should study other things. Bringing different perspectives and passions to law school make them stand out as candidates as well as more well-rounded lawyers.

When asked how she ended up on the Michigan Supreme Court, she shared that it was mostly by accident. She had been inspired to pursue a legal career because of her godmother who was a Legal Aid lawyer in New York City. She became a judge because there was an opening and she felt like she had a unique perspective to share.

In closing, Justice McCormack asked that we be mindful of these symbols of freedom and of how much it took to create the Magna Carta.

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN!

Congratulations are due to Gyl Kasewurm, winner of the "People's Choice Award" at last weekend's 2nd Annual "Dancing with the Symphony Stars!" The Rotary Club of St. Joseph-Benton Harbor was well-represented on Saturday, May 9 at the Inn at Harbor Shores with Stu Boekeloo and Tom Starks also participating in the event.



The "People's Choice Award" is bestowed upon the STAR who receives the most votes in the form of donations. Of the \$45,637 dollars raised through voting, Kasewurm brought in a whopping \$12,695! The total amount

raised at the event has yet to be tallied.

"Dancing with the Symphony Stars" is the largest annual fundraiser for the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra. This funding maintains their musical, educational and collaborative programs that help further the Symphony Mission of "Transforming Lives Through Music."



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