

Dunlap Inducted as Fellow In American College of Trial Lawyers

REBEKAH HEARN | The Daily News

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- William W. Dunlap Jr.

Name: William W. Dunlap Jr.

Position: Member

Firm: Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC

Basics: Dunlap, who has been practicing law for 37 years, recently was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers as a Fellow.

William W. Dunlap Jr., a member at Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC, recently was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers as a Fellow.

In order to qualify for the honor, lawyers must have a minimum of 15 years of trial experience. Dunlap exceeds those expectations by far; he has been practicing law in Memphis for 37 years.

Dunlap's practice areas are medical malpractice defense, personal injury defense, family law and civil litigation defense. He attended law school at Vanderbilt University School of Law and works in the Downtown branch of Harris Shelton, which also has offices in East Memphis and Oxford, Miss.

Q: What does the honor of being named a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers mean to you?

A: It was a great honor. I was always - in my practice as I've come through - very impressed with those who were Fellows of the American College, and I think each one, if you asked them, would say it's a privilege to be associated with those who are Fellows. It's so very meaningful.

Q: What are the demands of a medical malpractice and civil litigation practice, especially in this economy? Have you seen a spike or a drop in suits since the economy started its downturn?

A: I would have to say if anything, there (have) been fewer suits - either a suit gets filed and the plaintiff attorney looks at all the details of the case, and it might get dismissed at that point, or if the case goes to trial, then you've got that. But I would have to say that if anything, especially in the area of family law, there has probably been a drop in cases.

Q: You participated in the Tennessee Supreme Court's SCALES (Supreme Court Advancing Legal Education for Students) project for high school students in Tennessee. What is the SCALES project, and how were you involved?

A: The SCALES project is a program where oral arguments are presented to the court in regular cases that are coming before the court, and those cases are argued before groups of high school students in different parts of the state. In the case that I participated in, we were arguing about a landowner's obligation to contractors coming on the property to perform work. After the oral argument, the plaintiff attorney and I turned to all of the high school students, and they asked us questions about various parts of the argument, such as why did you argue this, why didn't one of the lawyers argue that. It's so very interesting, and it's basically an educational program that our Supreme Court has instituted that I think is really helpful to high school students in getting a better grasp of the law and how it works. If I had been in high school and had that opportunity, I think it really would have been a neat thing.

Q: Do you think the high school students who attended those cases are interested in pursuing careers in law?

A: Well, I don't really know that would be the case; in our group, and I assume in all of the groups in the program, they just bring in classes of high school students, and I'm sure that there are some in the classes who would be interested and who might go on to become lawyers. It certainly gives them an opportunity to see what lawyers do before a Supreme Court (and) how the Supreme Court justices handle themselves during oral argument. If nothing else, it's a really good civics lesson.

Q: What role do you feel lawyers should play in society, especially lawyers in your field?

A: Everybody brings to the table their own impressions, their own experiences, so you get to experience that in trying cases. I think that lawyers, and trial lawyers in particular, have a real obligation and, I think, make a difference in terms of the rule of the law, the justice system, how it operates, and all of that. As we often tell juries over here at the courthouse, our system here in America may not be perfect, but it is, no question about it, the best system that the world has ever devised. So I think that lawyers - particularly those lawyers that try cases, that represent

folks on either side of civil cases (or) that represent folks on either side of the criminal justice system, be they prosecutors or criminal defense attorneys - that's right where the rubber meets the road in terms of the justice system, how it works, and whether all citizens, as they are due, are going to get justice in a particular case.

Q: Is there any case, historical or current, that you would have liked to have been counsel on?

A: Oh, I think there (are) any number of cases that I would have liked to have been involved in. ... Some of the cases involving some of the products liability issues, particularly in the area of some of the significant drug cases, those sorts of things, I think those would be interesting cases. But there are any number of them that we simply read about in the newspaper or see on the Internet, and think those are interesting. I think all attorneys here in Memphis have all been involved in their share of interesting cases. So you just go from one case to the other, and you better be interested in every one of them.