

*Leader of
the Band*





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raising lawyers and judges who have done great things is an enjoyable but required rite of passage for State Bar leaders. Generations of Bar officers have uttered plaudit-filled introductions and keynote speeches—some great, some heartfelt, some perfunctory. And the annual convention is the site where the lion's share of such kudos are tossed.

This June's convention in Tucson offered a surplus of opportunities for that most legal of staples. And it was at the luncheon of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education—the Bar's charitable sister organization—where some of those lawyers who had given the most were honored.

As always, luncheon attendees looked forward to congratulating those who had excelled in legal services and pro bono work. But they also were about to hear from a Bar leader who had dedicated himself years before to their mission. A speech that was sincere rather than dutiful was what they expected—and what they got.

When Joe Kanefield climbed the steps to the podium, he was one day away from being sworn in as State Bar President. But it was not solely because of that lofty perch that attendees leaned forward to hear the President-Elect's words. They believed that the upcoming Bar year would be one marked by a renewed commitment to access to justice. Kanefield's decades-long devotion to the cause—their cause—led them to expect nothing less. They were about to hear from a Bar leader—and from a longtime friend.

He opened by sharing the genesis of his recognition that many unfortunate people are separated from life's necessities by a huge chasm. As he messengered materials for a high school job, he came across more and more homeless people in Phoenix. He realized that helping to close that gap demands hard work and commitment, not just idle wishes.

"I determined then," he told the convention audience, "that I wanted to be a part of any group that was making a difference."

He revealed that a significant milestone had been reached this summer: Arizona lawyers had exceeded the \$1 million mark in voluntary donations via their dues statements. And he spoke eloquently about how access to justice was not merely one of his year's goals but also a "critical component to the State Bar's mission; and now it has been made a part of our mission statement."

Both announcements pleased the audience. But his commitment to re-initiate the Bar's Access to Justice Task Force (which he once chaired) brought lengthy applause. That group, he said, will weigh

options and determine how best to invest the accumulated funds.

The next day, Kanefield would honor many others at the State Bar luncheon. But for now, the busy lawyer hurried from the room toward an important Phoenix event.

He was headed to a rock concert.



It is a truism that every person is comprised of paradoxes and contradictions. It's likely that is what makes the human species interesting.

For Joe Kanefield's part, his life and career are characterized by uncanny accomplishments in surprisingly diverse venues. The man who operates smoothly in the buttoned-down world of legal meetings also travels hundreds of miles to attend a Rush concert—and allows his eyes to smile broadly as he describes the experience the next day. He has worked in a governor's office and played the guitar at a multitude of gigs for years as part of a rock band. He has established himself as a superior lawyer, largely in service of conservative political clients, while committing himself in word and many deeds to access to justice issues for society's most needy.

If progressive change in that area can be wrought in a bad economy, some say of the 43-year-old Kanefield, perhaps it has its best chance in someone who bridges multiple worlds. In a legal profession that may appear occasionally atonal and locked into old steps, is the way forward harmonized best by someone who hears the tempo and can sample from a variety of styles? How will Arizona's lawyers and its myriad legal challenges be served by a President who has rhythm?

Who's ready for some fusion?



He youngest of three siblings, Joe Kanefield was born in Nebraska, and his family moved to Arizona when he was 1. His father was "one of the first orthopedic surgeons in Sun City." By the time Joe was about 2, though, they had moved to north central Phoenix, where his parents remain today.

A career in law hadn't occurred to the young boy, until he attended college at Arizona State University. An economics undergrad major took him to an internship with the state Department of Revenue. There, he interacted with assistant attorneys general, and he found himself intrigued by their work.

The intern distinguished himself at Revenue. Leigh Cheatham, then the legislative liaison for the department and Kanefield's boss, speaks of his skills and personality.

"From his first day at Revenue we found working with him a

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delightful experience. Joe immediately learned the political processes and protocols, sensing the nuances to deal with 90 legislators, staff, lobbyists and the Governor's Office. I learned to rely on Joe."

Cheatham also praises his later work as an assistant attorney general in the Tax Section.

"Unreservedly I can say he is a super star. When the job is done, Joe will be among the outstanding State Bar Presidents—mark my words!"

Except for one law school summer—and his current law firm position he started in May—Kanefield's entire career has been in public service. That has included nine years' work with the Attorney General's Office, elections work for the Secretary of State, and legal work in the Governor's Office. In fact, his first job out of law school in a bad economy came to him because of his previous work as an intern: He was the state's "Taxpayer Bill of Rights Coordinator."

That public experience is never far away as a visitor speaks with Kanefield in his spacious new office overlooking downtown Phoenix just days after he started work as a new Ballard Spahr partner. Even as he begins a new career chapter, he relishes the sometimes rough-and-tumble quality of public service.

"Joe appreciates that he must consider consequences before acting. Hasty is not a word in his vocabulary."

His Revenue Department experience served him well when he joined the Attorney General's Office, where he focused on tax issues. Five years into that, a new young Solicitor General dropped by his office.

Scott Bales had just joined the AG's Office, arriving along with Janet Napolitano, the new Attorney General. As Solicitor General, Bales had to increase his staff to address the burgeoning elections law work, now to be handled by his office. And Solicitor General Bales—today a Justice on the Arizona Supreme Court—had heard good things about a young attorney in Tax.

"People before me had identified Joe as a rising star," says Justice Bales. "He did very well. He is down to earth, and has a good sense of humor."

The elections work eventually would shape more than one career. As the staff wrestled with voter-approved Clean Elections, a new Redistricting Commission and primary challenges in court, Kanefield and others found themselves on the front lines of policy debates—and on the front pages of newspapers.

Hired at the same time was lawyer Todd Lang, who today is the Executive Director of the Citizens Clean Elections Commission. The closeness of the "small group of folks who practice in this area" remains intact today, Lang says.

"Joe was and is a smart, sharp lawyer," Lang continues. "People tend to underestimate Joe because he's friendly and funny. But it may be surprising to some people how forceful he can be as a litigator."

Kanefield's elections work eventually took him to the Secretary of State's Office, where he worked for Jan Brewer as the State Election Director. When she became the Governor, he joined her office as a central part of her staff. There, he was General Counsel.



admiration for the new Bar President begins with the state's highest office.

Arizona Governor Jan Brewer says, "Joe Kanefield provided me with steady and wise legal counsel through some exceptionally complicated episodes, including an Arizona Supreme Court standoff with the Legislature and lawsuits against the federal government. I know he will provide fabulous leadership for the State Bar of Arizona during his term as President."

Kanefield is praised by many for his qualities of courtesy and professionalism.

David Bodney is a partner at Steptoe & Johnson, and someone who has worked the other side of a Kanefield case.

"Joe is fair-minded and reasonable," says Bodney. "He is liked by lawyers on both sides of the aisle, even in a time of great political rancor. That speaks volumes about Joe's decency and exemplary behavior as a lawyer."

David Cantelme, of Cantelme & Brown PLC, agrees.

"He is a very decent, caring person with a great sense of humor. He has the ability to see the other person's side of the story."

Mike Rich is a lawyer at Burke Panzarella Rich in Phoenix—and a former law school classmate of Kanefield, whom he calls "ridiculously smart. He is an exceptional writer and one of the most organized guys I've ever seen."

"He is one of the most likeable, easygoing guys you'll find."

"People may underestimate Joe," Rich continues, "but it will come back to bite them. He's very nice, but he's got great instincts, and he's always sizing everything up."

Leigh Cheatham, Kanefield's former boss, adds, "People like to work with and for Joe because to do so allows them to be part of the process, the solution and the accomplishment. He has a wonderful sense of humor that eases long hours and tension. Joe's smile is open, warm, and just has to be answered with your own smile."

Someone who has known Kanefield "since we were toddlers" is Judge Sam Myers, of the Arizona Superior Court for Maricopa County. Their mothers even attended college together, and the two men have been "friends ever since," from preschool through law school and beyond. In fact, Judge Myers served as best man at his friend's wedding.

"Despite Joe's prestigious legal past," Judge Myers says, "Joe is not impressed with himself. He is one of the most approachable, welcoming people I have ever known."

According to Judge Myers, it is the man's public-service background that may make him an excellent President.

"It has instilled an appreciation of consequences; by that I mean Joe is aware that all actions and decisions, both big and small, have consequences to people. Joe appreciates that he must consider consequences before acting."

"Hasty is not a word in his vocabulary."

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he new President says he will focus on a few goals in the coming year: improving technology for lawyers, celebrating 100 years of the state's lawyers to coincide with Arizona's Centennial, and improving access to justice.

It is on that third topic where friends and colleagues marvel at his contributions. As Justice Bales says, "He is genuinely committed to access to justice."

Gary Restaino, of the U.S. Attorney's Office, says, "Joe is a huge proponent of access. He recognizes that the Bar is much more than a regulatory agency, and that it can and should do more to help the indigent and working poor meet their legal needs."

Kevin Ruegg, the AZFLSE Executive Director, reminds a visitor that she thinks all the State Bar Presidents have been supportive of the Foundation's mission. But she reserves special praise for Kanefield.

"I will never forget my first meeting with Joe Kanefield seven years ago. He was on a mission to assure equal access to justice for all Arizonans, and he was going to see it through, no matter how long it took."

With others on the Bar's Legal Services Committee, she calls him one of the "Arizona Justice Horsemen—he clears the path and pulls others along no matter how heavy the load. I am very excited to have Mr. Kanefield lead the Bar."

Judge Peter Swann of the Arizona Court of Appeals knew Kanefield while in the Tax Section of the Attorney General's Office, and they wowed audiences as part of a rock band. He says Joe will be "the most accessible Bar President ever. He genuinely enjoys communicating with all sorts of people, and harmonizing people's interests—and doing it pleasantly."

"He's a Boy Scout, basically. A really smart Boy Scout. He exudes good faith because that's who he is."

Judge Swann adds, "He automatically becomes the go-to guy because everybody trusts him. He's the Ben Stiller of the legal profession."



anefield's hobbies may be as interesting as many people's careers. They range across media, from music, to photography, to running.

James Schwegel, a Special Agent Supervisor in the Attorney General's Office, recalls the young lawyer's contribution to a unique endeavor: the 120-mile law enforcement relay race known as "Baker to Vegas." It begins near Death Valley, goes over a mountain and finishes in Las Vegas. Schwegel says their goal is always to finish in less than 18 hours. To do that, they need 20 strong runners and 15 dedicated crew members.

"Joe was the perfect fit for the team," Schwegel says. "Fast, competitive, upbeat and always supportive of his teammates. This combination of qualities resulted in Joe being chosen to start the race for Team AG three years in a row. He always set the perfect tone for the rest of the team—competitive but always friendly and good-natured."

As for music, Kanefield was a part of a band that eventually was called Blue Fur. He smiles as he describes the great times he had with band-mates. Finally, though, in 2004, when the group was

playing up to 35 gigs a year, he decided to retire from the music business.

Sort of. He loves songwriting, and admits that he still writes and records.



he expansive President is terse when asked about a difficult recent chapter in his career: shepherding the Governor's Office through a hurricane whose eye was SB1070, a state immigration law that made national headlines.

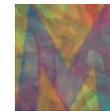
The politically astute are accustomed to rough sledding. But that controversy, Kanefield admits, "was harder."

"It has been a challenge," he says, even among longtime friends and family members. The issue was so polarizing, he says, that "even some good friends were upset with me for defending 1070." The antidote was always the same: remind detractors about the job of a lawyer and what it means to represent a client.

Kanefield says that most friends have been able to understand his role as counsel.

"But I do feel that some friendships have been damaged. That saddens me. But it's helped me understand how deeply these positions are felt."

Todd Lang recalls the difficult past year: "Some of Joe's more political friendships may have been strained. But his close friends know Joe and what a good guy he is."



ike Rich reminds a listener that "Joe's biggest priority is always his family."

Kanefield volunteers that his wife Marcie "is the love of my life." And their 4-year-old daughter Betsy is never far from his mind. In fact, one may spy him pulling Betsy around central Phoenix in her little red cart.

And it was at least partly family that led Kanefield to look finally toward a private law firm for a career change. For most people, immersing yourself into a large firm would equal a huge upswing in your time commitment. But for a man who was the Governor's General Counsel 24/7, the more predictable schedule will be welcome.

Steve Savage is managing partner in Ballard Spahr's Phoenix office. He says they wanted to build a particular practice with Kanefield's expertise—tax and government affairs. But they wouldn't have made the space for just anyone with the skill set.

"We want people who can make the pie bigger for everyone by collaborating, even among multiple offices. Joe can do that."

"Joe has an engaging personality," he continues, "and people like being around him. He has an infectious spirit; the Governor saw it, and clients will too."

His lifetime friend Judge Sam Myers agrees.

"Joe is a principled man who stands up for what he believes in, all the while retaining the humility and warmth that draws people to him. As President, he will honorably represent and lead the Arizona legal community and, as always, attract new friends and supporters along the way." 