



# The Docket

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**SCBA PAST PRESIDENT**  
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# John Patterson, SCBA President 1982–1983

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It's hard to believe that 38 years ago John Patterson began his term as president of the Sarasota County Bar Association. In a recent interview, John recalled that there were only about 150 lawyers in Sarasota at that time. Almost all the lawyers were members of the SCBA; it was just the thing to do. There was a "certain intimacy" involved with being a lawyer in Sarasota and a member of the SCBA; the atmosphere was a bit more cordial.

There were only a few women lawyers. Anne Stinnett, Evelyn Gobbie, Joan Bradbury Kayser came to John's mind. Layon Robinson was the only black lawyer in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit that John could recall.

The Office of the Public Defender had only a handful of lawyers and the State Attorney's office had only a few assistant State Attorneys.

Bar meetings were held at the old Plaza Restaurant which has long since been demolished. When the Plaza closed, meetings were moved to Zinn's restaurant on Tamiami Trail. Approximately 110 to 115 lawyers attended the meetings. Patterson wrote, "Attendance at the meetings of the membership peaked in the mid-1980's and have never been the same since, both in terms of the percentage of the membership that attends and in terms of the absolute numbers."

As for the nature of the SCBA meetings, John opined that the SCBA has always been "the focal points for lawyers of interests in specific fields to get together for learning and socialization." Specifically, he recalled a good presentation on the McNaughton Rule years ago.

"Bar meetings of the general membership used to sponsor debates of political candidates." He specifically noted the candidacy of Connie Mack for the United States House of Representatives. Candidate Mack (who was opposed by Jim Gardner and possibly Ted Ewing) won.

John Patterson's immediate predecessor as president of the Sarasota County Bar Association was Art Ginsburg who, when he learned that certain venues were discriminatory, made a point of seeking out non-dis-



Above and left, John Patterson then and now.

criminatory locations in which to hold future SCBA meetings. Sara Bay Country Club was chosen.

John recalls that Hattie Murphy was the intake person for legal aid which was run by the SCBA. She had an office in the basement of the historic courthouse. Federally funded legal aid commenced in the 1970s.

When asked to identify what he was most proud to have accomplished during his term of office, he responded "The resolution of the long-standing disputes between the federally funded legal aid organization (which I believe was Gulf Coast Legal Services, Inc.) and the SCBA-sponsored legal aid program through the formation of the Sarasota-Manatee Lawyer Referral Service, Inc., organized in October 1982. It was a success and lasted until for-profit lawyer referral services were allowed to enter the market. Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc. is the successor organization."

When asked whether there were any changes he would like to see the SCBA institute, John responded that he hasn't "been sufficiently involved in recent years to make any constructive suggestions for change.

The SCBA appears to be very well run, and the programs of the Real Estate Section" which he tries to attend regularly, "are well done and informative."

When asked what would entice him to become more involved in SCBA activities he said, "There are many good speakers in the legal field. They range from lawyers to those who deal with topics of interest to lawyers. Two of the best speakers I've heard recently (say, last 5 years) have been Bryan Stevenson (Just Mercy) and Gilbert King (Devil in the Grove). Perhaps the SCBA could consider having a major speaker every two years."

When asked to recall any memorable characters from the past, John pointed to Jim McDonald, who never owned a car. Jim rode his bicycle everywhere and was known to cart off steaks from the SCBA picnic in the basket of his bike. The organizers knew this and would purchase extra steaks so that Jim could purloin them.

John recalled going to Tampa for a seminar. He drove up U.S. 301 to the Sunshine Skyway bridge and noticed a man hitch hiking. Sure enough, it was Jim McDonald going to the same seminar. So, John turned around and gave him a ride to the seminar and back. And then there was William "Buzz" Cardozo. . .

John Patterson is now a partner in Shutts & Bowen, LLP, which has six lawyers in its Sarasota office. He has practiced law for fifty-one years.