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1-1-2010

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Mary Celeste

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Celeste, Mary, "Incoming President's Column" (2010). *Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association.* Paper 328.
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Incoming President's Column

Mary Celeste

Soon after my swearing in as a judge, I received a letter from the American Judges Association offering me a free one-year membership. The letter arrived during my first year "judge jitters," and it was a welcome sight. I thought about how nice of a gesture this was and how I could become involved with the Association.

After being on the bench for a bit, I contacted Judge Terry Elliot, the then education chair, to ask how I could assist with his Education Committee. I found him welcoming and supportive of me as a new judge. I worked on several projects with him, including distance learning, which was then on the cutting edge of education. I inherited the chair of the Education Committee and had the privilege of coordinating the AJA conferences for the next three years.

The highlight of my position as education chair came in 2007 when the AJA joined with the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges and the Provincial Court Judges Association of British Columbia for a conference in Vancouver. I had the very good fortune to secure the attendance of United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who I introduced at the conference. Wow!

This year is a very special year for me and my relationship with the AJA; it is for me the "perfect storm" indeed. I have been installed as president of the AJA in front of my home team in Denver; I have completed a white paper for the AJA; and I was able to coordinate a joint conference between AJA judges and the judges of Colorado for the AJA's annual conference in Denver. This model of joining efforts with state educators and administrations is an approach that has proven successful. The AJA is now in the process of trying to replicate this joint conference model for our 2011 annual conference in San Diego, California.

I have had the privilege to serve under many great AJA presidents over the last decade. I was appointed by AJA President Michael McAdam to chair the Access to Justice Committee. At the direction of my mentor, Judge Gayle Nachtigal, another AJA president, I was able to conduct a workshop at an AJA midyear conference that resulted in the AJA resolution on access to justice. It was through the appointment to the AJA Executive Committee by AJA President Mike Cicconetti where I really learned about the operations of the AJA and decided to run for office. Judge Eileen Olds, another AJA president, assisted me in attaining that goal. Finally, it was Judge Jim McKay, now our immediate past president, who served as my muse for the new AJA white paper. These past presidents will be a hard act to follow.

As I take the reins from those AJA presidents and leaders before me, I am thankful for the trust in me and for the opportunity to represent the AJA at many of the upcoming national conferences of interest to judges. I promise to represent the association to the best of my ability and to harness the talent of the association.

AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION FUTURE CONFERENCES

2011 Midyear Meeting
Hilton Head, South Carolina
Westin Hilton Head Island
April 14-16
$209 single/double

2011 Annual Conference
San Diego, California
Westin Gaslamp
September 11-16
$199 single/double

2012 Midyear Meeting
Nashville, Tennessee
Doubletree Hotel
May 17-19
$129 single/double

2012 Annual Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana
Dates and hotel to be determined

2013 Annual Conference
Kohala Coast, Hawaii
The Fairmont Orchid
September 22-27
$219 single/double