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Farewell

*The Times They Are A-Changin' –
Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan*

This will be my last column as Bar Counsel. It has been an honor and privilege to serve our state and our profession for more than three decades and to lead an office of dedicated public servants the last six and half years. Let me close out the Bar Journal columns with a note of reflection and hope.

I have no crystal ball (and therefore see no reflection there) and I'm notoriously off the mark in my predictions. Nevertheless, even without a crystal ball and even with my track record of errancy, I'm totally comfortable making this prediction: There will be change. Even those among us with just a few gray hairs will attest to the changes we've already seen. The changes to come, driven by technology, will be even more rapid and substantial. We have to embrace what technology will mean for lawyering or risk (almost certainly) being marginalized. Many decry what technology has wrought: the ever-increasing demand for speed from those with whom we interact, often at the cost of thoughtfulness; the risks of electronic communication and storage; the expense and time necessary to keep up; the change in our attitudes on privacy and the need for social media validation. But, the possibilities that innovation and technological advances present for the profession and for those who rely on lawyers are perhaps as limitless as our imagination. If we commit to meet the challenges of the future with creativity and with professionalism, we have nothing to fear. If we remain true to the ethical and professional foundations of the practice of law, we can ensure that technological advances will serve the public interest, improve access to justice, and make more transparent the goals of our profession.

Naturally, we should have concerns for the future of our profession and the implications of fundamental change on the society at large. But I'm ever optimistic. Based upon my own experience, I believe we're up to the challenges because Maryland attorneys are true to the ethical tenets that are our bedrock. As I leave this post, I am more certain than ever that most Maryland attorneys strive to practice not within ethical norms, but to exceed those norms. Most Maryland attorneys seek to act beyond what is called for by the Rules; to act with "professionalism" at all times and in all that they do as lawyers. Certainly there are exceptions and you've read about some of them on these pages and every week or two on the Judiciary website. While you know that these folks are the source of most of our "business" and while I'm proud of the work our office has done over the years with respect to the discipline of attorneys, I am most proud of the work that usually never comes to light: the lawyers whose professional (and sometimes personal) lives have been saved by the intervention of our office and by those who we've summoned to help them. I'm a great believer in second chances and I'm glad that over the years, I can (without identification) point to many who've not been disciplined, but who've been redeemed by their interaction with caring people in and out of my office. This is part of what we do. And this is the part that brings the greatest satisfaction.

As you might imagine, I am more than a bit *ferklempt* as I leave after so long. I look back at some remarkable cases, many in the category of “you can’t make this stuff up,” remarkable people (some of whom are no longer with us), great happiness and sometimes heartache. I know how fortunate I’ve been working here and I know the source of that good fortune is the people who have taught me, nurtured me and inspired me. I leave it to others to assess our success in pursuing the mission of the Attorney Grievance Commission. With the help of so many others, I did what I could.

Finally, I thank the MSBA for permitting me the privilege of this column. And I thank those who have travelled this trail with me – my colleagues at the Office of Bar Counsel and the men and women who have represented and counseled those who have found themselves in difficulty. I am humbled by your friendship, your dedication, your courage and your constancy.

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