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where the summit will be held. All present and past board members of the NCWBA are especially invited to attend, to contribute their personal histories and recollections of their service on the NCWBA board, to have a reunion with long-time friends and meet new ones.

Many thanks to our sponsors of the 2007 summit/ anniversary celebration, including Hanson Bridgett, Morrison & Foerster LLP, and Carlton Fields P.A. If you are interested in participating in the planning for the summit and/or 25th anniversary celebration, or would like to join our ever-growing list of sponsors, please contact Andrea Carlise (acarlise@pwblaw.com) or Kathleen M. McDowell (kathleen.mcdowell@mto.com).

NCWBA Holds Board Retreat in New Orleans

Each year, the NCWBA holds a retreat to strategize and plan for the upcoming year. Typically, the retreat is held in or near the city where the current board president resides and practices. This year, however, in a show of support for the New Orleans community devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the NCWBA board decided to have its retreat in New Orleans.

Thus, the first weekend of November 2006, NCWBA board members from across the country brought their enthusiasm and spirit to New Orleans for the retreat. Committee reports were received, goals were set, and plans were made for the upcoming year, including plans for the annual summit and a 25th anniversary celebration to be held on August 10, 2007 in San Francisco. Board members also found time to sample the local cuisine and culture, including an impeccable dinner at Antoine's (served by a third-generation

BELOW: Cezy Collins (left) and Carole Aciman (right), Secretary and President of the National Foundation for Women's Bar Associations, respectively, presenting check to Janet Ahern of the Association for Women Attorneys of New Orleans.



Antoine's waiter), some gambling at the local casinos (the winnings paid for lunch the next day), and some carousing at local watering holes (singing along with the crowd).

The highlight of the retreat was unexpected and sobering. Two leaders of the local women's bar association, the Association for Women Attorneys of New Orleans, gave a personalized and very moving tour to NCWBA board members of the Hurricane Katrina destruction. The newspaper pictures, and the media coverage in general, do not begin to do justice to the enormity of the situation, even 14 months after the fact. We saw blocks and blocks of abandoned and destroyed houses and businesses in the neighborhoods whose names had become familiar to us through the news coverage – the Lower Ninth Ward, Lakeview, St. Bernard's Parish. We saw parking lots that looked like refugee camps filled with rows and rows of white, non-descript small FEMA trailers, and tried to imagine how entire families could live with such uncertainty in such small spaces for so long.

We also heard about the personal experiences of our two guides, Janet Ahern and Jeannine Roques, during Hurricane Katrina – stories of trying to practice law out of a car using only a cell phone, of desperate clients who had no courthouses and judges to turn to, and of returning to a neighborhood with no people, no stores, no schools – just a determination to rebuild their lives. The sheer extent of destruction was overwhelming, as was the fact that there were still so many remnants of destruction more than a year after the hurricane left its mark. It was emotionally exhausting to see it and absorb it, and we all were left with impressions and disturbing images that will stay with us for a long, long time.

And so it was especially gratifying to us that the National Foundation for Women's Bar Associations was able to present a check to the Association for Women Attorneys of New Orleans – as a small token of our support for its efforts to function and thrive among the chaos and the rebuilding. Janet Ahern, President of AWA, expressed her gratitude for the help. When asked what message she'd

like to have conveyed, her responses were "Don't forget about us" and "Come to New Orleans and spend money" – as rebuilding the economy will go a long way in helping the community to recover and heal. If you can't get to New Orleans to spend money, you can make a tax deductible contribution to the National Foundation for Women's Bar Associations, P.O. Box 82366, Portland, Oregon 97282-0366, or visit: <http://www.ncwba.org/foundation.htm>

Rondolyn O'Brien



On July 31, 2006, women's bar associations lost a great friend when Rondolyn O'Brien, age 54, of Albuquerque, New Mexico passed away after a long illness. She was active in bar associations at every level, serving as president of the New Mexico Women's Bar Association, the Albuquerque Bar Association, as bar commissioner for the State Bar of New Mexico and as a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association. Rondolyn was a member of the NCWBA board for eight years, from 1993 until 2001, serving as president in 1999-2000.

Katherine O'Neil (NCWBA President 1993-1994) remembers Rondolyn's first NCWBA board meeting in Chicago. "She brought a refreshing joy to the proceedings as well as practical insights. With her enthusiastic openness and sincerity, she was immediately accessible to all. No matter what hour a board meeting began or in what city, Rondolyn managed to do some expert shopping before the meeting or at the very least scope out the shops. I still have a bright red wool jacket trimmed in black and white rickrack identical to one that Rondolyn found in Chicago, of all places. I wear the jacket whenever it's appropriate for me to look like an urban cowgirl."

Rondolyn was an early advocate of the need for a summit meeting for women's bar associations, despite considerable skepticism from board members concerned with the logistics and costs of such an endeavor. In 1998, as Rondolyn began her term as NCWBA President-Elect, the first part-day women's bar summit was held at the ABA Annual Meeting in Toronto. In Katherine O'Neil's words: "The summit became and remains the NCWBA's most important outreach activity. The summit is a fitting living memorial to a woman lawyer who believed in the power and promise of the women's bar."