



ON THE FRONT COVER

RALSTON ALEXANDER, Q.C.

By Master Peter Keighley

Ralston Alexander, Q.C., assumed the presidency of the Law Society of British Columbia on January 1, 2005. Knowing Ralston, he likely celebrated the event with a round of golf.

Ralston was born in Toronto in 1944, and two years later trekked west with his parents, first to Kamloops and then to Salmon Arm, where his father established a medical practice. After matriculating in 1963 (think of it, two years before the Beatles released *Rubber Soul!*), Ralston left the Shuswap community behind and headed for UBC, graduating with a bachelor of commerce degree in 1968 and his LL.B. in 1969 in the combined program. He had married Karen, his high school sweetheart, in 1967, and their two children now enjoy successful careers: John in Vancouver's movie industry and Kristen as a high-tech recruiter in Dublin.

Ralston articulated in Victoria and has spent his professional career to date as a practitioner of real property and business law in that community. As at the date of this writing, he is a partner in the firm of Cook, Roberts. He has a nice office facing The Bay Centre, but befitting the maritime nature of the community, a visitor should not be dismayed to find a bucketful of moribund crabs (likely left by a grateful client) outside the office door.

As one would expect, Ralston has an extensive resumé of community and professional involvement. He is a former president of the Victoria Bar Association

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and has been active in the affairs of the United Way of Canada since the 1970s. Until 2003, he was a director and treasurer of the Uplands Golf Club. Prior to being elected as bencher for Victoria in 1999, he served as a non-bencher member of the Complainants' Review, Competency, Ethics and Insurance Committees. Since becoming a bencher, he has served on numerous committees and task forces, most notably, and not to derogate from his other contributions, the Land Titles E-filing Committee and Paralegals Task Force.

Ralston's strengths are his keen wit (his lifelong ambition to perform as a stand-up comedian in the Don Rickles mould having been achieved, as his bencher colleagues will attest) and his equally keen intellect. He is able to condense vast quantities of paper offerings down to a few insightful, pertinent questions or comments. His written decisions are, despite their serious content, a joy to read and models of compassionate clarity. If he has a weakness, it is for french fries, and in this respect he has egalitarian tastes, favouring neither the exquisite *patates frites* of the Café de Paris nor the banal offerings of the most plebian drive-thru. To some extent, Ralston is a study in contrasts: he is a bundle of intellectual energy but eschews physical exercise these days (except to the extent offered by his beloved game, since his knees gave out). His sharp, incisive wit is balanced by kindness and compassion. His leadership is tempered by introspection and a willingness to consult. He is, by the standards of all who know him, a workaholic, but also a devoted family man.

The presidential role places extraordinary demands on the time, energy and commitment of those who fill it. In keeping with the way he has faced all challenges, Ralston will do all that is expected of him and more. I also expect that he, and we, will have a little fun along the way.



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