

IN THE NEWS

Stanley B. Balbach *December 26, 1919 – November 12, 2012*

Excerpted from ATG President Peter Birnbaum's remarks at the memorial service, November 26, 2012, Champaign, Illinois.

Practicing lawyers everywhere have lost a great friend.

Champaign-Urbana has lost a great citizen.

But most of all, the Balbach family lost a devoted husband, loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

Stan's impact on the legal profession and on the consuming public has been profound.

Stan's fifty (50) year odyssey with ATG, (or "The Fund" as we were known then) had modest beginnings. Together with his partners Richard Thies and Charlie Webber, they started ATG out of their law offices.

Stan was committed to the concept that consumers need access to a lawyer when buying or selling a home. For most consumers, it is the largest financial transaction of their lives. To accomplish this Stan went about trying to form a lawyer-owned title insurance company as a way to stop the trend of commercial title companies taking over what traditionally had been the practice of law.

The early years were marked by moments of great joy.

As Stan traveled the counties of downstate Illinois, he was warmly embraced by bar leaders like Dick Hart, Jim Elson, Wilbur Capps, Ed Moehle, and John Satter. These men joined Stan in becoming ATG founders.

But these early years were also marked my rejection, even hostility. The commercial companies who saw Stan as a threat responded with lawsuits, legislation, and an aggressive media campaign.

Incredibly, in the early years, ATG was denied membership in American Land Title Association. Something that held true until the early 80s.

Many lawyers aligned with commercial title companies fought The Fund Concept and sought to have it banned. The ISBA wouldn't even allow Stan to have a booth at its meetings. Several factions of the ABA worked strenuously to stop him.

Despite these hardships, with the support of his law partners, his family, and from the founders and original members of ATG, he persevered.



In 2004 ATG honored its founder, Stanley Balbach of Urbana, Illinois, and presented him with a bronze statue of his likeness—including his omnipresent bow tie. There are two copies of the artwork, one on display in ATG's Champaign office lobby and the other in ATG's Chicago office outside the Stanley B. Balbach Boardroom. Shown above are Stanley and Sarah Balbach, pillars of the Champaign-Urbana community. Of his early commitment to the bar-related movement and the work he did on behalf of ATG and the profession, Stan was known to say this of his bride: "No story about Stanley Balbach is complete without credit being given to Sarah Witherspoon Balbach."

Stan was a magnificent looking man. Impeccably dressed. Impossibly fit. Chiseled features. A face that should be on currency. But the content of his character was even more magnificent. He fought all these battles with equanimity and cherished the joys of our successes along the way. And he did all of this without compensation and—at least in those early years—very little adulation. Hard to imagine this day in age.

After a few years of running ATG from his law practice and doing mailings at his kitchen table with the help of his wife and kids, Stan eventually turned over the reins for day-to-day operations first to Jack Metzger, then Sam Irwin, and then a talented young lawyer named Ward McDonald. Working together, ATG began to flourish.

And the rest they say is history.

Because of Stan, in our 48-year history, consumers in Illinois have been represented by lawyers in more than three (3) million ATG-insured transactions. Nationally, companies that were formed because of Stan's efforts represent nearly five (5) million real estate transactions.

Today, the ISBA is our most trusted friend. ALTA now embraces us—I even serve on its board. The ABA honors us as a premier lawyer service organization. We are an active and responsible corporate citizen.

Thousands of lawyers, their employees, and their families now rely on ATG for significant portion of their firm revenue. More than \$500 million in law firm revenues have been generated over the years through ATG.

Because of Stan, braces get put on kid's teeth.

Those same kids go to college.

Groceries are bought, and other bills are paid.

Retirements are funded.

To borrow a phrase from Isaac Newton: "Our accomplishments have only been achieved by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Today, we honor Stan as such a giant. We also honor the men in this room who joined him in those efforts.

On a personal basis, I thank Stan and Sarah for their thirty-one (31) years of supporting me, encouraging me, applauding me. Earning their trust and respect has driven me to be what I hope is a competent steward of Stan's mission.

Champaign-Urbana also lost a favorite son. A war veteran, a Captain in the Army Air Corp., Stan came to Champaign early in his practice and devoted himself to the community for more than sixty (60) years.

He was particularly involved in transportation issues (trains really do run on time because of Stan), helping the elderly, and providing pro bono legal services.

He was also active at the Boys Scouts, American Legion, and other activities. His accomplishments and honors are too numerous to be listed here, but trust me, they are many.

A very sweet thing happened a few months ago. Senator Michael Frerichs, who knew and admired Stan, also knew his time was near. Mike introduced and had passed a Senate Proclamation honoring Stan on December



Also honored in 2004 and shown here are founding directors, from left: Richard Hart (Benton, Illinois); James Elson (Canton, Illinois); and at far right, John Satter (formerly of Pontiac, Illinois). Wilbur Capps (Carthage, Illinois, now deceased) was also a founding board member.

26, 2011. Senator Frerichs together with Stan's family and friends presented Stan with this proclamation at a breakfast on April 13, 2012. It added to his list of countless awards.

And now to the family:

Sarah, his wife of 68 years has been nothing but a blessing to Stan and Stan a blessing to her.

Their calming influence on each other is a model for all marriages. I can only hope to say the same of my marriage.

A devoted father, he had the pleasure of practicing law with his son, Byron, and his son-in-law, Tom, for many years.

All fathers especially love their daughters and he was blessed with three of them, Nancy, Edith, and Barbara.

Sadly, Stan and Sarah lost their son Jacob many years ago and experienced the tragedy of outliving their child. Something no parent should ever face.

We honor Stan today, honor him for his contributions to all of us. From his family, his friends, his colleagues, we say thank you Stan for blessing us with your remarkable life.

View **Stanley B. Balbach's obituary.**

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