

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO TODAY

July 31, 1986..... the Association of Collegiate Licensing Administrators (ACLA) germinated at the Big Ten Kick-Off Luncheon at Hyatt Hotel in Chicago. It's one of those moments in times that I recall with crystal clarity. Four collegiate licensing pioneers convened in the Hyatt lounge on Wacker Avenue after the luncheon and literally wrote the playbook on the back of a napkin. There were many early pioneers that helped build the collegiate licensing industry, but on that particular day, four licensing administrators made it happen. They were: Kim Allan, Michigan State University, Finus P. Gaston, University of Alabama, Dickie Van Meter Anderson, University of Iowa and me, Anne Chasser, The Ohio State University who set the wheels in motion to form a new organization --ACLA.

Since the late 1970's a number of colleges and universities operated college trademark licensing programs. There was little consistency as many took the form of entrepreneurial enterprises. The administrative function reported to a desperate variety of units—legal, college bookstores, athletics, university development, external merchandising organizations, and even the President's office. There were different business models-- independent programs and programs managed by licensing agents. In many ways it was like the wild west, with pioneers, cowboys, sheriffs and a potential gold rush. A lot of folks were making up the rules as moved wemoved forward.

PAC-Ten schools, like USC and UCLA were actively registering their trademarks and developing programs, schools in the Big Ten, like OSU, MSU, Michigan and Iowa and schools in the SEC, like Alabama, Auburn, Florida, and Georgia, and Southern Georgia were establishing licensing programs. Steve Crossland and Bill Battle were building companies to represent universities in a consortium approach and were actively engaging schools through their bookstore operations and athletic departments.

Word spread and the academic “entrepreneurs” started talking to each other—articles began to appear in a variety of higher education administration journals, merchandising journals and legal journals. Often, when an interesting article appeared, we'd get on the phone and call the author. It was a real treat to find someone else who was interested in this new endeavor—collegiate licensing.

Groups started to get together informally. My first meeting was in San Francisco in 1978 when the National Association of Colleges Stores (NACS) met for its annual convention. At that time college licensing administrators were banded from the meeting so we had to meet in a hotel room not connected with NACS. We were viewed as the “bad guys” by companies challenging the validity of public universities registering their trademarks or requiring manufacturers to pay a royalty for the use of those marks. We were taxing students for showing school spirit!

As we met informally and through educational seminars, there was tremendous energy in sharing ideas, strategies and business practices. A group of the early pioneers, including Jack Revyor, UCLA, David VanderHyde, University of Washington, Tom Porter, University of Illinois, Will Perry, University of Michigan, Frieda Donnan, Notre Dame, Jack Arnold, USC, Mike Lowe, Arizona University, along with the Dickie Van Meter Anderson, Finus Gaston, and Kim Allan believed that if collegiate licensing would grow as an industry it needed an organization to share information, to establish a collective voice, and to be recognized as a collective presence in order to make a difference in the marketplace for collegiate licensed products. We all shared a passion for protecting our university trademarks and identifying ways to promote our university's name and reputation and generate revenue to support scholarships and other university interests. We called it the Three P's of Licensing: Protection, Promotion and Profit.

Much like today, there was tremendous passion in what we were doing because we felt that we were making a huge contribution to our Universities and forging important new work in an emerging field- intellectual property. It was all very exciting!

Once we decided to form an association, on that day in July 1986, we named our first officers—Finus Gaston, President, Dickie Van Meter Anderson, Vice President, Kim Allan Treasurer and I would be the Secretary. The rest is history! It took about a year to get all the bylaws, code of regulations, directory, newsletter, identify projects such as annual reporting of licensing activities, and aspirations for future projects—handbook on collegiate licensing, enforcement standards, audit standards, and universal label program. We scheduled annual meetings, educational seminars and other opportunities for networking.

Since I had the pleasure in participating in ICLA's 2011 Annual Meeting in Orlando, I saw first hand, that the early ideals and aspirations of ACLA continue today—an open forum for sharing ideas and information, a united voice for the collegiate licensing industry and a place to meet and network with all groups associated with the collegiate licensing industry.

You might ask why I will always remember the exact date July 31, 1986? It was my son, Stephen's first birthday!

Congratulations to ACLA/ICLA for 25 great years!

***For a more detailed description of the history, I'd recommend Jack Revoyr's "Non Definitive History of Collegiate Licensing," published in the Trademark Reporter in 1998 and available on the ICLA website (see xxxxxx)

Anne H. Chasser is currently Associate Vice President for the Office of Research at the University of Cincinnati. After serving as Director of Trademark Licensing at The Ohio State University, she was the Commissioner for Trademarks at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. She is the author of “Brand Rewired: Connecting Intellectual Property Protection, Branding, and Creativity Strategy,” published by John Wiley & Co. Anne was inducted into the Collegiate Licensing Hall of Fame in June 2011.