

AALS – the Association for Arkansas Legal Support Professionals
A History - The Beginning, The Middle,
and The End – 1968-2022
November 20, 2021

First, I want to say thank you to each of you for giving of your time, and being present on this very special day. My heart is full with happiness and gladness because of your presence!

To our Mississippi members/family—thank you for traveling so far to be with us today. It is such a special treat to have you here.

I also want to say a special thank you to Cheryl and Danny—who were “volun-told”—and yet agreed to take on the challenge of coordinating and planning this special event. We are in your debt.

Today, I’m going to talk about **our** association, our Grand Lady, initially named the *Arkansas Association of Legal Secretaries (AALS)*, and now known as *AALS – the Association for Arkansas Legal Support Professionals*, but we commonly refer to her as “AALS.”

I am very grateful to Martha for providing me with a copy of *The History of AALS – Celebrating 40 years – 1968-2008*, which was compiled by Marie Schoenfeldt, Velzene Wilson, and other members of Garland County.

Cheryl has also been a treasure trove of prior dates, events, certifications, and positions obtained. I couldn’t have prepared this without their input.

I have taken the liberty of including some of their information with my comments and observations, adding some information from those early years, as well as our accomplishments since 2008. Because we are a tri-level association, I’ll have to include some NALS important dates and events, as well.

Some of you may personally know of the events and history I'll speak about; some of you may have heard about some of them; and for some of us, it may very well be new information and things we never knew!

Prior to organizing the state association, Arkansas had three local chapter associations: Greater Little Rock Legal Secretaries Association (33 members), Garland County Legal Secretaries Association (28 members), and Jefferson County Legal Secretaries Association (32 members).

On May 19, 1968, the Arkansas Association of Legal Secretaries was formed, with a combined total of 93 charter members. Temporary officers were elected for the year 1968, which included Mada Larmore of Greater Little Rock as AALS' first President and Doris Hughes of Jefferson County as Recording Secretary.

State dues were \$2.00 per year (it appears NALS dues were \$5.00 per year).

The temporary board determined the First Annual Meeting would be held in Little Rock in April 1969, and that annual meetings would be held in April of each year thereafter.

AALS State convention locations in those first years were:

1968 - Organizational Meeting – Little Rock

1969 - 1st Annual Convention – Little Rock (Greater Little Rock)

1970 – Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)

1971 – Hot Springs (Garland County)

1972 – Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)

1973 – Little Rock (Greater Little Rock)

1974 – Hot Springs (Garland County)

Our state colors are red and white, and our state association's motto is: "We Serve." In all these years, I never knew we had a motto!!

It was also announced that Temporary Chairman Larmore would receive the Charter of the Association in July, 1968, at the NALS National Convention to be held in Hot Springs, and installation of elected state officers would be in August 1968. Arkansas received Charter XXXVII (37) issued by NALS.

As an aside: AALS hosted the Region 6 meetings in 2004 and 2009, but NALS would not come back to Arkansas for its annual convention until 2019 when it met in Little Rock.

The records don't reflect the reason for the delay, but the Board of Directors Meeting and First Annual Convention was not held until June 7, 1969, with 37 members and guests in attendance. Treasurer's reports reflect AALS' net profit for the year was \$360.49.

Interestingly, it was reported that a resolution was before the U. S. Senate Judiciary Committee that October should be established as National Legal Secretary Week. President Larmore advised that she had written to Senator McClellan requesting his support. (It was not until October 14, 1974, that President Gerald Ford proclaimed the second full week in October as National Legal Secretaries Court Observance Week.)

At the Second Annual Convention held on April 25, 1970, President Larmore announced the formation of our fourth chapter, Baxter County LSA in Mountain Home, with 13 charter members.

AALS approved its first state budget for the year 1970-1971.

A Scholarship Program was approved in May 1971, and a Scholarship Savings Account of \$100 was included in the 1971-1972 budget.

The first state Historian was appointed in 1971.

Around that same time, on the national level, NALS was discussing moving its headquarters from Chicago, and the AALS' EC submitted Hot Springs or Little Rock as possible sites for relocation. Ultimately, Tulsa, Oklahoma, was chosen as the new location.

State dues were increased to \$5.00 for fiscal year 1974-1975 (for a total of \$10 per member per year).

During those early formative years, AALS continued to grow, both in the number of chapters and the number of members. In all, over the years, AALS has been proud to have 16 local chapters:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Charter Year</u>
Greater Little Rock LSP (After 58 years, merged w/AALS in 2016)	1958
Garland County LSP	1962
Jefferson County LSP	1966
Sebastian-Crawford Counties LSA	1975
Benton County LSA	1976
Jonesboro LSA (now Northwest Arkansas LSP)	1977
Washington County LSA (dissolved after only one year)	1978
Faulkner County LSA	1978
Hempstead-Nevada Counties LSA	1979
Phillips County LSA	1979
White-Prairie-Lonoke Counties LSA (now White County LSP)	1980
Union County LSA	1981
Saline County LSP	1982

Greene County LSA	1983
Washington County LSA (Chartered again)	1990
Southeast Arkansas LSA	1998
Crittenden County LSA	1998

According to other reports, at the height of AALS' membership, eleven of those chapters were active at one time, with a total of 220 members.

From that high, today AALS has 2 chapters – NEALSP in Jonesboro and White County in Searcy (but White County is in the process of dissolving its chapter), with total membership of 25 members.

AALS has 5 NALS Life members, and we have now lost our two AALS Gold members, Dot Griffin, PLS, and Sue Holder, PLS.

Since 1968, AALS has had 42 members who have stepped up when asked, and committed their time, effort, experience and knowledge to serve as president of our association.

The AALS Past Presidents, their terms of office, and their themes, that are here with us today are:

Ann Simmons..... 1997-1999 (two terms)
(Emphasized Leadership Development; held our first state Retreat)

Kim Cooksey, PLS1999-2000
(PLS emphasis; Sharing the Vision)

Doris T. Compton, PP, PLS..... 2000-2002 (two terms)
(PLS emphasis; TEAM (together everyone achieves more) and Linking Links
–obtained first NALS Grant for Leadership Retreat)

Martha Cox, PP, PLS2003-2004
 (PLS; Building Blocks; it takes each individual block (member) working together with other blocks (members) to build a building)

Belinda Penn 2005-2006 / 2020-2021
 Write Your Own Story! And Through The Years (remembering past members/events)

Linda Adair, PLS 2008-2009 / 2014-2015
 What's Puzzlin' You? . (back to the basics of NALS, AALS, local chapter rules and regs) Second term: Addicted to AALS

Janice Miller, CPS, PLS, PP2009-2010
 Bloom Where You Are Planted! .. (reward and encourage member participation)

Judy Davis2010-2011
 Passport to the Future! (Captain Judy encouraged us to fly and reach the stars!)

Cheryl Summerhill, PLS2011-2012
 United We Stand (We all joined the AALS Army, and towed that line!)

Janet Gordon, PP, PLS2012-2013
 AALS Symphony -Creating Chords of Harmony (we could create a beautiful sound by working together)

Danny Looney-Yoder.....2018-2019
 What's Cooking? (Mixed us all together and encouraged us to be the best we could be!)

Doris Tong Compton, PP, PLS Emeritus2021-2022
 Head, Hands, Heart = Memories (it's the culture, the stories, and the history that reminds us of how things were done successfully in the past and how things are changing)

It was in 1957 when NALS President Rhoda V. Polley, PLS, of California, inaugurated the Professional Legal Secretary program, and appointed Clara Lagow, PLS, (Texas) to head a committee that began working on a professional examination. The very next year, Ms. Lagow became NALS President and, in April 1960, the very first Professional Legal Secretary exam was administered.

One of the first items of business the 1968 AALS Temporary Officers addressed was the need for legal education, and the intent to present the Professional Legal Secretary course. The Minutes reflect that Member at Large Norma Hughes of Searcy was the only secretary studying for the PLS examination at this time.

NALS President Helen Crittenden's theme for the years 1970-1972 was "PROFESSIONALISM plus EDUCATION equals EXCELLENCE." Does that sound familiar to anyone?

One of the local chapters, Greater Little Rock, presented the first Professional Study Course (started 09/06/1972) with 40 attendees from across the state.

Although it was mentioned several times in the early minutes and reports, and several members had intentions of sitting for the exam, it appears no members achieved their PLS certification during the first five years of AALS.

Reports coming from the national convention in 1971 advised that NALS and the American Bar Association were discussing the "Legal Assistants Program" [AALS President's Message, 1971].

NALS established the Legal Assistant Section during the 1972-1973 year. In 1975, the Legal Assistant Division of NALS was dissolved and became a separate association, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA).

It was during that time (1972-73) that AALS co-sponsored with the Arkansas Bar Association the First Annual Conference for Legal Secretaries (And Lawyers), which was deemed a success.

Fast forward to 1985, when AALS established a Continuing Legal Education Committee to ensure quality legal education was presented at a state level, not only at our meetings, but through legal education seminars made available to our members and the public. We are still benefiting from the monies made during those early, and subsequent, years!

In 1991-1992, NALS developed and finally offered the ALS, Accredited Legal Secretary, exam was offered as a “basic” standard of legal education.

Time marched on, and NALS finally came back full circle to the paralegal debate, and in 2003 and 2004, the Professional Paralegal (PP or CPP) exam was first offered to qualified members.

I know several of our AALS’ members—as well as our Mississippi members/family—were actively involved in writing and perfecting these exams, and getting the message about them to the members, by being part of the Beta testing for each exam, or volunteering their time and efforts by serving on the Certifying Board, as well as the Education Committee, the Editorial Committee, the Manual Committee, and the Marketing Committee—at the NALS level, AND sharing that expertise with our members at the state level.

Over the years, we have been honored to have exam administrators to oversee and proctor our exams, and kudos go to Linda Adair, Janice Miller, Cheryl Summerhill and myself for their commitment to ensuring these exams maintained their high standards.

Since that time, approximately 80 of our past and current AALS members have obtained their PLS certification;

ALS – approximately 70 past and present; and
PP – approximately 20 past and present.

To the best of my ability in researching available records, (I believe) the first AALS member to obtain the NALS PLS Certification was Jefferson County LSA member Bobbie D. Jones, PLS, (deceased) in 1975, followed by Benton County LSA member, Dolph Parker, PLS, (deceased), who obtained her certification in 1978.

For those of us here today, both former and current members, a few represent the next “batch” of PLSs -- with Martha and Janice passing in 1983, Claire Martin in 1985, and Cathy Underwood in 1988.

Linda, Cheryl, Charlotte, Mary, and I obtained our PLS in the 90s, and Janet in 2001. Rita obtained her ALS in 2000. Belinda had her PLS reinstated in 2020. All PP certifications have been awarded since 2003/2004.

While I am certain there are many more than I can remember, I know of three fairly recent members that went on to become lawyers, one of which is here today: Cathy Underwood, [the others are the Hon. Cindy Grace Thyer and Sherry Hoffman Bussell]; and one that is now a Nurse Practitioner, Kim Cooksey.

As you can see, we have been very busy over these past years, presenting quality legal education and promoting professionalism. In order to acknowledge and recognize outstanding performance of our members, AALS established what was originally known as the Legal Secretary of the Year Award, subsequently changed to the AALS Award of Excellence Award, which has been awarded 40 times since 1982. I would like all past recipients to please raise your right arm and be acknowledged. Thank you.

Another very special recognition on the national level is the NALS Award of Excellence (as of 1994) (formerly the NALS Legal Secretary of the Year from 1957 until 1993.) During these past 64 years, AALS has the honor of having seven members that have achieved this honor, tying with Texas.

AALS can also claim something that no other state can claim—of the seven members who received this award, four of them were received in consecutive years:

Bobbie Jones, PLS (deceased)	1982;
Dolph Parker, PLS (deceased)	1983;
Cathy Underwood, PLS	1996;
Marie Schoenfeldt, PLS, CLA	1997;
Mae Humphries, PLS, CLA	1998;
Janice Miller, PP, PLS, CPS	1999; and
Cheryl Summerhill, PLS	2012

And we cannot go forward without recognizing our Mississippi friend/family, Karen Kuhn, PP, PLS, who received this Award in 2006!

AALS has always been very involved on a national level, serving as members on various committees, sitting as chairs, and serving as elected officers, as follows:

Doris Compton PP, PLS Emeritus - NALS President 2013-2014

Mimi Mangrum Pace - NALS BOD – 2014-2015

AALS – the Association for Arkansas Legal Support Professionals is soon to be 54 years old! We done many great things, accomplishing goals that we initially thought couldn't be done, and developed many lasting friendships.

As state president, my theme for this year is “Hands – Head – Heart = Memories.” What is this? It is **our** culture, **our** stories, and **our** history that reminds us of how things were done successfully in the past, creating a common connection, reminding us to bear witness of what we've done and how people and times are changing.

As I told the members in April, I believe that, over these past years, we've learned the gift of connection and of making memories:

We've learned about putting our heads together, sharing things we each knew something about, and enjoyed talking about, and sharing it with others;

We've used our hands to show the things we knew or the skills we have with others, creating purpose, values, or goals;

And we have always put our hearts into whatever we were doing, things about which we care deeply, creating compassion, developing trust, and nurturing honesty.

Using our Head, Hands and Heart to create commitment;

Allowing our Head, Hands and Heart to create Memories.

Memories that are comforting, lasting, meaningful.

As you leave here today, that is my wish for you: Whatever you may do, wherever you may go, take your memories with you, and always, always--remember your time with AALS.

Thank you.