

REFLECTIONS*

H. Hamilton Rice, Jr.**

In a land far away and long ago, and at a law school that I suspect is only in my mind, I labored long and hard as a member of the law journal staff. It was so long ago that there were no women students, to give you some idea. While we were very proud of our journal, we had little or no contact with the practicing bar concerning its contents and, had we time to stop to think, as I do now, we would have been curious to know if anyone ever read the product of our toil.

When I joined the Local Government Law Section of the Florida Bar in the early 1980s, I listened to early discussions concerning the prospects of an arrangement with the Stetson University College of Law and the *Stetson Law Review* to the end that the combined Section and *Law Review* efforts could produce an issue of the *Law Review* dedicated to the subject of local government law and all or many of its aspects. The idea was to provide practitioners in the field and those concerned city, county, and local governments meaningful information and observations about the law in that area of practice.¹ Some folks felt that it would be a waste of money. Others felt that it was too much of an academic pursuit to be of any genuine

* © H. Hamilton Rice, Jr., 1999. All rights reserved.

** B.A., University of Kentucky; J.D., University of Kentucky College of Law; Chairman, Local Government Law Section, 1993–1994. H. Hamilton Rice, Jr. is a partner in the law office of McGuire, Pratt, Masio, Farrance & Rice, P.A. in Bradenton, Florida. Additionally, Mr. Rice serves as an Adjunct Professor at Stetson University College of Law.

1. Here is a listing of local government attorneys who were instrumental in seeing that the first issue was published in the Summer of 1985:

Editorial Advisory Committee:

John-Edward Alley, Tampa	Anthony J. O'Donnell, Miami
Nikki Clayton, Sanford	Charles F. Schoech, West Palm Beach
J.T. Frankenberger, Gainesville	Harry A. Stewart, Orlando
Jose R. Garcia-Pedrosa, Miami	James R. Wolf, Tallahassee
Samuel S. Goren, Ft. Lauderdale	

Symposium Editors:

John J. Copelan, Jr.
David E. Cardwell

Faculty Coordinators:

Thomas Marks, Professor
James J. Brown, Professor

See Symposium, *Local Government Law*, 15 STETSON L. REV. 489 (1985).

help to practitioners. As I moved through the ranks from member of the Section to the Executive Council, and subsequently to the Chairmanship, I became more and more convinced that the Local Government Law Symposium of the *Stetson Law Review* was an invaluable tool for both practitioners and students alike.²

To those who would relegate law schools to purely clinical activities, and how-to seminars, I suggest that there is plenty of time in a career in the law to address those aspects. For the law student, law school is the last opportunity any of us will really have to study, learn, and inwardly digest the fundamental tenets upon which our American system of laws is based. For local government law practitioners and wannabees, the *Stetson Law Review* Local Government Law Symposium provides a marketplace of ideas, to coin a current phrase, where the practitioner can revisit for a brief time his academic beginnings and the student can relate and demonstrate his legal acumen with some assurance that it will be read and criticized (which lawyers are wont to do).

My experience with the City, County and Local Government Law Section is that the Local Government Law Symposium is widely read, cited, and used by local government practitioners as a primary research tool and, as well, is a point of pride demonstrating to the Bar at large that, as in other fields, the subject is unique.³

2. From the beginning, each Local Government Law Symposium was comprised of three parts: leading articles, student topical comments or case notes, and recent developments (current case summaries). In the first three issues, leading articles were written by practicing attorneys (14) and law professors (2). Student works numbered 20. The recent developments of case summaries grew from 81 to 159 printed pages. Each issue thereafter contained approximately the same three-part mix with lawyer-written emphasis until the sixth issue in the Summer of 1990. In the Summer 1990 book, three academic writers made contributions to supplement the four practitioner-written leading articles and five student works. Focused symposia began appearing in the Summer 1991 issue. That book looked at Local Government Finance; it was followed the next year by Voting Rights (revisited in the Spring 1997 issue), and in subsequent years by Homelessness.

By Spring 1993, only two student works appeared, but the leading articles authors included one judge, four attorneys, and four professors. The equal balance between practitioner and academic authors is clearly represented in the Thirteenth Annual Symposium Issue (Spring 1997), but it is at this point that more cases and research background began to be included. One hundred and ninety-seven pages of case materials were printed; 278 pages were printed in the Winter 1998 issue. And with this issue, a cumulative three-year topical index is being presented.

3. The Local Government Law Symposium issue is one of the benefits of Section membership. Some Executive Council individuals attribute it as being influential in raising the number of dues-paying members. To put this into perspective, the Section had

It is always a pleasure to be able to say that I have, in some small way, been associated with the Local Government Law Symposium.

291 enrolled members in 1973. In my term, 1993–1994, we had 953 enrolled. As of October 1, 1998, the membership totaled 1195.

Another point for perspective is that there are no competitive law journals in the Southeast Region that devote one or more books to strictly local government law subjects. On the national level, the *Urban Lawyer*, published by the City, County and Local Government Law Section of the American Bar Association, dominates the field.