



NALTEA

The National Association of Land
Title Examiners and Abstractors

Message from the President

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Our 2009 conference has come and gone. We have enjoyed seeing many familiar faces, and were thrilled to meet several new members in Charlotte, NC. For those who were unable to attend this year's conference, read on. This issue features news from the conference, as told by the board members and officers in attendance.

During our initial years, NALTEA has always enjoyed a burst of energy and new ideas in the wake of the conference. This year is no exception. We begin a new NALTEA year with two new board members. **Jill Kissell** previously served as NALTEA's secretary, and **Debi Merrill** as vice president. I could not be more pleased to welcome these two dedicated members to the board. They have both certainly earned the positions through their past participation and efforts on behalf of the NALTEA membership.

Congratulations also go to our newest officer. We have high hopes for our newly appointed secretary, **Malinda Griffin**. It cannot be an easy task taking minutes of meetings by phone, where it is often difficult to distinguish who is speaking at any given time. Malinda brings the necessary energy, talent and experience to get the job done. She will also be responsible for chairing the Ethics Committee.

To the outgoing board members, we offer our sincere gratitude. **Lynn Hammett** served on the board since February of 2006. The board appointed Lynn as president of

NALTEA in January of 2009, and she has since served faithfully and tirelessly, leading NALTEA through a period of significant progress. **Vikki Moffitt** accepted the board's request that she serve as vice president in February of 2008. In April of the same year, she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the board of directors. Both of our outgoing board members have contributed significantly to NALTEA. We are a better association for having benefited from their efforts.

We have momentum and accomplishments from the past year to build upon this year. Thanks to our talented Education Committee, we now have a certification program available to recognize member abstractors for their superior knowledge and experience in the field. Our Public Relations Committee is now in the process of promoting the certification program to the greater title industry. With the endorsement of recognized industry experts and associations, we expect the NALTEA certification to quickly become the widely accepted standard for abstractor recognition.

Within a couple of weeks, our printed directory will go to press. It is ready to go, waiting only to allow an opportunity to ensure that all members who have not yet renewed, but intend to do so, are listed. The membership committee will also highlight the directory when contacting prospective members. The directories will be sent by mail and will be distributed generously at industry events.

I am confident that the accomplishments of the past year will lead to a healthy boost in membership this year. Several of the tangible benefits that abstractors seek are now in place. The board is discussing plans for a number of mini conferences in select cities, at which board members will be present to meet current and prospective members who reside in and around those cities. The Education Committee is 'training trainers' to teach classes locally for abstractors preparing to take the certification exam.

Because of the efforts of our volunteers in past years, we have an excellent foundation to build upon this year. The building of our association happens in the committees. There is still room on most committees for more members. Please take a look at the different committee pages on our website at www.naltea.org. Determine where your talents can best benefit your association, and contact the committee chairperson via the link on that page. Or, contact me at info@naltea.org and I will forward your message to the committee(s) of your choice.

We've come a long way. We still have much to do. I hope you will join us in making this a most productive year.

Board of Directors Report

Ed Gunther

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The board and officers convened via conference call on Tuesday October 27, 2009. Our newly elected President, Pat Scott, brought the meeting to order. Board members Ed Gunther and Dave Pelligrinelli were on the call with newly elected Board members Debi Merrill and Jill Kissell. Wanda Steudel, Treasurer, Malinda Griffin, Secretary and Jeanne Johnson, Education Committee Chairman were also on the call.

The meeting had a renewed enthusiasm and many positive comments about the recent Annual Conference. Everyone agreed it was great to put faces together with the voices once again at the conference. Wanda Steudel was sorry to have missed the conference but could not have passed up Robert Franco's wedding. The board wished Robert and his new bride the best.

The conversation then moved to getting Robert more involved again in NALTEA. Robert's Model Abstractor Act was the topic at one of the round table discussions during the conference. We all agreed that getting legislation to regulate our

profession is the best way to keep our profession strong and not lose our work to offshore companies.

Now that we have our certification test available on line, getting our message out about the NALTEA Certification program is moving into high gear. Dave Pelligrinelli has put together an invitation to local land title association to take the NALTEA Certification Test. Dave is inviting comments about our program and also hopes to see new members and a higher awareness of NALTEA as a result.

Jeanne Johnson has put together an Education Committee survey that will be offered on the NALTEA web site. The Education Committee is looking for feedback on the Certification program. Going forward we will be purchasing 100 more on line test licenses for the upcoming year. Our current licenses will expire soon and we encourage anyone who is interested to take the test now. In addition, anyone who fails the test – because it is not an easy test – is able to retake the test for free after seven days and before 30 days have passed. Take the test now and become a NALTEA Certified abstractor.

Ed Gunther presented a suggestion to have two "Meet NALTEA" conferences during the year to get our message out and meet abstractors on their home turf. Wanda felt the idea was like the "Title Camp" program that was started prior to business slowing down for all of us. It was great to have Wanda at the meeting. She seems to have an invaluable amount of NALTEA history stashed in her file cabinets. I think we have her hooked again.

Cities for "Meet NALTEA" and our next NALTEA Annual Conference were discussed. I think everyone will find the list interesting. Comments or suggestions are welcomed by the Planning and Events Committee. The cities in no special order are: Boston, Kansas City, Memphis, Columbus, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago, San Diego, Phoenix, Nashville, Clearwater, Montreal and anywhere in South Florida.

On line networking was kicked around and the board decided to set up a NALTEA business account on LinkedIn. Pat Scott is going to get that going for us.

The Board discussed the assignment schedule for the newsletter report. Having been lucky enough to draw the month of October, I also had the assignment of getting this report in on time and hopefully making it not sound like the

minutes of the board meeting. I keep thinking that if I had more time I could put a few jokes in but it's my wife's birthday and if I don't wrap this report up I'll be late to pick her up for dinner.

Membership Committee Update

Pat Scott

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NALTEA proudly welcomes our newest members:

- Chris Adcock of Capital City Land Title, LLC.
- Rene Blevens of Security American Title, LLC.
- Christa Porth of Richland Title Corporation
- Timothy Korzen of Infotrack Information Services
- Rob Anderson (Individual Membership)
- Nannette Bernard of DTCC Enterprises dba Land Title Abstracts
- Catherine Jackson of Triad Title Associates
- Teri Carro of CMP Search , Inc.

We now have 77 active members*

*As of October 29, 2009 we have 28 members who have not renewed for the current year. The membership committee is in the process of calling each non-renewing member in an attempt to learn their reasons for non-renewal. We are required by our Code of Regulations to then send written notice before deactivating the memberships.

If you are one of the 28 members who have yet to renew, and you intend to retain your membership, please save us a phone call and a stamp. Take a moment and renew your membership at this time.

Public Relations Committee

David Pelligrinelli

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It is easy to forget that we are only about 8 weeks away from the end of 2009. NALTEA accomplished a great deal this year, and the prospects for 2010 are interesting. First, congratulations to the new board members and officers. The current leadership is a strong combination of individuals, and I can see the potential for significant accomplishments. The board meeting on 10/27 was a particularly insightful conference call, and I came away with a great deal of enthusiasm for the projects in the coming year.

The NALTEA certification program is shaping up to be an industry benchmark, as the first national designation for professional abstractors. Congratulations to those who have already been certified, and I recommend that all members take a look at this. Jeanne Johnson and the Education Committee have put a great deal of work into polishing the program and the online testing.

The NALTEA conference was an excellent experience for those who attended. For those who were not able to make it this year, be sure to make it a priority for next year. In the meantime, keep your eyes open for some mini-conferences at regional locations throughout the year, where you can meet with your peers from your local area.

As chairman of the Public Relations Committee, I can tell you that there are aggressive plans to promote NALTEA in the coming year. The printed membership directory is in the final stages of production, and should be in print by year's end. This will be mailed to important industry contacts, to promote the association and all of the individual members. We have also arranged for letters to be sent to all the local and state title associations, promoting the certification program. Both of these projects will elevate the distinction and status of NALTEA members, and certified abstractors. Be sure to remind your clients that you are a NALTEA member when you communicate with them, to let them know you are committed to being a professional in the industry.

I have never been more impressed with the potential for achievements that the association has in the works. Over the next year, the various committees at NALTEA have ambitious plans to promote the association. I appreciate the support of members during the past year, and look forward to continuing to raise the level of professional abstractors in the marketplace. We are here to serve you the members, and the goal of the public relations committee is to widely promote NALTEA to all markets, for the benefit of the members.

I wish you continued success during the last months of this year, and look forward to completing projects in 2010 to help the abstractor community increase its status among our peers. Please contact me anytime if you have suggestions or observations which you think would be helpful.

Education Committee

Debi Merrill

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Stallings Search Services, LLC is family owned, in business since 1997. The staff has over 44 years combined experience in the banking, legal, title insurance and research industries and specializes in Tennessee research. Stallings are active members in good standing of NALTEA, ALTA, PRRN (Public Record Retriever's Network), and NAPBS (National Association of Professional Background Screeners), and hold designations as NALTEA Certified Abstractors. They are committed to excellence in our industry, providing thorough and prompt search results in a concise format with friendly and knowledgeable customer service. Shaun and Jamie Stallings attended their first NALTEA annual conference and were interviewed about the experience:

NALTEA As first timers to the NALTEA Annual Conference, what did you think of it?

Jamie Stallings It was a really great opportunity for Shaun and me to meet professionals who I otherwise might not have met. It is a rewarding experience to meet people from different regions who do the same kind of work that we do and get their perspective on things. Not everyone understands our business. We could discuss differences and compare notes. We met Debi Merrill, for example, who we have worked with over the last 13 years, trading services back and forth, but we had never actually met before face to face. It was kind of like old home week.

The icebreaker was really fun. It was a chance to meet and greet. And coming from the Tennessee area, the location of Charlotte, North Carolina, was terrific – the hotel accommodations and famous southern food were outstanding too!

NALTEA Were there any sessions that you remember that were of particular interest?

Jamie Stallings The **Environmental Search Session** was very good. We haven't done much of it, but a little bit. It was good to hear others talk about environmental searches and to share information. There was a lot of interactive discussion in that session – I like that. I found it comforting that so many people did not find any environmental liens. As an abstractor you always question if you're missing something when you don't have a lot of things on the report to add. But I guess with environmental searching,

the value is in checking and finding nothing. It was great to exchange that kind of information.

The **NALTEA Exam Prep** session was a good refresher. Being able to "hash it out" with others who do the same things we do in other parts of the country was very helpful. You have a better understanding of the national customer and it was a great overview of the NALTEA Manual. It was quite engaging – "I don't think I yawned more than once, (–just kidding, Jeanne)." It was much better than just reading the whole book and signing up to take the online test. For Shaun and me, this was our first introduction to the public land survey system, because in Tennessee and Kentucky where we do our business, they don't use that system – we are strictly grantor-grantee. It was good to see it demonstrated and get a better understanding of it.

We both took the **NALTEA National Certified Abstractor (NCA)** designation exam and passed. But the test required a lot of concentration because it covered so many aspects of the business – both broad and complex. A lot of "gear shifting in my brain" went on as I thought through the questions and answers. It was definitely both challenging and rewarding.

The **Business and Government** session was also good. It was informative to know about what we can do to affect a beneficial change for our industry. It's not something we talk about or think about very much. But it inspired me to be more proactive, and encouraged me to be more involved and more of an advocate for NALTEA and our industry.

NALTEA Would you recommend that other abstractors attend this annual conference?

Jamie Stallings I definitely recommend it. We have been members for three years now, but the timing wasn't good before for us to make the conference in the past. But now that we have made one, I don't want to miss any others. There's a lot of value in the content, connecting with others, & networking with other qualified abstractors and searchers. We look forward to next year's conference.

News from Charlotte – the Round Table Discussions

Pat Scott, President

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One of my favorite parts of the NALTEA conferences in recent years has been the round table discussion. These discussions offer an

opportunity for conference attendees to really participate in a meaningful way, by sharing their ideas and knowledge with other attendees.

Since the attendees have an opportunity to choose the topics of discussion, we are pretty much guaranteed some passionate discussion of issues that the attendees care deeply about. One such topic that came to dominate the first session was "Keeping Public Records Access Local". The discussion centered around the original intent of public records, as opposed to their current use. Also prominent in the debate were the advice offered by our keynote speaker, John H. Thomas, B.S. J.D., who had earlier suggested that the answer might lie in the states' redefining of the definition of "public record".

Session two offered several new ideas for the near term development of NALTEA, and ways to communicate better with our members. The session also focused on the study of a Model Abstractors Act, as proposed language submitted by Source of Title owner Robert Franco, for review and suggestions. Ideally, the model would be used as a template for any state to write legislation that would improve the industry, and benefit the business of quality, thorough, abstracting.

My only disappointment has been that the discussions are scheduled concurrently with other important conference programming. In the past couple of years, we have had valuable review sessions for those preparing to take the certification exam. And then there is the exam itself. For those already certified, and for those who have chosen to wait and take the exam later on line, the round table sessions are offered as an alternative. Being the type who likes to get every conceivable benefit from a conference, I would have liked to attend both.

I would like to see enough future interest in round table discussion that we can offer an exclusive spot on the conference agenda, and fill several tables with abstractors discussing different topics at each table. I can just imagine the industry-changing ideas that could emerge from our conferences.

Train the Trainer

Jill Kissell

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I have always said that I learn more when I am trying to teach something than I do when I

am being taught, so I was excited to see that NALTEA was going to let me learn how to teach so I could learn even more when I taught what I was learning how to teach. (Sounds like maybe I need an English lesson, huh?)

The opening session for this year's conference was "Train the Trainer" taught by Jeanne Johnson, Chairperson of NALTEA's Education Committee and, I might add, instructor extraordinaire! Jeanne, together with all of the Education Committee members, has formulated a stringent test that is part of a certification process for NALTEA members. The test has been offered at recent annual meetings, and this summer the test went online – so you can now take it on the internet!

Now, by way of background, any of you who have taken this test know that it is Difficult (with a capital D) (and maybe a capital IFFICULT too) and study materials are an absolute must. When I took the test, as I was waiting for results I was actually sweating and fretting. I take tests well but I didn't have a warm and fuzzy feeling about this one. I did pass and got my certification, but I have to tell you, without Jeanne's study guide AND her test review course immediately before the test, I'm not so sure I would have been successful.

So when NALTEA decided to put the test online, I silently wondered whether anyone taking the test without the benefit of a live test review course would be successful. I didn't have to wonder about this for long though, because I quickly discovered that NALTEA and Jeanne have jointly put together a program for NALTEA certified abstractors to teach the test review course. That's right – YOU can hold a seminar anywhere you choose and for just the payment of some minimal fees, NALTEA and Jeanne will make materials available for your use as an instructor.

And that, my friends, is what "Train the Trainer" was all about. Jeanne spent about two hours imparting to us her invaluable knowledge as an instructor. She reviewed some basic real estate abstracting knowledge – things that are on the test – and she reviewed teaching methods. She taught us how to read the interest of our audience; she gave us statistics on information retention; she explained different teaching methods; she involved the audience in role playing of classroom scenarios; and she listened intently to all of our input and questions.

When I came out of this class I was asked to do an emergency fill-in at a presentation the next afternoon. I was not ready at all. I had no information and no material prepared. But, when I stood up in front of the audience the next day I remembered many of the things Jeanne had taught us and I tried my best to implement them. I walked into the audience, and, remembering Jeanne's advice, I did not turn my back on the audience but instead walked slowly backwards to the podium (which by the way I didn't hide behind – also on Jeanne's instruction). Of course in my backwards walk I ran into the projector and almost knocked it on the floor. I guess I'll have to work on that one!

So, Jeanne's Train the Trainer class has started me on my way to being an instructor. I see all kinds of ways I can work this new talent into my business while promoting the benefits of NALTEA at the same time. I am going to start a list of people and businesses in Iowa that might benefit from a class and see if I can't garner enough interest to make it a profitable endeavor for me and get good exposure for NALTEA as a result. I think I'll include mortgage companies, banks, attorneys, legal assistants, land title associations, independent researchers, civil engineers – GEEZ – the list could be endless. I better get busy!

Oh, by the way, anyone interested in leading a seminar in their area (and I heartily encourage you to do so) can contact the Education Committee. There's a link on the NALTEA website at www.naltea.org.

NCA/NMA Testing at Annual Conference

Debi Merrill
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If you were not in attendance at the 2009 NALTEA Annual Conference in Charlotte, NC you missed out on the camaraderie of people from across the US that share in the enthusiasm of title searching. There was great food and fantastic speakers in a wonderful setting. Some members were there, to review, study, and take the NALTEA Certified Abstractor exam. At any time you would have witnessed first hand the excitement and pride shown by those that have taken and passed the exam. You also would have seen some members studying their books every

available minute and sitting in review classes, hoping to pass the exam on Sunday.

The NALTEA certification will help identify those abstractors who have reached a higher standard in title searching. Passing the exam provides evidence of their knowledge and experience. It requires a solid understanding of title search concepts and practical experience in using those concepts. Talk to those who have taken the test, it is NOT easy. It is not an entry level exam. The pass/fail ratio is approximately 50% at this time. If you do not study and have the needed experience – you probably will not pass on your first try. Seven (7) individuals signed up for the exam during the conference. Five (5) of them actually sat for the test and only three (3) of those passed.

Congratulations go out to:

- **Tim Korzen** of InfoTrack Information Services, Chicago, IL
- **Jamie Stallings** of Stallings Search Services, Nashville, TN and
- **Shaun Stallings** of Stallings Search Services, Nashville, TN

These individuals can tell you first hand about preparing for, and actually setting for, the exam. The letters they can now place after their names will showcase their exceptional knowledge and set them apart from the ordinary abstractor as a certified professional in the title search industry. As of October 30, 2009 there are 26 individuals that hold the NALTEA Certified Abstractor designation, which includes 3 NALTEA Master Abstractors.

The Education Committee has completed the online testing platform for you to become a certified abstractor. Go to www.naltea.com and register today to take the exam online.

