

MY SCALI MEMOIRS

I remember the skepticism I felt when Bob Joseph called me in 1985 asking if I'd be interested in forming a private investigators association in South Carolina. Since we were both members of the National Association of Legal Investigators Bob thought South Carolina needed a local counterpart. I agree but doubted we could get the ball rolling and keep it rolling. At that time I didn't know Bob Joseph very well.

Within a year we had our first meeting at a Greenville motel. The group, of less than a dozen, consisted of Private Investigators and law firm investigators. We sat in a circle comparing notes and discussing common problems. I was thrilled with the concept and the camaraderie I'd found.

In 1979 when I became a licensed Private Investigator there was no training for PI's in South Carolina. This meeting gave me hope that what has come to fruition might survive and flourish.

One of our first training sessions in Columbia was held in a St. Andrews motel conference room. One of our first speakers was attorney John Delgado who has remained a strong supporter of SCALI.

Over the years many legal professionals have responded positively when asked to address SCALI. Jay Bender, Dick Whiting and Mark Moore are among them.

Another early conference speaker was Chip Johnson of SLED. Chip had extensive experience in surveillance and shared some great ideas with us. I always remember Chip saying that if you "**Fail to Prepare; Prepare to Fail**". I still find this great advice. Who knew that years later Chip would become a PI and SCALI member.

As word spread about our conferences more Private Investigators became involved. In the late 1980s there was no internet and no requirement for Private Investigators to obtain continuing education.

As conference attendance grew we moved from the motel conference room to a meeting room that accommodated more than 50 people. It wasn't long before it was standing room only. We then moved to a larger venue.

For several years the dominant issue at meetings related to Private Investigators carrying guns. Many hours were spent discussing who can, who cannot and why. At the time a concealed weapons permit was nearly impossible to obtain.

On more than one occasion Bob and I met with the hierarchy at SLED. We hoped to enlist their assistance in professionalizing the private investigative business. To say we were disappointed with their response would be a gross understatement. At the time they wanted little to do with us.

The reason finally came out during a meeting Bob and I had with the SLED Regulatory Captain. We were told that Chief Strom did not like private investigators and would do nothing for us. At least we knew where we stood.

In 1991 there was a legislatively generated initiative to revamp the private investigative and private security businesses in South Carolina. The first legislative meeting on the subject drew an overflow crowd. Private Investigators were concerned about being swept into the security business and not given separate treatment. Fortunately the entire effort failed.

Since we believed that SCALI could not lobby the legislature the South Carolina Association of Private Investigators (SCAPI) was formed. I was the first president.

SCAPI was not at odds with SCALI and many of us maintained membership and positions in both organizations. When SCAPI's original purpose had been served the group was disbanded.

It was not until Captain Joe Dorton (ret) took over SLED Regulatory that progress was made and a positive bond was formed between SLED, SCALI and the PI business.

In the late 1990s SLED spearheaded the passage of a new law for the PI business. When drafting the law SCALI was invited to provide input. We were not only invited but they listened and by working together a reasonable law was crafted and quickly passed by the legislature.

I believe SCALI will survive and prosper because of the strength of its original tenets and beliefs. We are constantly welcoming new members each of whom brings an expertise or new viewpoint to the association. As SCALI grows and improves we all grow and improve.

Respectfully submitted October 19, 2012

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DB Mac Dougall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

David B. Mac Dougall