

## Arbiter and Staff Notes

Robbie Barr spent the Labor Day week in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she served as a teacher at the seventh annual Advanced Trial Advocacy course presented by the Northern Ireland Advocacy Working Party ("NIAWP"). She called the experience, "perhaps the most fun as well as the most rewarding week I have spent in the legal profession." And, she adds, she hopes to return to Ireland for her next vacation, having become an instant hurling fan. (The all Ireland final competition was held the day she arrived.)



By way of background, the legal profession in Northern Ireland is divided into two distinct branches: Solicitors and Barristers. Most lawyers are Solicitors. Solicitors have private offices (like law firms) that undertake legal business, including client contact, case work-up and the transfer of real property, while the function of Barristers is to conduct cases in the High Courts. Only Barristers

automatically have the right of audience before the superior courts, although Solicitors may now gain these rights by undergoing appropriate training. The Law Society of Northern Ireland (similar to Colorado's Bar Association, but comprised only of Solicitors) had established NIAWP in December 1998 to develop, deliver and promote courses to enhance the abilities and competence of Solicitors. Later, Tony Caher and Fiona Donnelly, two well regarded Solicitors and members of NIAWP who had appeared as co-counsel alongside Barristers in the equivalent of Colorado's state district courts, collaborated with the National Institute of Trial Advocacy ("NITA") to initiate a learn-by-doing trial skills course, similar to the intensive multi-day practical courses offered by NITA stateside.



Twenty one Solicitors participated in the course, led by Emory law professor Paul Zwier, renowned Boston trial attorney William Hunt and Judge Barr, who were in turn assisted by experienced local Solicitors and judges. Students attended classes at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (a law school for Barristers and Solicitors associated with Queen's College) and culminated the week by presenting a trial in Belfast's Royal Courts of Justice, adjudicated by eminent High Court Judges.

The participants had already passed a NIAWP course in evidence, and upon completion of one more training unit, will be certified advocates and will be entitled to higher rates of compensation from the Legal Services Commission.

