

# Bar chief urges consumers rely on professionals

By Dine Frae staff writer

Denis Archer believes there will always be lawyers. Naturally, you might say. As president of the Michigan State Bar Association, Archer must have faith in that premise, basing his belief on the ever-increasing complexity of the law. Archer spoke to the members of the

Livonia Bar Association who battled the snow storm Thursday night to attend a dinner meeting. A partner in the Detroit law firm of Charlois, Christensen and Archer, Archer is the first black president of the State Bar Association. "It's incumbent upon the bar association to provide information and the opportunity for people who choose to represent themselves to protect them-

selves," Archer said. But the increasing number of people who do choose to represent themselves is a cause for concern for lawyers, Archer said. "Anybody, from an emotional point of view, feels threatened," he said. But it's concern for the public, not personal economic concern, which is at the forefront, he said. Comparing do-it-yourself law, such as basic divorce and will kits, to ama-

teur mechanics who tune-up their own cars, Archer said that people sometimes take a risk. "If we (the do-it-yourselfers) mess up something, it can cost us considerably more," he said. THE AMERICAN public should feel fortunate to have so much access to the legal system and to so many good lawyers, Archer said. Currently there is one lawyer for every 383 people in the

United States; 63 percent of those are in private practice and 44 percent of those are sole practitioners, "the lawyers who wear many hats," Archer said. A decline this year in the number of applications to law schools represents students' concern about a possible abundance of people in the field, Archer said. "Any lawyer out of law school with an A or B average will find a job. The problem is with the C student," Archer said. An adjunct professor of law at Wayne State University, Archer said today's students "are some of the highest quality law students ever" because of their increased exposure to more experiences.

The trend in most professions is to reach a saturation point and then to back off for a while, Archer said. In the end, the marketplace will determine how many lawyers it can support. But there are a large number of mature lawyers who won't be practicing in future years and whose spots will need to be refilled, he said. ONE OF THE fastest growing fields in the legal profession is the computer law section, where lawyers are concerned with protecting their clients from computer fraud and computer theft, Archer said. Where it once was considered cute to tap into another's computer system, "That's no longer

cute," Archer said. A major issue confronting lawyers today is computer utilization, Archer said. "The law office in the next 10 years will be highly mechanized," he said. "To deliver quality service in the most cost-efficient way," Archer predicts that many of the routine legal actions, such as filing depositions or motions, soon will be performed via computers.

A computer section has been established recently at the state bar association to keep up with the changes and how they affect the profession, Archer said. The Michigan State Bar Association will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in Detroit in September. Archer said an exhibit where people will be able compare a law office of 1935 with a computerized law office of the future is being planned for the event.

Archer said he has no aspirations at the time to become a judge, although he expressed respect for those who are now serving as judge, calling them "grossly underpaid."

Archer discounted the public's perception that judges have caused prison overcrowding. "Judges have the responsibility to listen to evidence and exercise their discretion when sentencing," he said. "What occurs after with the prisons is not the judge's fault, so it's unfair to suggest that prison overcrowding is a result of what judges do."

# Ice thickness is deceiving

This is the time of year when anyone who ventures out on the ice should be thinking about ice safety, stresses Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Law Enforcement personnel. Early winter freezes and thaws render ice unsafe for any type of traffic, particularly in December and January, and as temperatures rise in March and April. "In 1983 alone," says Frank Opolka, Chief of DNR's Law Enforcement Division, "twelve Michigan residents lost their lives in ice accidents; in 1984, DNR reports show six fatal ice accidents occurred in Michigan." What constitutes a safe depth of ice is difficult to state. While three inches of ice on a farm pond may hold a person with little danger, that same three inches on a moving stream or a lake with springs, stumps and currents, could be dangerous. On the Great Lakes, one step from three-foot-thick ice may lead the next step to nothing

more than skim ice. The following measures are suggested to reduce the risk of ice accidents: • Do not drive on ice. • Test the ice continually with an ice spud or similarly heavy bar or staff, especially for ice skating and ice fishing. • Stay away from stream mouths and lake inlets and outlets. • Be suspicious of gray or dark spots in the ice. These may be soft areas. Ice deteriorates along shoreline and around pilings and docks first. • Rescue gear should be available. A ladder is a good tool and at least 50 feet of good line, a tree limb or even an article of clothing can save a life. • If you walk on ice, two large spikes carried on the body can be used as a hand hold on the ice when crawling from a hole. Those who can avoid ice travel, should do so, says Opolka, particularly

snowmobilers, cross country skiers and snowshoos who can enjoy these sports on solid ground. In 1982, four snowmobilers traveling on a lake and unfamiliar with the conditions, crashed through the ice and drowned. If travel over ice is unavoidable, as in ice fishing or is work-related, some of the factors that should be weighed are: type of ice, recent weather, a person's knowledge of conditions and area, and the body of water you are crossing. WHAT DO YOU do when you go through the ice? Opolka offers these suggestions: • Turn on your back and kick to work your way out of the hole; your clothes will offer some flotation. • Get out of the ice in the direction you walked on. • Do not stand; rather roll away from the hole until you feel you can safely stand. • Work fast, you have just minutes before the cold water will affect your

reasoning. Your clothes will soon freeze; walk to safety quickly. If you are going to your car, remove your keys before they freeze in your pocket. What do you do when assisting someone who has fallen through the ice? Stay on solid ground; avoid getting on the ice if possible. If a person must assist from the ice, they should lay flat and spread their weight as much as possible. Rescue gear (ladder, rope tied around victim) should be utilized. A person removed from cold water may appear to be beyond help but still may be successfully resuscitated. Start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and transport immediately to a hospital. Ice sports are a part of Michigan's winter recreational scene, says Opolka, and stresses not to be afraid of the ice, but instead, respect it by taking the proper precautions for a safer, more enjoyable winter.

# Seminar offers builders advice

NCA Associates Ltd. will offer a free seminar on obtaining a Michigan residential builder's license, 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24. The seminar will be at Birney Middle School, 27225 Evergreen (corner of 11 Mile and Evergreen), Southfield. The program will be an introduction to the course "Residential Builders

Fundamentals" and is designed for the general public or skilled trades. No previous training or experience is required. All instructors and materials are certified by the Department of Education under permit 937. Call 772-8350 to reserve a place.

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