

KENTUCKY BAR ASSOCIATION
Ethics Opinion KBA E-320
Issued: June 1987

This opinion was decided under the Code of Professional Responsibility, which was in effect from 1971 to 1990. Lawyers should consult the current version of the Rules of Professional Conduct and Comments, SCR 3.130 (available at <http://www.kybar.org>), especially Rules 7.01-7.50 and the Attorneys' Advertising Commission Regulations, before relying on this opinion.

Question: A lawyer's office is set back from the main thoroughfare so that the firm's nameplate is not visible to traffic. The lawyer wishes to place a dignified nameplate on a post or display used by other businesses in the same or adjacent buildings. Is this permissible?

Answer: Yes.

References: DR 2-102; ABA Informal Op. 1214(1972); Alabama Op. 83-151(1983).

OPINION

This question harkens back to A.E.W. Mason's The House of the Arrow (1920) which related certain adventures at the firm of solicitors styled Frobisher & Haslitt. The following excerpt recounts the reaction of the senior partner to a newcomer who suggested that the firm ought to have a brass plate on the door:

“Mr. Haslitt's eyebrows rose half the height of his forehead towards his thick white hair. He was really distressed by the Waberski incident, but this suggestion, and from a partner in the firm, shocked him like sacrilege.

“ ‘My dear boy, what are you thinking of?’ he expostulated. ‘I hope I am not one of those obstinate old fogeys who refuse to march with the times. We have had, as you know, a telephone instrument recently installed in the junior clerk's office. I believe that I myself proposed it. But a brass plate upon the door! My dear Jim! Let us leave that to Harley Street and Southampton Row!’ “

Obviously, the times have changed. In accord with the above-cited authorities, the question is answered in the affirmative.

Note to Reader

This ethics opinion has been formally adopted by the Board of Governors of the Kentucky Bar Association under the provisions of Kentucky Supreme Court Rule 3.530 (or its predecessor rule). The Rule provides that formal opinions are advisory only.