

# ROCK ON

BY MARC SCHECHTER



The author (left) with Jorma Kaukonen, lead guitarist for The Jefferson Airplane.

**How one local lawyer's love of the guitar led him to meet – and later befriend – his rock 'n' roll idol.**

**G**rowing up, music was the center of family life. My dad played professionally in a jazz band and my mother was a wonderful piano player. Both taught private lessons. By third grade, I had played the clarinet for several years, and won the school talent show.

In 1970, at age 12, I heard a song that totally grabbed me, particularly the soaring guitar at the end: "Somebody to Love" by The Jefferson Airplane. I immediately purchased a best-of album that featured songs played in the finger-style guitar technique. I became an immediate fan and determined to learn guitar. Later I found out that lead guitarist, Jorma Kaukonen, began as a finger-style blues guitarist. By age 13, I quit the clarinet and became a guitarist.

As a student at Rowan University in New Jersey, the only genre of guitar playing you could study was classical. I would spend eight hours a day practicing, on top of a full class schedule. I also played in a rock cover band, NoseDive, which was a great escape from the structured classical music setting.

By my junior year, I realized that my music degree with a focus on classical guitar performance would likely get me a weekend job playing in the local Italian restaurant. So I decided to take the LSAT. I took a U.S. Constitutional law class and (surprisingly) got the highest grade in the class. We visited Washington, D.C., to see oral arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court, and from thereafter, I was determined to go to law school.

In 1984 I graduated from California Western School of Law second in my class. My intent was to somehow merge my music and law degrees, and practice in the entertainment field.

Upon graduating I did what most young lawyers do: worked long hours. My leisure time

dropped dramatically, forcing me to put down the guitar. Several years later, my then 7-year-old daughter Molly asked about learning guitar, which returned me to playing for my own enjoyment.

I continued to follow Jorma's career, seeing him perform whenever possible. He opened a "guitar ranch" in Ohio and taught private workshops, which were difficult to get into. But lucky for me a colleague contacted Jorma's wife, and I had the honor of taking lessons directly from the master himself. We hit it off and I was invited back for many more workshops — and I was retained by Jorma to do some legal work, which led to him becoming a firm client.

I was surprised to discover how many local lawyers are also musicians. Over time several of us would get together to jam. We invited Jorma to come play with us when he visited here, which has happened on several occasions.

In January 2013, Butterfield Schechter LLP celebrated its 15-year anniversary, and Jorma performed a solo acoustic show for clients, colleagues and guests.

As most lawyers confronted with Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) issues will likely attest, the area is rather dry. But for those of us who are devoted to its practice, it is enjoyable and challenging. Most ERISA lawyers I know have hobbies to offset the dryness. I still find myself playing the guitar every evening as a release after a full workday and, when we have a chance, getting together with fellow lawyer musicians to do what we truly love: play music. I can think of no better way to spend my leisure time. 🎸

**Marc Schechter (mschechter@bsllp.com) is an attorney and co-founder of Butterfield Schechter LLP.**



**William M. Berman, Esq.**  
Berman & Riedel, LLP  
12264 El Camino Real, Suite 300  
San Diego, California 92130

Please call for  
a free Consultation

**(858) 350-8855**

www.bermanlawyers.com  
www.preventelderabuse.com

## Protecting the elderly throughout Southern California... one elder abuse/neglect case at a time.



Berman & Riedel, LLP, continues to accept referrals and co-counsel involvement from members of our legal community on complex elder abuse/neglect cases, nursing home cases and dependent adult abuse/neglect cases.

**Over \$25 million in elder abuse/neglect case settlements  
and verdicts in the past 5 years alone.\***

*William M. Berman, Esq., and the firm Berman & Riedel, LLP, is a Martindale-Hubbell AV-Rated Firm, AVVO 10.0 Rated Firm, and member of SuperLawyers, with recognition as a Top-10 San Diego Personal Injury Attorney in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012.*

\*Many significant referral fees paid for cases involving claims of elder abuse/neglect cases against nursing homes, residential care facilities, in-home care companies, and other facilities that serve the elderly and dependent adults. All Referral Fees are paid consistent with the requirements of California Rule of Professional Conduct 2-200.