



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Campora, Pitre are Consumer Attorneys of the Year

Balaban named Street Fighter of the Year at CAOC Awards Dinner

SACRAMENTO (Nov. 17, 2013) – **Steven M. Campora** of the Sacramento firm Dreyer Babich Buccola Wood Campora and **Frank M. Pitre** of the Burlingame firm Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy are Consumer Attorneys of California's 2013 Consumer Attorneys of the Year for their work to force PG&E to adopt new safety measures after the San Bruno gas line explosion that killed eight people and destroyed 38 homes in September 2010. The announcement was made Saturday night at the awards dinner as part of CAOC's 52nd Annual Convention at The Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

Daniel K. Balaban of the Los Angeles firm Balaban & Spielberger was also honored Saturday night as CAOC's Street Fighter of the Year for his representation of a man who died of pancreatic cancer that went untreated for too long when he was not informed about the tumor that was detected on a CT scan. Balaban did not take a fee in the case, which saw his client win a verdict just days before his death that would have prevented his heirs from receiving any compensation for medical negligence.

Consumer Attorney of the Year is awarded to a CAOC member or members who significantly advanced the rights or safety of California consumers by achieving a noteworthy result in a case. Eligibility for Street Fighter of the Year is limited to CAOC members who have practiced law for no more than 10 years or work in a firm with no more than five attorneys. To be considered for either award the case must have finally resolved between May 15, 2012 and May 15, 2013, with no further legal work to occur, including appeals.

As part of *In re PG&E San Bruno Fire Cases*, Campora represented the husband/father and daughter/sister of a woman and 13-year-old girl who were burned to death in the front yard of their home. Pitre represented the wife/mother of a man and 17-year-old boy who burned to death in their home. PG&E claimed the explosion was an isolated incident resulting from a uniquely flawed weld in its pipeline, but Pitre and Campora proved that the explosion was symptomatic of a corporate culture that repeatedly circumvented rules and regulations necessary to assure the safety and integrity of its pipelines. PG&E engineers and other managing executives were forced to acknowledge that PG&E elected to push profits up to nearly a billion dollars per year, rather than testing and replacing its worn-out transmission lines to assure public safety. Campora and Pitre turned down significant monetary offers to negotiate a settlement that required PG&E to conduct more rigorous safety assessments than that required by regulators of the industry.

In *Bershadsky v. Lee*, Balaban represented Ilya Bershadsky, who had gone to a gastroenterologist with complaints of radiating back and stomach pain. The gastroenterologist, Dr. Martin Lee, sent Bershadsky to the ER for a CT scan that detected a mass in Bershadsky's pancreas. Dr. Lee was told about the mass but didn't tell Bershadsky about it during a follow-up appointment three weeks later. Bershadsky's cancer went undiagnosed for more than a year until the tumor had grown five times in size, at which time a second doctor ran a CT scan and told Bershadsky the news. The defendants stalled the case, because if Bershadsky died prior to trial, his case would die with him, and under the law for terminal cancer cases there could be no case for wrongful death by his heirs. As his health rapidly declined it became clear Bershadsky wouldn't live to see his trial date. On a Friday, Balaban submitted a request for an earlier trial with any judge, waiving the right to a jury, and was able to get one the following Monday. Bershadsky was in hospice when the court awarded him a verdict; he died within a week.

Also honored at Saturday's dinner were:

Gretchen M. Nelson (partner, Kreindler & Kreindler, Los Angeles), winner of the Robert E. Cartwright, Sr., Award, given "in recognition of excellence in trial advocacy and dedication to teaching trial advocacy to fellow lawyers and to the public." Nelson is an outstanding trial lawyer who has given generously of her time lecturing on class and class-related litigation issues.

Niall P. McCarthy (principal, Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, Burlingame), winner of the Marvin E. Lewis Award, given "in recognition of continued guidance, loyalty and dedication, all of which have been an inspiration to fellow attorneys." CAOC's president in 2012, McCarthy has continued to serve the association and its members as co-chair of the Open Courts Coalition, a group dedicated to restoring badly-needed funding to California's court system in order to maintain consumers' access to justice.

Christopher B. Dolan (owner, The Dolan Law Firm, San Francisco), winner of the Edward I. Pollock Award, given "in recognition of many years of dedication, outstanding efforts and effectiveness on behalf of the causes and ideals." Dolan has put his heart and soul into advocacy of the issues most important to CAOC and served the association as president in 2010. He has frequently testified before California legislative committees to help shape laws that promote access to justice and preservation of the constitutional right to a jury trial.

The awards dinner also included the installation of CAOC's 2014 President **John M. Feder**. A graduate of UC Berkeley and the UC Hastings College of the Law, Feder is a name partner at Rouda Feder Tietjen & McGuinn of San Francisco. He has extensive experience representing consumers in wrongful death and personal injury cases and has also resolved cases involving product liability, medical malpractice, elder abuse and public-entity liability.

Also during CAOC's 52nd Annual Convention, the CAOC Women's Caucus honored **Lori E. Andrus**, name partner with Andrus Anderson of San Francisco, with its Consumer Advocate Award for her outstanding contributions to the legal profession.

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs' attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

For more information:

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