

**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**  
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**New Members . . . New Energy . . . New Ideas**

**by Robert J. Francavilla**

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When I was a new lawyer, what I lacked in skill and ability, I made up for with desire, enthusiasm, a thirst for knowledge, and compassion for the person I was representing. Among the things I did was to read every *Trial Bar News* article about taking depositions or trial techniques that I could get my hands on. In addition, I attended every learning seminar that was offered by CASD as well as CAOC. I sought out every article written and every presentation given by the stalwarts of the plaintiffs' bar to help me become a good lawyer.

Of course, I also had the big advantage of being able to simply walk down the hall to discuss cases and learn new strategies from the lawyers in my firm.

As time went on, it occurred to me that if I could learn trial skills from the best lawyers in town from afar, I would surely benefit by meeting, shaking their hand and talking to them one on one. So, I made it a point to talk to and get trial strategy advice from as many seasoned trial lawyers as I possibly could. To this day, I still talk to my colleagues as much as possible in order to improve my skills.

I recently had the good fortune of attending the New Members Reception put on by our very own CASD Membership Co-chairs Alex Scheingross and Alexys Kalafer. Besides the hard work put in by Alex, Alexys and others to make this membership drive successful, what was truly evident at the New Members Reception was the enthusiasm of all the new lawyers. Every one of them seemed to be very excited to be part of our organization and extremely eager to meet and get to know some of our more established members. Talking to many of the new members at the reception brought to mind my first few years as a lawyer. Recalling how relentlessly I pursued my education and training as a trial lawyer and how intimidating it was to ask for help from those I admired, I chatted with as many new members as possible to make them feel comfortable.

Remembering how valuable advice from others has been to me and to our members as a whole, especially our newer members, **I make this pledge to you: my door will always be open to you.** If you have questions or concerns or just want to brainstorm case ideas and strategies, I am here for you. I urge the rest of the members to similarly extend themselves to

helping the next generation of members. They bring fresh ideas and new energy to the organization. I'm sure they will be glad they joined.

And now a word about the membership drive. Alex Scheingross and Alexys Kalafer planned and implemented a powerful membership drive and were able to cajole our loyal vendors into providing spectacular prizes : a trip for two to Hawaii including airfare and accommodations (\$2000 Value) provided by loyal Consumer Support Member ("CSM") **Dorothy Scanlan-Stevens of Summit Settlement Services**; a one-week stay in a vacation home in Kauai provided by **Steve Knox of Knox Attorney Services (CSM)**; free Trial Director Software provided by **Visualogix and Media Delivery System Incorporated** and training on the Trial Director Software by **AJL Litigation Media (CSM) -- August Larsen**; PADRES VS. GIANTS TICKETS provided by **Richard Huver**; PADRES TICKETS 2006 Season Game provided by **Alex Scheingross**; Certificate for dinner for two at Dobson's (\$75 Value) provided by **Paul Dobson**; a Trial Exhibit Portfolio provided by **North County Graphics (CSM) -- John Alessi**; \$500 Cash Prize was provided by **Brodshatzer, Wallace, Spoon & Yip (CSM)**; Litigation Support Deposition Software provided by **Sandpiper -- Tom Baldwin**; and a \$75 Gift Certificate to the Manhattan provided by **LegalLink (CSM) -- Sarah Heimburge**. These are absolutely fantastic prizes. Please thank and support our loyal vendors who provided these prizes.

The New Member Reception was held at the La Jolla Cove Suites Rooftop overlooking the beautiful La Jolla Cove, generously provided by **Sarah Heimburge -- LegalLink San Diego (CSM)**. Food and beverage at the party was provided by **Derek Sanders of FindLaw (CSM)** and **Dorothy Scanlan-Stevens of Summit Settlement Services (CSM)**.

More than 100 members turned out to celebrate and welcome our new members. It was a grand party in one of the most spectacular venues overlooking the Pacific Ocean at sunset. The first prize winner was **Josh Swigart**; second prize went to **Michelle Mitchell**; and third prize went to **Maria Palmieri**. The other prizes were awarded by a drawing and they were very generous prizes indeed.

Special thanks go to Alex and Alexys for their energy, enthusiasm and perseverance in pulling off such a successful membership drive which resulted in 39 new members – and a grand total of over 60 new members since May. **Please thank and support the vendors who so generously supported this membership drive!** The vibrancy of the organization this year has been incredible. Our seminars have been outstanding. If you haven't been attending, I can tell you without reservation that you have been doing yourself and your clients a real disservice. We have learned from the best in the most important areas of our practices – skills and tips that you could not learn anywhere else.

And the major support available to our members by ListServe, **Trial Bar News**, and our continually expanding Brief Bank on our web site are key benefits of joining our organization. Many times I have seen an urgent question posted on ListServe in which the member needed immediate answers in order to file a motion or make an appearance within hours – and ListServe has responded with the answers, the case law to support it, sample motions and briefs, and lists of voir dire questions – all within a few hours of posting the question.

Hats off to all of you for helping each other – through the seminars, the labs, the roundtables, the web site, ListServe and *Trial Bar News*. Keep up the good work. CASD members truly ***NEVER STAND ALONE*** and this has been demonstrated more forcefully than ever this year. You folks are the leadership and you have shown it in so many ways. It is an honor to serve as president of the organization and I am truly proud of what we have accomplished. Thank you all.