

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
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You are Never Alone

by Richard A. Huver

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One of the single greatest accomplishments since I have been on the CASD Board was the "revamping" of our image with a logo and slogan by the Communications Committee. The Committee, comprised of Andy Albert, Kerry Hoxie, Jon Williams and SJ Kalian, was assigned the task of creating a look that signified CASD's real mission and function for its members. Our current logo and slogan are the result. The slogan "Never Stand Alone" was singularly brilliant and stands today as a shining example of what makes CASD great.

As a member of the CASD family, you Never Stand Alone, whether it involves a situation in your personal life or one confronting you in your profession. You and your clients will never stand alone because you have access to hundreds of other plaintiffs' attorneys with thousands of combined years of experience available at the touch of a computer key. The strength of a 780-plus member organization is that no matter what you are experiencing, what crisis you are in, or what new issue you are confronting, there is invariably someone out there who has "been there and done that." It is, after all, the members who respond to these requests for help or guidance, thus breathing life into our slogan "Never Stand Alone."

But just as importantly, if you are feeling down, exhausted and overwhelmed, you have a place to turn where those who have been there before can help you along, brighten your day, and lend you a hand. And when you have good news, a great settlement, or an outstanding verdict, there is an audience ready to cheer you on, congratulate and celebrate with you. This, of course, is really why this organization was created some 46 years ago -- to give plaintiffs' lawyers a place to celebrate or commiserate, someone to drown our sorrows with or celebrate our victories together.

One need only watch a week's worth of List Serve messages to see examples of the comradery, commiseration and celebration time and time again. I have personally experienced the sense of community from and with CASD in my professional life during my past 12 years in San Diego and in my personal life as well. Just recently in fact.

As some of you may know, I lost my older sister Karen just before Christmas. It had a tremendous impact on me and I am sure will impact me for years to come. I watched Karen battle cancer month after month, all while undergoing more aggressive medical treatment. Unfortunately, that treatment and the ever-advancing cancer transformed her in ways I could not have imagined.

I owe it to my sister to tell you a little about her. She was 51 years old, the mother of three children, ages 16, 18 and 24, and married to her best friend for over 25 years. She was a great student and a hard worker who entered the health care field with designs on being a nurse (it was just like her to help others), but she eventually studied very hard, passed all her exams and became a nurse practitioner. For those of who don't know, a nurse practitioner is more like a doctor than a nurse. Karen could do almost everything a doctor could do except operate. Instead of taking a high-paying job available in many areas in San Diego, she instead decided to work at the Vista Community Clinic. She had her own practice and her own patients, providing medical care, comfort and hope to the underprivileged and under served in our community.

Karen was diagnosed with breast cancer two weeks before our Dad died in April 2003. She courageously fought the disease through chemo, radiation and surgery and we all thought she had won. That is until April 2005, when she started having "unusual" headaches. The cancer, it turned out, had metastasized to her brain. It later returned everywhere and eventually became just a matter of time. She died on December 6, 2005, with her family by her side. A sobering event to witness, needless to say. She will be missed by so many.

Yet even in the depths of my personal suffering and loss, there was the CASD community to help me through this very difficult time. I received cards, phone calls and e-mails from many of you offering condolences, words of encouragement, and sympathy. I was reminded that I was not alone in many ways -- there were others among us who have suffered similar losses in their lives and who shared their experiences with me.

To all of you who took the time to help ease my suffering, thank you. I am deeply grateful. The lesson to learn from all this is simple -- I was not alone during this time of personal loss and suffering, and regardless of whether your struggles are personal or professional, as a member of the CASD family, know that you too never stand alone.