

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### *Thanks for Everything*

by **Kenneth M. Sigelman**

*Ken Sigelman, J.D., M.D., is CASD's President for 2008. He is the founder of Kenneth M. Sigelman & Associates, which represents plaintiffs in medical malpractice, product liability, and personal injury cases. Dr. Sigelman is a graduate of Dartmouth College, the University of Florida College of Law, and the University of Miami School of Medicine. He is a past recipient of the CASD Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award and is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates. Dr. Sigelman can be contacted by email at: [ken@sigelmanassociates.com](mailto:ken@sigelmanassociates.com).*

Since you are reading my final President's column (I can't believe how quickly the year has passed) right after Thanksgiving, I wanted to take this opportunity to give thanks for all manner of things for which I am, indeed, very blessed.

First, my associate, Penelope Phillips, and I just finished a four-week jury trial in Los Angeles in which our catastrophically injured client received a very favorable verdict. I am thankful that the jury saw through the deceit and obfuscation generated by the other side, found the truth, and dispensed justice.

During the trial, my mother was hospitalized twice. I am incredibly thankful that she is now home, feeling healthy, and, as always, a source of continuous advice (solicited or otherwise).

I am thankful for Penelope, my remarkable co-counsel, who has worked with me since 1991, as well as the outstanding support offered by our legal assistants, Ruth Garcia and Sara Witt, who worked long hours, including weekends, without complaint, and kept the office running while Penelope and I were gone.

I am thankful for the recent election results that provided a transcendent moment in our nation's history, and hold, for the first time in many years, true promise of real, positive change in all of our lives. I am thankful that, at long last, "federal government" will not be synonymous with erosion and/or elimination of consumer rights via the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

I am incredibly thankful for the love of my life, Susan Handel, who appears to still recognize me notwithstanding my having been cooped up in a Los Angeles hotel five nights a week for the past month, and confined to my office for virtually all of the weekend hours in between.

So, from a personal standpoint, I feel truly blessed for all of the great people that I have in my life. I have also had the privilege this year, as CASD's President, of working with a succession of talented and passionate people, and I wanted to devote the rest of this column to thanking all of those who have helped make 2008 a great year for CASD and for me.

Throughout the year, I had the benefit of the advice, counsel, and wisdom of Bonnie Benitez, our Executive Director. Bonnie always managed to simultaneously be one step ahead of the curve and

remain anchored firmly in the here and now. She is truly a multi-tasker *par excellence*. Esther Andrews, our Membership Coordinator, worked tirelessly, enthusiastically, and effectively throughout the year. Jasmyne Hand, who left her position as Membership Coordinator earlier this year to relocate to Ohio, did a great job and will be missed. Chloe San Agustin came on board recently as a Membership Coordinator and has been a pleasure to work with. CASD would not be able to offer the quality and diversity of programs and services available to our members without the extraordinary efforts of our great staff.

Special thanks go to Manny Valdez, Sr. and Manny Valdez, Jr. of Ringler & Associates, my good friends who, as CASD's sole Platinum Affinity Partner are always there for us. Manny and Manny put on a fabulous "Day at the Races" this past summer which we should all mark down on our calendars now as a "can't miss" for next year. Our bronze level Affinity Partners, Judicate West, Atkinson-Baker Court Reporters, and MEA Forensic Engineers and Scientists have been proud supporters of CASD throughout the year and we are equally proud and fortunate to have them on board. August Larsen of AJL Litigation Media graciously donated his time and expertise so that the techno aspects of the Annual Awards and Installation Dinner and Trial Stars Dinner ran smoothly. ESQ Services delivers the ***Trial Bar News*** to the court for us and also volunteered to do pick-ups for our document drive at no charge.

Our officers and board of directors worked hard throughout the year and several of them made particularly outstanding contributions. Alexys Kalafer's passion, focus and determination single-handedly made this year's Trial Stars Dinner one of our most successful events ever. Tragically, impossibly, Alexys passed away less than a month later. She is remembered, warmly, elsewhere in this issue of ***Trial Bar News***.

Joel Bryant, one of our true stalwarts, served as CASD's Treasurer, chair of the Education Committee, and co-chair of the Awards Committee, without ever losing his good nature, his terrific sense of humor, or his sound judgment. In 2011, he will be a great CASD President.

Karin Wick was both the chair of the Events Committee and co-chair of the Awards Committee. Karin knows only one way of doing things – full speed ahead, every detail attended to, and outstanding results always with grace, calm (at least outwardly) and determination. Karin is another one of our great multitaskers.

George de la Flor, one of our new board members this year, was a constant source of positive ideas, positive energy and great humor. George also showed us the fierce determination and focus accompanying his humor when he ran a hugely successful CASD Blood Drive.

On the educational front, Tracee Lorens, one of our esteemed past Presidents, put together a world class panel for the first CASD class action symposium, marketed the program to lawyers throughout California and beyond, and made the symposium a big success in 2008, as well as something to build on for the future.

My illustrious predecessor, Past President Gayle Blatt, worked very hard to put together a truly memorable Past President's Reception in honor of Harvey Levine. Thanks to Gayle's efforts, we can look forward to continuing this event on a regular basis in the future.

Last, and absolutely, positively not least, I want to give special thanks to Kerry Hoxie, our ***Trial Bar News*** Editor-in-Chief. Kerry's wisdom, patience, creativity and commitment have made her an absolute joy to work with.

I had the great pleasure this year of working with CAOC President Don Ernst and Legislative Advocate Lea-Ann Tratten, two valiant warriors that I have been privileged to fight alongside for 20 years or longer. Lea-Ann was incredibly responsive, thorough and insightful in responding to all of our inquiries for legislative updates from CAOC. Don came to our Annual Awards and Installation Dinner at the beginning of the year, has made several visits to San Diego over the course of the year, and always made sure to keep me in the loop as to what was going on at the state level.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as CASD's President this year. As I pass the torch to the capable hands of Wayne Hughes, CASD's 2009 President, I know that we have a core of talented, committed people who will strive to make CASD ever-more responsive to our members, respected in the legal community and interactive with our community as a whole.