

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Slogans

by Wayne Alan Hughes

Wayne Alan Hughes is CASD's President for 2009. He practiced criminal and domestic law before joining with his "significant other," Tracee Lorens, to practice in various areas of complex civil litigation. Their first trial, as co-counsel, served as a chapter in Judge Ehrenfreud's book, You Be the Jury. Currently he practices in the areas of mass torts and class actions for which he received two Outstanding Trial Lawyer Awards. He is blessed with three children: Alexander Zaharopoulos Hughes, MBA Oxford, Vice President at Wells Fargo; Cassandra Zaharopoulos Hughes, completing Vet. school; and Alexandra Rose Lorens, first year college student and dynamic carbon copy of Tracee. You can reach Wayne by email at: waynecloud@aol.com.

2003 was named "Year of the Member" by my significant other when she was CASD's president. Frankly, I had always thought most slogans were meaningless until I saw how Tracee used it as a focal point around which the board of directors, committees and staff directed their efforts. We are a very competitive couple and, as my installation approached, I sought an even better slogan for a couple of reasons: I had been wrong about them being meaningless and I had been approached by so many CASD members who told me how they felt that the Year of the Member had changed both their lives and the organization.

I also wanted to beat Tracee's slogan. Slogan War was on. I spent a lot of time mumbling to myself one phrase after another. We then came to the end of 2008 and faced the CASD budget for 2009 even as the economic melt down spread west from the sanctity of Wall Street and New York. We heard from our youngest members that they were facing economic problems . . . and we heard from more established attorneys of more difficulties. I personally was pessimistic enough that I voted against the recommended budget for CASD in 2009 believing that it was an unrealistic budget in a bleak economy.

A slogan should face the reality of the situation and offer solutions. Up until the day of my installation as president I kept changing my mind about what I would use. Finally I picked . . . and mostly stole from Tracee: "STILL YEAR OF THE MEMBER – More for Less."

I know this slogan owes more to plagiarism than creativity. Let me elaborate on what this collection of words means to me and, I hope, to an organization I truly love.

The focus needs to remain on the member. In my mind, the two most important goals need to be to provide our members with the opportunities to network with other attorneys and to help the less experienced become more effective for themselves and their clients. CASD's Executive Director, Bonnie Benitez, conducted what I feel was a truly useful survey of membership opinions. Let me share some of those results. Of those responding, 54.3 % were sole practitioners and another 42.9% were in 2- to 4-attorney offices. More than 40% of responders felt that CASD's primary mission now and over the next three years should be to foster and improve networking for its members.

The five highest rated services provided by CASD, in the order of importance to our members, were: first – list server; second -- seminars; third – document bank; fourth – *Trial Bar News*; fifth – website. Members also indicated that they were most satisfied with the list server, *Trial Bar News*, Tuesday Night at the Lab and seminars in that order. More than 50 % of those responding said they always use list server and always read the *Trial Bar News*. The two most common reasons to attend CASD events were professional development and networking.

No survey can accurately report everything, but we did try to give everyone the opportunity to have input. We are always willing to hear your opinions. You can reach me at waynecloud@aol.com or Bonnie can be reached at bonnie@casd.org. My experience with our members tends to support the survey results. The question then becomes what are we going to do to breathe life into the 2009 slogan of “Still Year of the Member — More for Less”?

Most members do not realize that the sum total of membership dues does not cover all costs. For example, the per person cost of dinner at the Awards and Installation Dinner did not cover all costs. The sponsorships generated a profit for the organization. Two big dinners, one golf tournament, many sponsors and some, but not all, seminars produce additional income. Seminars are profitable, for example, because most speakers donate their time and we get sponsors to cover items such as materials. We are charged for the use of the Bar building. Still an “average” seminar cost is \$2600 to \$4500 plus staff labor. Special seminars like last year’s class action seminar can cost as much as \$18,000 [this seminar drew people from around the state and made a substantial profit]. Seminars are free for all sustaining members which are approximately one in six of our members. Sustaining membership is a bargain for anyone who goes to two or three seminars a year. We also try to find “scholarships” to help struggling members afford events. These scholarships are funded generally by generous members who remember the tough years. We don’t cut the rate, but we take the time to go out and find someone to cover the difference. Many board members contribute and do it anonymously.

We generate “more for less” because some members step up and volunteer their time and money. For instance, the Awards and Installation Dinner was a big success because the board of directors sold out the event and, in addition, three people worked extremely hard to put the event together and find sponsors: Karin Wick, George de la Flor and his wonderful wife, Susanne. Susanne is a tough and hard worker behind the scenes despite not being a CASD member since she isn’t an attorney. There are some who suspect that she is the power behind George. Behind the scenes, there are a cadre of hardworking, generous people who are making “more for members at less cost to members”.

Here’s some of what these people are doing this year to help members in this economy:

*We have given free seminars to an unprecedented number of people at both of our first seminars.

*We have offered financial help to those who need such help in terms of membership dues and attendance at events and seminars.

*John Rice is putting together an expanded number of Tuesday Night at the Lab programs. These seminars are low cost events with lots of materials. The labs are designed so that people meet each

other and form networks.

*Raul Cadena and Scott Levine have put together some great plans for Lobby Day in Sacramento on April 28, 2009, which include travel packages for the events, opportunities to win free travel, the ever popular Women Attorneys events, meetings with legislators and special tours for those of us who take their children. My daughter attended last year with me and has since written two papers in her first year of college based upon last year's tour of the capital and legislators. Bring your children to this great lesson in government. It was a good father-daughter time for Alex Rose and me. We might even have a party with the Orange County trial attorneys.

Remember "Still Year of the Member — More for Less" is brought to you by thousands of volunteer hours. Seminars for 2009 include at least the following seven: What's New in Tort and Trial; The Business of Being a S.M.A.R.T. and Successful Lawyer; Your First Trials; Haniff; Liens; A Return to Evidence with Judge Trentacosta; and an as yet unnamed seminar on employment law and class actions. Two of these seminars are designed for either the current economy or those wishing to improve their trial skills. We are considering a surprise ninth seminar for fall.

Our website is being updated to be even more user friendly. There are many, very helpful documents in our document bank including pleadings, discovery, motions in limine, trial briefs, demand letters, and much more. Our document bank is always expanding. In fact, Rebecca Mowbray, who has been responsible for indexing and processing the documents for the bank, reports that documents are added every month. We will be expanding our expert bank – information on frequently-used experts. Have you visited our website lately? You'll be surprised at the information available.

We are considering having two list serves [one for law and one for OT or off topic discussions].

Thank You to our Board

Your 2009 board of directors continues to excel, event after event, in a very tough environment which most associations are finding difficult. Take a member of the board out for coffee. They might even buy. I'd like to draw your attention this month to these individuals:

TIM BLOOD of Coughlin, Stoia, Geller, Rudman & Robbins LLP, is a large part of how we can deliver more for less. His firm generously allows us to use their spacious facilities for seminars such as the Tuesday Night Labs and other events. Because of his participation on the board, our members save on seminar costs. "More for Less." For some unknown reasons, there is talk of naming a so-called instigator award after Tim . . . "The BLOOD." Tim has helped us strengthen our ties with legislators and, oh yes, still finds time to contribute significant work as a class action attorney.

GEORGE AND SUSANNE de la FLOR are a powerhouse couple. George practices in La Mesa and his wife, Susanne, keeps the office and George functioning in tip top form. The two of them worked hard, long hours, to help Karen Wick make this year's Installation and Awards Dinner the most successful one in recorded history. I know that they did it quietly behind the scenes and their combined contributions were significant. I can tell you that if Susanne calls asking for help, hang on. Both are lovely people – Susanne is quite a bit more lovely than George. George is a fun loving Cuban packaged in bright colors and has a gifted personality and mind.

REBECCA LACK MOWBRAY of the executive committee lacks little and does almost everything: mixers, list serve parties, website and document bank . . . and this year, with L. **TRACEE LORENS**, she is running one of the best membership drives in our history. While other associations are losing members, we have actually had a slight gain as of the writing of this article. We can't function without her and she is always there, willing to contribute. More than once I have seen Rebecca contribute from her own resources so that younger attorneys can benefit.

So what if it is nepotism. I have to mention **TRACEE LORENS** who is putting meaning in the expression "two for one." I call her Mighty Mouse and in the first five weeks of this year she was responsible for the location for the board retreat, planning the president's reception, raising money for CASD, arranging a dinner for the board, past presidents, legislators and sponsors, co-chairing the membership committee and is working on another signature education event. The seminar she did last year brought in attendance and revenue from around the state. These resources help us provide "More for Less."

Please go up and thank these people and the other members of the board. You may owe people like them more than you imagine.