

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### *2009: Thank You, Kudos, and a Few Thoughts for the Future of CASD*

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 who just completed 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](mailto:waynecloud@aol.com).*

This column is my last as President of CASD and I write it with gratitude for the opportunity given me this year and more than a small amount of relief. When I was sworn in last January, I had some serious concerns. The economy was in drastic trouble and neither CASD nor our profession was part of the federal rescue plan. As I committed us to "More Year of the Member – for Less" even I was skeptical of what we could accomplish.

During 2009, the American Association for Justice reported a 40% drop in membership and serious economic hardship. Consumer Attorneys of California also experienced a less drastic drop in membership and financial concerns. So what did CASD accomplish? Did we produce more without increasing dues and fees? The short answer is yes.

During 2009, CASD increased total membership by at least 120 additional members to a decade-record high. Likewise, by producing quality seminars and educational programs, we have substantially increased sustaining memberships to an all time record number. While such memberships cost slightly more, sustaining membership gives a member free access to all educational programs. It is such a bargain that in October, 26 people became new members and/or sustaining members just to attend the Second Annual Class Action Symposium either free or at the member's rate. Economically, this year we will have increased net revenue, after expenses, by an estimated \$80,000 to \$100,000. It took smart, efficient and hard work to produce these results in probably the worst economy of the past 10 plus years.

Larger membership and healthy finances allow us to keep costs lower and extend more benefits to our members. None of the results happened by accident or luck. All of the results are traced to extraordinary volunteer work. We were fortunate in that, despite difficulties, the 2009 Board of Directors was outstanding in their contributions to CASD. Let me bring your attention to some of those members' work this year.

Your next president, Scott Levine, was a true partner this year. In the spring, Scott put on the very much praised SMART seminar. Unknown to most of you, he has been meeting with next year's Board members individually to get their ideas and inputs. Scott wants to put people in charge of projects or committees for which they have a passion. It is part of what worked for us this past year.

As an incoming president, a great deal of work is being done by Scott behind the scenes in the last three months of my term.

Your 2011 president, Joel Bryant, brought his people skills to help handle a number of less than pleasant yet necessary projects as education chair and was one of the spirits of the golf tournament.

John Gomez [2012] had a very good year as a trial attorney and concerned father of young twins. Along with past presidents Ken Sigelman and Richard Huver, these three were always willing to give me advice.

I call your 2013 president, Lady R. Rebecca Lack Mowbray earned her title this year by putting on all the list serve parties and mixers, co-chairing the Membership Committee with Tracee Lorens, chairing the Document Bank Subcommittee of our Communications Committee and doing other important behind-the-scenes work. The list serve parties put faces to names and have made us a family as an organization. Lady Rebecca will bring great energy and a love of our profession to her term.

In 2014 Raul Cadena will be president. This year, he arranged monthly meetings between leadership and state legislative office holders. We have never been so well informed. For Lobby Day this year, Raul brought the largest group of attorneys from San Diego ever to Sacramento. More than 25 of us had a wonderful and educational stay. CASD has always been subject to critical comments from state leadership for its low participation in Lobby Day. This year, Raul won for us a **trophy for best attendance** in the state! State leaders were shocked at what he accomplished.

Members of the Board of Directors are all expected to contribute something special to CASD, but the contribution varies from member to member. The nominating committee tries to watch who works on committees and get those people onto the Board. Do become a Board member, get on a committee and be active. If you want to work on a special project, write Scott at [slevine@sillardorfflevine.com](mailto:slevine@sillardorfflevine.com). From the Board of Directors we try to then pick one person each year who has more than "paid their dues." This person is then nominated to the executive committee: a six-year rotation which usually leads to the presidency.

This year Tim Blood of Coughlin, Stoia, Geller, Rudman, & Robbins has been nominated to start on the executive journey. In 2009, Tim was co-chair with Tracee in putting together the Second Annual Class Action Symposium. His firm has generously let us use their conference rooms for Tuesday Night Labs and phone banks. His advice has helped many negotiate the maze which is Sacramento as he has worked on legislation to benefit consumers.

George de la Flor and his wife Suzanne once again did the hugely successful blood bank drive in front of the court house. This drive is the second largest blood drive in the county [behind the Chargers].

Karen R. Frostrom is heading up the Almanac project which will become a 2010 member benefit. The Almanac will be a desk top reference book on valuable information. Most of this labor intense project has been completed and sponsors are being pulled together.

Julia Haus is a first year member of the Board who in her spare time is being considered for California Trial Lawyer of the Year by CAOC.

Kerry Hoxie has been a very good friend this year. She has let me vent my frustrations freely . . . while continuing to be the Editor-in-Chief of ***Trial Bar News*** and co-chair other aspects of the Communications Committee. Ten times a year she patiently nudges all of us to get our columns in, edits the articles and deals with layout of the magazine, space constraints, late submissions and printers. One day we ought to have a contest: a free sustaining membership to the person who can guess how many hours a year Kerry volunteers to CASD without complaining to anyone. In addition, Kerry is generous in complementing others on their work. When the soul of an organization is volunteer work, it is important that those who produce are recognized and appreciated.

Sadly Debra Hurst, Sean Simpson and Jill Sullivan, while able to make time for Board meetings and important insights, will not be with the Board next year because of time pressures.

Robert W. Jackson put on the very highly praised trial skills seminar and promises to return in 2010 with a second edition. He is both a skilled and busy trial attorney who also makes sure that north county is represented.

Maria Palmieri keeps us young and in touch with the concerns of the future of the trial bar. She is always willing to help out with various committees including Membership.

John Rice, year after year, has kept us up to date on *Haniff* and Liens, both in seminars and by helping members by phone and list serve. He is also the driving force behind Tuesday Night Labs. John is a fountain of energy and when I grew tired, I'd call John for a pick-me-up. John is the real thing, but so far has resisted being pulled or pushed onto the executive committee – a recognition he deserves.

Jeremy Robinson and Nicole Tee both served on the Board and had monthly responsibilities to write or edit ***Trial Bar News*** articles. I don't know how it was for them, but writing my columns is difficult: what topic, how not to embarrass myself with second rate spelling or typing, etc. Sadly, both are retiring from the Board this year, however Jeremy will be continuing on as Tort Law column editor for ***Trial Bar News***.

Speaking of ***Trial Bar News***, we need to thank the column editors who so faithfully every month keep us informed about developments in their area of the law. A big thank you to Drew Dunk for Civil Procedure, Dana Grimes for Criminal Law, Dick Semerdjian for Discovery Law, Ian Fusselman for Evidence Law, Jim Lance for Products Liability, Karen Frostrom for Property Law, Jeremy Robinson for Tort Law and Tim Blood and Tracee Lorens for Legislative Law.

Brett Schreiber is both fun to work with and a force of nature. He has brought us humor, new sponsors, fun and was, along with Karin Wick, what made events so successful this year – the installation dinner [best in years], the golf tournament and, as I write, the Trial Stars dinner. These events give us cohesiveness as a group and an opportunity to share the burdens as well as the successes of our trial practices.

Joel Selik helps keep us relevant to the north county coastal area. His almost daily posting of changes in the law on list serve help keep our members informed and current. To these accomplishments add seminars, labs, publicity and opening our eyes to focus groups.

Steve Vosseller was co-chair of outreach along with John Gomez this year and an active member of the Awards Committee.

Amy West is a single parent yet finds time to come to meetings and help us promote events. She brings a fresh perspective to our meetings. When we needed extra help, we could always depend on Amy.

Last but certainly not least from this year's Board is Karin Wick. Karin has been literally over half of the effort behind every dinner and golf tournament over the last several years. I have begged her to consider going on the executive committee for at least three years without success. She would make a fantastic president but her role as mother and attorney have led her to leave the Board next year. Her absence [even if we are able to get some help from her] will be felt.

Only one more person to thank here . . . past president and my wife, Tracee Lorens. I was her administrative aid during her term and she more than paid me back this past year. She chaired the Membership Committee and set a goal of 850 members for the year. We thought she was being unrealistic but she has already exceeded that number. I literally watched her sign up two new members in an elevator between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> floors of a building. She was relentless and worked the phones with skill and results. When she wasn't running our practice and me, being a mother and wife, taking care of her father [as he wished, he passed away in our home in August], bringing pets home, etc., she was putting together the most successful seminar in the history of CASD. The two-day class action seminar required Tracee to put together a panel of more than 32 speakers, defense and plaintiff attorneys, federal and state judges, mediators and experts. Once gathered together, she had to supervise panel conference calls in order to work out agendas, get panels to stick to very tight schedules and even do mock rehearsals. The materials for the symposium take up two CDs containing at least seven banker's boxes of information. She made us all look good.

Tracee and I will be taking a low profile next year. We frankly need the break. I am impressed with the people who will fill next year's Board. We do have the talent to fill in for those of us who will be less active. Scott Levine needs and deserves your support.

Remember that your dues to an organization can encompass more than money. Most of our member benefits come from volunteer labors. It's your turn to get active, donate your time and make sure you pause to thank those who work for us all.

Thank you.