

## Our Hero

I write this month's column on Father's Day. My three children, J.D., age 5, and twins Michael and Analise, 3, have all pitched in to make me coffee, bring me the morning newspaper and create cards and special Father's Day skits for me. I received one actual gift. It is a simple shiny metal trinket for my key chain. It says, "Our Hero." I love it. It's a perfect day.

And so I got to thinking about the importance of our children, family and loved ones to us as trial lawyers. I guess when you start thinking about that, you can't help but think of Atticus Finch and his kids, Scout and Jem, in the classic novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird." Atticus, of course, is an ethical Southern lawyer hired to defend Tom Robinson, a black man, against charges that he raped a white girl. An important dynamic of the book is how Atticus' work affects his relationship with his children and vice versa. The case is an unpopular one and causes Atticus some social disdain. Atticus, however, uses that experience to teach his children that what is right is right -- regardless of the price to be paid. At the same time, and as importantly, he relies upon his children for strength and affirmation. Scout and Jem live the whole case with him and come to watch the trial. They sit in the "colored" section and are stunned by the jury's guilty verdict despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In the end, they love their father and their father loves them.

I know that sometimes I feel like Atticus. I'm sure many of you do too. We take on cases because we believe in them and because justice is on our side. I am a civil lawyer so there are some differences but lots of similarities too. Often the odds are long and stacked against us. Before trial, adjusters and defense lawyers tell us the case isn't worth a thing. Perhaps a mediator tells us the same thing. We get to court and often the judge is hostile. The jury panel, hardened and calloused by tort reform rhetoric, looks at us like we are the bad guys. Our money is at risk. Our reputations are on the line. Our client's future may hang in the balance. But still, we are somebody's "hero" as we step up to do our job. And that can be what gets us through the day sometimes.

My kids are obviously young. But they get it. I tried a brain injury case in December. Every day, my kids would encourage me to "help the man with the broken brain." They tell their teachers and friends that my job is to "help people." Often I will be on the road in trial. My wife will record a video with all the kids encouraging me to "help the lady with the broken back" or "the man with the broken brain," or whatever case I am involved in. I watch the video before I go to court and I keep their pictures in my portfolio on my trial table. When things start getting me down, I take a look at their smiling, supportive faces.

We may not all have children. But we all have somebody that loves us and sees us as a hero for doing what we do. We are really blessed in that regard. There is a reason that Scout's dad wasn't the prosecutor in the book. What is right is right. To accuse an innocent person is wrong. To hurt a person and then deny responsibility is wrong. I'm not sure if we all realize the immense power and strength that our loved ones can provide us. We are drawn to the right side of justice because that is who we are. The people in our lives are drawn to us because of who we are. We are, simply put, their "heroes."

And so, I guess I just want to wish all you dads a "Happy Father's Day." And all you moms, a late "Happy Mother's Day." And to each and every one of you, a "Happy Heroes Day" -- every single day. Thanks for being a hero to your family, your loved ones, your clients and your co-workers and colleagues. Remember when times get tough, we are all very, very proud of what you do every day. **TBN**

by John H. Gomez

A graduate of Yale Law School and Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyer's College, John H. Gomez is CASD's President for 2012. John believes passionately in improving our world though both the law and community service. John's community passions are the Latino community, kids at risk, drunk driving prevention, foster children and legal services for the indigent. CASD has twice named John "Trial Lawyer of the Year" and has awarded him six "Outstanding Trial Lawyer" awards. His Gomez Law Firm is an eight-attorney consumer law firm dedicated exclusively to community service, catastrophic personal injury and mass tort litigation. Most importantly, John is the devoted husband of Lisa and the proud father of son "J.D." and twins Michael and Analise.

