

Joel Bryant is Passionate About Community Involvement

It's a warm summer day when I finally interview CASD's 2011 president – Joel Bryant. It's time to get to know the person who has been at the helm of CASD this year. Joel is efficient and well-organized. He seems to handle the many issues facing CASD's president with a calm, cool approach, despite having a very busy law practice.

It's has been a challenging year for everyone. Much of the world is in an economic spiral of some sort and people in many countries are challenging their own governments for control. This year has even seen our own country in turmoil. Our elected leaders are fighting so badly they have us living in fear. Age-old practices are being overthrown. Working together to achieve common goals has been replaced with threats and demands. Joel has watched the turmoil have a serious effect on the practice of law. People resent anyone wanting to be compensated for wrongs done them. It's an "every person for themselves" world; no one wants to help anyone. This has certainly had an effect on juries and makes plaintiff organizations like CASD more important than ever to their members.

We begin with a little background about Joel. His background is in finance. He wasn't always interested in being a lawyer or working with plaintiffs. Joel was born in Oklahoma, but he grew up in Colorado where he moved when he was 8. He decided to attend college at Arizona State University because it had a good business school and he wasn't sure what he would do for a career. He graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance and earned the prestigious Wall Street Journal Outstanding Business Student Award also. Joel says he decided to go to law school, not because of a burning passion to practice law, but because he knew a law degree would open many career doors for him and he wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Because he has a positive attitude and he really like California, he only applied to California law schools. Fortunately he was accepted by University of San Diego School of Law and he graduated in 1990. As law school progressed and Joel clerked at several law firms, he began to realize that he would like to practice in civil litigation.

Joel's first job as an attorney was at Post, Kirby. A couple of years later he joined Perkins & Miltner which practiced primarily business and construction law. One of the firm's clients who operated a nursing home got sued and his defense was assigned to Joel. This is how Joel first got involved with issues involving nursing home abuse, financial elder abuse and other older client issues. With his background in finance and his desire to do something with his law practice which would really make a difference, the field was a perfect fit – however, he moved over the plaintiff side. His clients are frequently not able to report or explain the abuse. Physical and, even more importantly, mental issues allow seniors to be exploited and make prosecuting the offender difficult. Joel became one of the first attorneys in San Diego to specialize in prosecuting civil and probate actions for financial elder abuse. He has become very successful in handling nursing home abuse and financial elder abuse claims. His years of experience allow him to quickly identify medical issues and track financial fraud in either civil court or probate court.

In 2005, Joel and two of his colleagues, Ron Green and Jeffrey French, opened law offices in San Diego and Palm Desert. The firm concentrates on elder abuse, physical and financial abuse as well as financial fraud, commu-

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nity association law, construction defects and injuries, employment and real estate law, and personal injury and wrongful death cases.

Joel is married to English, an attorney who practices law at Tyson & Mendes as director of their employment practices group. They have a 8-year-old son, Carter, who is active in both baseball and soccer and made the all-star teams in both sports. Joel has coached Carter's little league baseball team for the past three years and is on the Mission Bay Little League board. Carter is in third grade.

Joel is passionate about community involvement. He believes that we all owe it to each other to work for the betterment of our communities – whatever communities we live in or work in. Consistent with this philosophy, he is actively involved in increasing public awareness of legal issues confronting elderly persons. He has served as a consultant and chair of San Diego Financial Abuse Specialist Team which has a mission of increasing the effectiveness of elder financial abuse reporting and prosecution. He served on the Board of Directors of Senior Community Centers, a charitable organization which provides food, housing and social services to senior citizens to help them maintain their health, independence and dignity, and has served on the Board of Directors of the Senior Housing Corporation which provides affordable housing to low-income senior citizens.

Also consistent with Joel's philosophy of giving back to your communities is his active participation in San Diego's legal community. Joel has been on the board of directors of CASD for 10 years. During his tenure, he has received several President's Awards for Excellence. Prior to that, Joel was on the board of directors for the San Diego Barrister's Club and was its president in 1994.

As to what the future holds for the practice of law, Joel believes plaintiffs' law will get more difficult as the public increasingly trends conservative and resists supporting social and governmental programs. This means participating in organizations which support consumer laws and responsibility for one's actions is more important than ever. CASD members benefit by banding together to work for the protection of our clients' rights and the individual rights of fellow citizens. Joel warns that limiting – or even eliminating – plaintiffs' rights, as various groups advocate, will not stop there. It will involve all individual rights. Business interests have saturated the public consciousness with anti-consumer messages. They insisting that consumer protections have destroyed jobs and the economy in general. We must all get involved in fighting back. We must work to protect and preserve individual, consumer and employee rights. It is only as we work for the good of all that we can have a society in which our chil-

dren and their children will be safe to grow up and prosper.

Joel believes that our highest priority in the practice of law should be to fight for our clients' rights in the courtroom, in Sacramento and in Washington, D.C. As attorneys, our relationship with Consumer Attorneys of California and with the American Association of Justice is paramount in this fight. It will help us be aware of actions by business and industry – and even foreign interests – to destroy our individual and consumer rights.

As Justice H. Lee Sarokin recently said, "I want an America that educates its children, feeds its poor, helps the unemployed, cares for its veterans, provides for the elderly and treats the sick who cannot afford it. I want an America that protects its environment, its food supply, its consumers and its borrowers. I want an America that is more concerned about the civil rights of its citizens rather the mythical invasion of Sharia law." Well, if we want it, we must fight for it.

Joel has led CASD to put a lot of attention this year on community outreach activities – making sure the community knows about the importance of consumer laws and individual rights and how to protect them. Come join with us in CASD to help each other and to protect these valuable rights. **TBN**

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