

CASD's Cornucopia of Member Benefits

by L. Tracee Lorens

Tracee Lorens is CASD's President for 2003. Ms. Lorens attended San Diego State University and Western State College of Law (now Thomas Jefferson) obtaining her J.D., B.S.L. in 1990 and was admitted to the California State Bar that same year. She has been a member of Consumer Attorneys of San Diego for nine years and was either a Director or Officer of CASD for the past seven years. She practices primarily in the area of employment law, focusing currently on wage and hour class actions, as well as complex personal injury and insurance bad faith claims. Ms. Lorens is the mother of a beautiful 12-year-old daughter, Alexandra Rose Lorens, and the "significant other" and partner of Wayne A. Hughes. She may be reached by e-mail at CASDPres@aol.com or by calling 619-239-1233.

Due to the necessary time lags between writing, publishing and distribution, it is necessary to sometimes visit the past in these articles to thank our membership for their contributions.

January was a very busy month at CASD. On the 9th, we held our Annual Awards and Installation Dinner at the Downtown Hyatt Hotel. As those of you who attended know, our keynote speaker was **Senator John Edwards**, who is one of the Democratic hopefuls for President in 2004. Senator Edwards "wowed" us with his eloquent and enthusiastic speech which made it clear that he is **proud to be a plaintiff's lawyer** and will in no way be shying away from that background as he pursues his candidacy for President. Whether Senator Edwards gets the democratic nomination or not, he is probably the best spokesperson we have on the national scene to speak out against the Bush plan to reform justice out of the tort system. Supporting this man is perhaps one of the best tools we have as a profession to get our message out.

We also heard beautiful, awe inspiring, and tingle producing speeches from our two Trial Lawyers of the Year, **Harvey Levine** and **Dwight Ritter**. Great attorneys doing awesome work

are our best advertisements. Speaking of great attorneys, who could forget **Rhonda Holmes** singing *God Bless America* as a start to the evening program. Thanks, Rhonda. I thought I had died and gone to heaven as I sat there listening to your beautiful rendition of *God Bless America*. In these difficult times, patriotism has become a unifying force. Thank you again for reminding us on an emotional level of this unity.

As I have been telling you every chance I get; this year is your year. THIS IS THE YEAR OF THE MEMBER. Many of you have asked me to explain our current member benefits. In that process, I will also explain how you can become more involved with CASD, the process to becoming a member of the Board of Directors (or even President) and the process for considering and determining who receives our coveted **Outstanding Trial Lawyer Awards**.

Our organization consists of three main working categories: the Executive Committee (the Officers), a 25-member Board of Directors (which includes the Officers), and the staff (SJ Kalian and Chris Van Orshoven). Most members of the Board and the Executive Committee work, I would estimate, between 100 and 500 hours per year for the organization as volunteers. So how does one become a member of the Board . . . or for that matter, president?

Each year there are generally two to three openings on the Board of Directors. Frankly, some people find that they cannot commit the time and leave to open a space for a new member. This year's new members are **Rebecca Mowbray, Lisa Stepp** and **Marc Stern**.

You will see this summer, in the *Trial Bar News*, a solicitation for information from any of you who would like to serve on our Board of Directors. Feel free to send in a little biography regarding your personal and work history and your reasons for desiring a position on our Board. Or, if you would rather, just pick up the phone and give me a call.

After you have been on the Board for two years you are eligible for elevation to our

Executive Committee which consists of our officers. Generally, once selected to be Parliamentarian, a member works up through Parliamentarian to Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President, President-Elect and eventually, after 5 years of more work, President.

The process begins with membership. Once you have been a member for the two most recent years or a member over the past year and doing committee work, you are eligible for the Board of Directors. If you are interested, contact me or a committee chair to start the process. We'd love to see you get installed as president!

GETTING MORE INVOLVED

CASD has many committees. Some of the committees are perpetual and others are created to fit specific needs. The **Events Committee** plans and hosts our Installation and Awards Dinner, our Trial Stars Dinner, and less formal events like our ListServe parties, which are free and generally feature a great dance band, and our newest event: **Monthly Mixers** (the first one was on February 20, 2003 at Downtown Johnny Brown's).

A sub-committee to the Events Committee is being chaired by **Joel Bryant** and it organizes our Annual Golf Tournament started last year by Past President **Steve Boudreau**.

Our **Communications Committee** handles functions such as last year's redesign of our logo and this year's anticipated redesign of the ***Trial Bar News*** and our webpage. They also oversee the sub-committees which monitor our ListServe and which will work, this year, to create an On-Line Brief Bank for our members. The Communications Committee also oversees our **Community Outreach Committee**, chaired by **Rhonda Holmes**, which consists of members willing to go out to our community to help improve our image and educate the public about our commitment to fighting to preserve the constitutional right to trial by jury for all consumers and our ongoing fight to keep the courthouse doors open for the regular people that

we represent each day.

We also have a **Membership Committee** which is probably the most important committee at CASD. Without you, our members, we cannot exist. Our membership has been decreasing yearly. Any assistance you are willing to provide to that committee will be rewarded with my **utmost gratitude**.

Another extremely important committee at CASD is the **Education Committee**. This year **Cathy Richardson** and **Joel Selik** chair that committee. They are always looking for your ideas and your needs and your comments so that we can provide you with the best seminars in the state. A sub-committee to the Education Committee is the **Roundtable Committee**. **Doc Anderson** and **Lisa Stepp** chair that committee this year. Roundtables are one hour free seminars on topics we hope interest all of you and generally proceed the third Wednesday of every month in the Presiding Department in our downtown courthouse at noon.

This year we are also adding monthly educational workshops which we are calling “**Labs**”. Our labs will be geared to newer lawyers, both member and non-member, and will cover the types of topics which new members have been requesting. **Wayne Hughes** and **Joel Selik** will be developing and running this new program. Each session will last two hours; one hour of instruction and materials followed by an hour of “hands on” experience. Some of the topics under consideration are:

The First Hundred Questions; The Basic Deposition.

Which Table Do I Sit At? A Primer on Courtroom Basics.

Law and Motion Sickness.

That Five Minutes Before the Judge Interrupts You.

The Demon Defense Attorney: A Guide on How to Exorcize.

Chris Hulburt and **Scott Levine** chair our **Legislative Committee**. This is the committee you want to join if you have the energy to change the world. That is in addition to the work you do every day in your office helping to change your clients' worlds.

Finally, we have our **Awards Committee**. The Awards Committee is chaired this year by **Richard Huver** and **Jim Spievak**. I want to publically acknowledge the dedication of Jim Spievak to this committee. He has been on the committee for at least 20 years and is the only member who always shows up early.

The Awards Committee receives nominations from anyone and everyone. We do not care who sends in your nomination. It can be your wife, your secretary, or your law partner. It can even be you, yourself. The identity of the nominator does not weigh into the determination or investigation of your nomination.

We are not looking for necessarily huge verdicts or settlements. The amount of the verdict or settlement is one of the factors but even more importantly we look at the difficulty of the case. In other words, if liability is a "slam dunk" you probably will not receive an Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award. These awards are saved for truly **OUTSTANDING** results. In other words, you might receive an award if you took a case against all odds (possibly a low impact-soft tissue case) and had the courage to try it and win it even if the verdict was not substantial; or maybe it is a case you had to re-try after an appeal, or a case that made new law, beneficial to consumers. For a complete list of criteria just call.

CURRENT MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

One of the favorite member benefits according to the members I know is our ListServe, our group e-mail program. This allows us to implement our motto ("Never Stand Alone") as it gives us all the feeling that we work in a nine hundred member law firm. Instead of walking

down the hall and asking a question (since most of us do not have long hallways of attorneys in our offices) we simply go on to ListServe and within minutes receive multiple responses to any and all inquiries that come to mind.

Another favorite benefit is ***Trial Bar News***, our monthly magazine (published 10 times a year) which has articles on the latest developments in most of the legal fields important to our practice. I can tell you I read ***Trial Bar News*** and so do our members and the judges – because we certainly hear about it if a copy is not received. If it is important to your practice, you can generally find it in ***Trial Bar News***.

One of my favorite member benefits is **brainstorming**. We use to have our brainstorming sessions before our monthly dinner meetings. Since we no longer have monthly dinner meetings we now schedule brainstorming sessions before roundtables and other functions. I anticipate that this year we will be having brainstorming sessions in conjunction with our monthly mixers as well.

CASD is affiliated with **DepoConnect**. As a result you have access to over one hundred thousand expert depositions. If you donate depositions to DepoConnect you earn credit toward downloading from their entire databank. We also have an affiliation with **Affinity Conference Calling**. As a member of CASD you will receive a great rate. In addition we have **anatomical trial aides**. We try to rent these at very reasonable rates and can always guarantee you a 25% discount from the non-member rate. In addition we have joined with the San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association to bring you affordable **small business health insurance**. The rates are very competitive.

Our newest benefits are the ListServe itself, the twice a year ListServe Parties, our brand new Monthly Mixers (the first one is on February 20, 2003 at Downtown Johnny Brown's) and

our new educational labs.

If you want any additional information on any of these programs or wish to get more involved at CASD (**I am especially looking for you computer gurus who can help me set up the On-Line Brief Bank**), please feel free to call me at (619) 239-1233 or e-mail me at CASDPres@aol.com. I hope that this information is helpful to you. Certainly I have had many requests and inquiries for an explanation of how CASD works and a list of our membership benefits. With this information under your belt hopefully you now can help me help you.