

President's Column

A Fond Farewell

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.

I am writing this column as firefighters predict full containment of the Cedar fire in East County. My family was one of the lucky evacuated. By now we all appreciate the losses suffered in our community and the heroism demonstrated by firefighters. We have fresh in our memories how this county pulled together and gave freely to both the victims and the firefighters.

I took a great pride in how our community pulled together. So much was given to our firefighters that the excess was shipped to firefighters in San Bernardino and to the north. In our legal community, ListServe was used to assist in raising funds for the family of Steve Rucker and the injured firefighter who tried to save him; to help a young mother with children who had lost her home to the fire while waiting for her results from taking the bar exam; and to find volunteers to provide free legal services to the victims.

Sometimes it takes a tragedy to pull forth the strength of a community. Disasters like 9/11 or the Fire Storm of 2003 remind us that we have more in common than the relatively small squabbles which divide us at times. This condition of the human species applies to organizations as well as communities.

This column is my last CASD President's Column. Chris Hulburt will officially become our president on January 15, 2004. As is our tradition, he is already taking over greater responsibilities as president-elect. For those of you who have not had the opportunity to get to know him, I'd like to tell you a little bit about him. He is going to be a great president. One of his great strengths is his ability to lobby for legislation and political support in Sacramento and the nation. In these times of assault on our profession, we need more warriors like Chris. They fight against great odds and frequently must be content with seemingly small victories. Sometimes what we win is what we stop and progress is measured in inches and feet, but people like Chris help us hold off the so-called "tort reformers".

In my opinion, what makes CASD stronger and puts meaning in the slogan "*Never Stand Alone*" is a commitment to a process. This process involves many steps. The process starts with participation of its members, debate and discussion, and eventually a recognition of the necessity of seeking a consensus on a course of action that can be supported by more than a slim majority of the membership.

My goal was to make this "*The Year of the Member.*" We wanted to make sure that we went out of our way to be the type of 700 plus member organization in which a young attorney could comfortably sit down, meet, know, and network with the most experienced of our members. CASD has members whose practices cover a broad spectrum of areas, experience, and levels of success. We wanted to achieve a comfort level for all members.

I can clearly remember how it felt 14 (or so) years ago when I would attend a CASD function and wonder about all those successful attorneys at the front of the room . . . but be too shy to approach and get to know them. I wanted to make this organization accessible and friendly to all and loaded with great membership benefits running the gamut from labs for the

newer attorneys to role playing and psycho-drama with the famous Joshua Karton.

Our goal was to achieve a higher level of participation, to find new faces who wanted to work, to get those new faces actively involved in committee work, and eventually to get new blood infused into the Board of Directors. I am pleased to see such new faces as Rebecca Mowbray, Alex Scheingross, Alexys Kalafer, Jon Williams and Josh Gruenberg as recent and/or new Board members.

I feel that *“The Year of the Member”* has had its successes. For the first time in more than 10 years, the number of attorney members has increased rather than decreased. I would like to think that is because of an increased sense of comradery and a recognition that CASD has the greatest number and highest quality benefits available to its members of any organization of attorneys locally, and maybe even in the entire state.

What We Have Accomplished This Year

In my first President’s Column (January 2003) I told you that “High on my list for new membership benefits is an on-line brief bank.” As we began to develop that on-line brief bank (probably because I, as well as the other members of the committee, are type A personalities) the project blossomed into a much larger effort to totally revamp, update, and enlarge our website. Hopefully, sometime in the next six weeks you will see the fruits of that labor when we roll out our brand new website.

CASD Brief & Expert Witness Banks

Under the leadership of Jon Williams, we are now in the final stages of the major re-design of our website. The new website will have a “members only” side with a firewall to better protect sharing of information, as well as a public side for Community Outreach, Public Education, Press Releases, etc. On the “members only” side we will have an On-Line Brief

Bank for the electronic downloading of sample pleadings.

In addition, there will be an Expert Witness Bank which will be utilized to gather the evidence necessary to impeach and/or completely exclude many of the “usual suspects” among defense-oriented expert witnesses. It will house the documentation which we have all be referring to as the “Taking Down Expert _____” documentation.

Network Building

Through CASD, I was able to build a network of colleagues who are a source of support, information and short cuts. I wanted to make sure that we provided our members with many opportunities to build their own “networks” through the ListServe, Mixers, ListServe parties, Tuesday Night Labs, Town Hall meetings, quality Educational Seminars, and the more formal events, such as our Annual Trial Stars Dinner, Past Presidents Reception, and the Annual Installation and Awards Night.

ListServe, CASD’s group e-mail service, is a fast place to seek and frequently find the answers to both practical and legal questions. We have worked hard to keep it open for free speech and debate. From ListServe many good ideas have emerged which have now become active programs: the high school student essay contest, the ListServe parties and the mixers. The social programs have given people the chance to put faces to names and build relationships with other members.

We have also watched ListServe and, when appropriate, scheduled Town Hall meetings to address issues which have evolved among the members. Likewise, the ListServe has been an invaluable tool for quickly communicating with the majority of our members to gather assistance in times of need such as the gathering of volunteer lawyers to assist fire victims after the 2003 firestorm.

Tuesday Night at the Labs was designed as a low cost, practical series of seminars teaching the very basic litigation skills. The materials and facilities are donated by interested members of CASD. Each of the labs has been a sell out. The labs are a place to learn, to brainstorm and, by their very nature, to meet other attorneys. We make sure that people introduce themselves and their areas of interests so that people can learn who to contact about what. We know that many labs have resulted in focus groups, smaller groups working together, and friendships. We designed these labs for attorneys newer to the practice of law. However, we are pleased that they have been so well received. Even some of the most experienced and successful attorneys in town have stopped by to see and participate in what they tell us are labs which have really built a reputation around this town.

Redesign of *Trial Bar News*

We have redesigned the *Trial Bar News* to be more user friendly with a more contemporary look. Under Kerry Hoxie's leadership, *TBN* will continue to have its usual high quality content. *TBN* is not just a tool for communication with the membership. *TBN* is also sent to the entire judiciary and many non-members who pay for it because they say it is the best legal publication in the state. *TBN* is CASD's monthly communication to our legal community.

Other Accomplishments

We were able to continue with the tradition of high quality educational seminars such as David Ball on Damages, Joshua Karton, and the Trial Stars Seminar with Ned Good, Tom Vesper and Dwight Ritter. We have also brought back the popular "What's New in Tort & Trial" seminar which will be held on Tuesday, January 27, 2004.

We continued to participate and perform the bulk of the work in putting on this year's Red Boudreau dinner which raised in excess of \$25,000 for Father Joe and the homeless. We

also put on another highly successful Trial Stars Dinner. This year the awards went to a truly wide spectrum of accomplishments from the *pro bono* work of a group of CASD members, spearheaded by Spencer Busby, in helping the Van Dams after the tragic loss of their daughter Danielle, to the defense of our Constitution by Randall Hamud, to the fighting of racial hate crimes and many other worthy causes – causes our members proudly fight. This dinner highlighted the sacrifice trial lawyers make and the appreciation their clients express. We also made sure that the sacrifice our families make for our profession was honored.

Thank You

I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your support of this organization. I was truly honored to be voted onto the Board of Directors of CASD in 1996. I have enjoyed each and every minute spent serving on its Board of Directors and thereafter as a member of the Executive Committee and finally as its proud President. Not only have I made many, many friends through this organization over the years, but my family has also gained many friends.

I remember my first Board of Directors retreat. My daughter, Alexandra Rose, was about five years old. Deborah Wolfe (who has been my mentor and whom I refer to as Mama Wolfe) was also on the Board of Directors. I remember her daughter Molly McDonald joining with Alexandra and running around at all of the family events, pulling on the ladies' skirts and running between the men's legs or sneaking up on the guests from underneath the table. To this very day Alexandra and Molly are still good friends.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who made it possible for me to attain the great honor of being your president. As mentioned above, Mama Wolfe herded me into this organization and assisted me in obtaining the highest level of achievement within the

organization. Dennis Schoville has taught me everything there is to know about civility, professionalism, and integrity. Steve Boudreau showed me, through his year as president of this organization, that all it takes to be successful is hard work, followed by harder work, followed by longer hours and more hard work. Judge Robert Trentacosta supported my nomination to the Executive Committee of this organization and I thank him for placing his trust in me and assisting me in my ascent to the presidency of CASD. Cindy Chihak and Judge Steve Denton have supported me in my quest to add member benefits, to include more “fun events”, and have not only cheered me on in this endeavor but have attended most all of our events.

Then there is Wayne Hughes! Wayne is the person that came up with the idea of “Tuesday Night at the Lab” and then took the laboring oar in developing those labs, finding speakers for each of the seminars, and gathering and preparing the written materials. In addition, he did all of the videotaping and editing for the Annual Installation Dinner, as well as, the Annual Trial Stars Dinner. These tasks alone took an average of 20 hours of work weekly, but he did not stop there. He attended nearly every Mixer and all of the ListServe parties. Any function that I was unable to cover (due to a conflict or the scheduling of two functions on a single evening) he attended on my behalf. I thank him personally for his dedication to this organization and also for his obvious devotion to me and to my successes. I also thank him on behalf of all of the members of CASD whom I know also greatly appreciate his tireless efforts and hard work for this organization this year, in years past, and I know for many years to come.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you because without you we would be nothing. As our slogan so aptly states, **“Never Stand Alone”**. We are the strong and successful organization that we all know because none of us ever stands alone nor have we since the founder of this organization, David S. Casey, Sr., recognized the need for plaintiffs’ lawyers to join together to

protect our clients' rights and to support each other.

After Chris is installed on January 15, 2004, I will still be around to help and participate, but I am grateful that a president's term lasts only one year. I have truly loved being your president, but frankly I am exhausted! It's time for us to get behind Chris. However, I want all of you members to know how much I appreciated this opportunity. Thank you one and all.