

December 2004 President's Column

"If You Want Peace, Work for Justice"

by **R. Christian Hulburt**

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The day after the election, President Bush provided his short list of issues that will be the focus of his second term. I can only remember one of them because I felt it was aimed directly at me: *protecting doctors from medical malpractice lawsuits*. That morning, I delivered a closing argument and began the agonizing wait for a verdict in a medical malpractice lawsuit. I was doing the very thing that my President was railing against. And I felt very proud, because I knew I was doing the right thing.

That evening, it seemed altogether fitting that we as a community of trial lawyers came together to honor our Trial Stars. First, we bemoaned the disappointing election. Then we celebrated, honored, and congratulated ourselves -- not just the eight Stars, but all of us who fight this fight for freedom, and truth, and justice, one client at a time. And I felt very proud, because I was surrounded by good people who work hard to do the right thing.

Pope John Paul II said many years ago, *"If you want peace, work for justice."* And so we do. We work for justice by trying to strengthen our community of advocates who represent real people, who challenge the powerful, and corrupt, and greedy. In our organization, **Jon Williams** and **Kerry Hoxie** continued to do tremendous work to expand the usefulness of the web site on the Internet and ListServ as tools for the exchange of information. **Joel Bryant** worked tirelessly, humbly, and without fanfare to entertain and support us with another hugely successful golf tournament. **John Rice, Wayne Hughes, and Joel Selik** brought endless energy and talent and creativity to education programs, offering something for everyone at every stage of a case or a practice. **Ben Bunn** and so many others raised record amounts of money for political races we believed would help us reclaim justice for our clients. Our Board and staff nurtured and guided the organization through another long and stressful year. And I feel very proud that we have helped many others to do the right thing.

The work is not done. The peace is not won. Justice is not without enemies. But we cannot lose hope. We must continue to find truth and justice, case by case. **It is in the individual struggles that we win.** Recently, I was given a prayer by Oscar Romero, the Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador who was martyred in 1980 for his tireless work for justice for his oppressed people. It is a prayer that gives me hope, because it embraces my own limitations and acknowledges the power of simply continuing to do my best. Romero helps us

accept that we may never see all that we hope for, but confirms that we are workers in a righteous and noble effort to build the way for others that follow:

It helps now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that
the kingdom always lies beyond us. . . .*

This is what we are about.

We plant seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,

and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way. . . .

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.*

We are the workers, not the master builders, . . .

We are prophets of a future that is not our own.

It has been my great privilege and honor to be President of the Consumer Attorneys of San Diego. It is an awesome responsibility. I hope I have done some things well, yet I know I did many things poorly. I did not accomplish all that I intended, but, like you, I continue to work

for justice. It is a battle worth fighting.

Thank you.