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# CITATIONS

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## **OFF-COURT WITH MARK HIEPLER**

By *Eric R. Reed*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Matthew P. Guasco

I have a confession: I watch television. Not all the time, mind you, but certainly enough. Recently, the strike by the Writers Guild of America has put a crimp in my entertainment: Jon Stewart isn't as funny without his team of writers, and "Pushing Daisies," like a lot of programs, isn't even on. Fortunately, this has increased the time I can devote to other things, such as this column. As I was sitting at the computer, my wife Susan, an appellate attorney, asked me what I was going to write. I told her I hadn't figured that out yet. She had an idea: What if, instead of the writers being on strike, it were all of us lawyers? What would our country look like without lawyers?

To hear some talk these days, this would be a dream come true. Our detractors say that lawyers have made society worse, that we are litigious to a fault, that we tear down without building up, that we line our pockets from the suffering of others. The popular depiction of lawyers in film or television is of amoral mercenaries bent on winning cases and gratifying their egos. You would think our profession is a problem to be eradicated. As Rodney Dangerfield might have said, "We can't get no respect."

So, assume that there are no lawyers, and that there have never been lawyers. There would be no United States Constitution. Many forget that the framers of the Constitution, such as Adams, Madison, Hamilton, Jay, Jefferson were lawyers. I suppose something as magnificent as the Constitution could have flowed from the pens of non-lawyers, but that is difficult to imagine; lawyers, unlike other professionals, are specifically trained to write laws. We may safely assume that the Bill of Rights, the separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and the judiciary probably would not exist but for the work of lawyers. The treasury, the national banking system, a standing army, and the modern commercial system were the creations of one particularly gifted lawyer – Alexander Hamilton. The Declaration of Independence was the creation of another –

Thomas Jefferson. Modern America and its constitutional democracy would not exist but for the work and sacrifice of lawyers.

There would be no functioning civil or criminal justice system as we know it. I suppose that judges could try to handle all those cases alone, but that would be an unusual and terrifying prospect for them and us. Without lawyers, there would be no adversarial system, and the parties would not be represented by professionals trained in law and procedure. Thus, the ascertainment of the truth in, and the resolution of, criminal and civil cases would fall squarely upon the judges, who, overworked, would have to wear all the hats that lawyers in civil and criminal cases wear every day in prosecuting and defending actions. Wait a minute; judges would no longer be lawyers, either. I suppose that in this brave new world, all civil and criminal cases would be litigated and decided by pro pers. This is a nightmare surpassing anything George Bailey experienced in "It's a Wonderful Life."

This antipathy toward lawyers probably comes from somewhere. Maybe it comes from seeing one too many advertisements in the phone book. Or it could be one too many accounts of overly aggressive lawyers who ruin the lives or livelihoods of real people. Or maybe it comes from seeing the legal system misused on occasion to pervert rather than to serve justice. As bad cases make bad law, so do bad stories produce bad perceptions of lawyers. It is easy to overreact to the lesser, and to overlook the better, angels of our legal system.

Without lawyers, there would never have been a Darrow, or *Brown v. Board of Education*, or anyone to stand up to tyranny, oppression and injustice with the one equalizing power which has made this country the envy of the world even in today's troubled times: the rule of law. Countries like China come to us to learn what our tradition of obedience to the rule of law and justice looks like. Lawyers are creating new constitutions and laws in the emerging democracies of the world. While we lawyers sometimes fail the trust that society places in our hands, our contributions far outweigh our shortcomings.

Fortunately, we lawyers are not on strike. Monday morning, we will go to our offices or to court. We will open our mail, meet clients, write briefs, make arguments, pick juries, draft documents, research the law, advise our clients, negotiate settlements, write laws, decide cases, and perform the countless and thankless tasks that make up the average day in the average life of the average lawyer. Without our scripts, the production that is the justice system would simply stop. And that wouldn't be a happy ending.

*Matthew P. Guasco is a mediator and arbitrator in Ventura. He is also Of Counsel to Norman Dowler, LLP, where he handles post-trial and appellate matters.*

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# OFF COURT WITH MARK HIEPLER

By Eric R. Reed

A phone call Mark Hiepler received nearly fifteen years ago paid homage to the cataclysmic effects of a single jury verdict.

The phone call found the young trial attorney in a victorious yet sober place. A Riverside County jury had recently awarded Hiepler's client—his sister Nelene—one of the largest verdicts in California history after hearing of her insurer's bad-faith denial of a life-saving breast cancer treatment. Cruelly, the verdict came too late for Nelene, whose cancer killed her only months before trial.

The caller kept it brief:

"Mr. Hiepler, this is, Vice-President of Blue Cross. Right now I'm heading to a Board meeting. We're going to discuss how to revise our policies because of your case. That is all."

This call signaled the start of the career he always wanted, but never expected.

## Triumph from Tragedy

Mark and Michelle Hiepler founded their eponymous Oxnard firm in the wake of *Fox v. HealthNet*, a case that grew out of Mark's attempt to expedite his sister's treatment after her HMO refused to fund an advanced, yet clinically proven procedure. The story of Nelene and Mark's dogged fight for a \$150,000 bone marrow transplant touched a nerve among the millions of Americans who, by the early 1990's, belonged to the "managed care" health insurance plans they initially considered a panacea for the rising insurance costs of the 1980's. Nelene Fox was the type of patient most vulnerable in a system focused on minimizing costs: extremely ill and in need of cutting-edge treatment. The jury found that HealthNet deemed the treatment "experimental" for the purpose of avoiding its high cost, and awarded her estate an eight-figure verdict that included staggering punitive damages.

Mark found himself the subject of nationwide media attention that, among other things, provided the momentum to establish his own practice after only four years of practice. Prospective bad-faith and insurance denial claims quickly arrived at the new Oxnard office, followed by a steady stream of wrongful death and serious injury claims. The latter now form the bulk of Hiepler & Hiepler's 40-50 active cases.

"Our receptionist receives an average of seventy to eighty phone calls a month from individuals and families who have suffered everything from minor physical injuries to death. Out of those we can accept only one or two. The financial and emotional investment in these types of cases is enormous, so we need to choose carefully." However, the firm structures its vetting process in a way that guides potential clients to the next step—whether legal or non-legal—and provides them with a much-needed outlet for their frustration and fear. "Our office has an employee whose sole responsibility is listening to these people, gathering information and educating them about their options if we can't take the case. Each one gets an attorney on the phone if they want. It may take a few hours of our time, but we need to investigate anyway. We all benefit from the process."

## The Politics of Change

Hiepler entered law school as many do; he viewed his *juris doctor* as the prudent first step for a person eyeing a career in politics or government. "I worked on political campaigns throughout high school and college. From what I saw, those influencing the process mostly came from a legal background, so I decided law school was the way to go."

An unpaid clerkship with the Ventura County District Attorney's Office opened the courtroom door earlier than he expected. "The clerkship provided me the chance to argue and even try cases during law school. I loved it." Hiepler described his next career move with typical self-deprecation. "For whatever reason, the L.A. office of a large San Francisco-based firm offered me a position after graduation. I took it, but I didn't see the inside of a courtroom very

frequently." The large-firm route also introduced Hiepler to the niche in which he has now settled, albeit from a different perspective. "I defended bad-faith and wrongful death cases. After two-and-a-half years Michelle and I decided to move back to Ventura County."

Mark joined Oxnard's Lowthrop, Richards, McMillan, Miller, Conway & Templeman upon their return in January of 1992. Around this time, he learned of his sister's illness and agreed to represent her out of necessity. Two years later he and partner Al Templeman arrived in Riverside to try the case that Nelene would have settled at the outset for the cost of her transplant. The verdict that followed showed Mark that his not-quite-expected turn in trial work had already achieved what many in government and politics would consider a career-capping victory: the reform of an industry affecting millions of people.

"Verdicts are a vehicle for your message. One jury vote can change how companies do business in America. It can change how people are treated for cancer or other serious illnesses. As a trial attorney you can effect political and social change without being in politics."

Although partial to the scythe of aggressive litigation, Hiepler still respects the traditional political process and frequently takes the issues closest to his profession (and heart) to Sacramento. "The firm's courtroom victories allow me to meet with legislators and officials and recommend reforms and new laws to address the industry practices I encounter. To prepare, I can refer to the network of experts our firm has developed over the past fifteen years and take their research directly to the decision makers."



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### A Family Affair

Enter Hiepler & Hiepler and you immediately feel as though you are a visitor among an extended family. Mark admits it's intentional. "My wife and I started the firm and we refer to Nelene as our silent partner. Most of our employees have been with us for many years and turnover is low. Each one knows they are part of something larger. Everyone belongs to our profit-sharing program, and the firm provides them with the resources they need to perform their jobs well. For example, if an employee believes a new computer or software program might help them, we just purchase it. As a small firm we have that flexibility."

The congenial office atmosphere belies the serious nature of the work. Mark developed his own method that helps him burn steam, if not slow down. "The stress is constant and heavy. If I spend all day in a tough depo, having a drink sounds like a great thing. Unfortunately, I'm the type of person who always takes things up a notch, so one drink would turn to eight. Instead, I balance myself with fun activities. I spend weekends coaching basketball with my kids and if I have a hard day we might head to L.A. to catch a Lakers game. I feel better and my family gets great memories."

Mark isn't shy about exposing his three children (a daughter and two sons; eighth, fifth and third grade respectively) to the adversarial world of litigation. "A while back I attended a deposition at ExxonMobil in Houston. My son went with me to the deposition so we could take in NASA that afternoon. Opposing counsel didn't know what to do, and couldn't believe that he'd sit there with his homework for half the day. I told them he'd be fine. You know what? That was one of the most courteous, professional depositions I ever participated in."

### The Strategy

Hiepler is asked how one can remain affable, courteous and utterly committed after fifteen years of fighting cases in which a father is dead, a child blinded or sister left untreated while cancer eats her bones. He paraphrases a principle explained in Tony Dungy's recent memoir, *Quiet Strength*: "You need to serve where your experience and your love intersect. I've found this in my practice, and I've found this in things such as coaching my children's sports teams. I love it, and although my job is stressful, I can fire on all eight cylinders because of this dynamic."

*Eric Reed is an associate at Lascher & Lascher in Ventura, and a member of CITATIONS' editorial board.*

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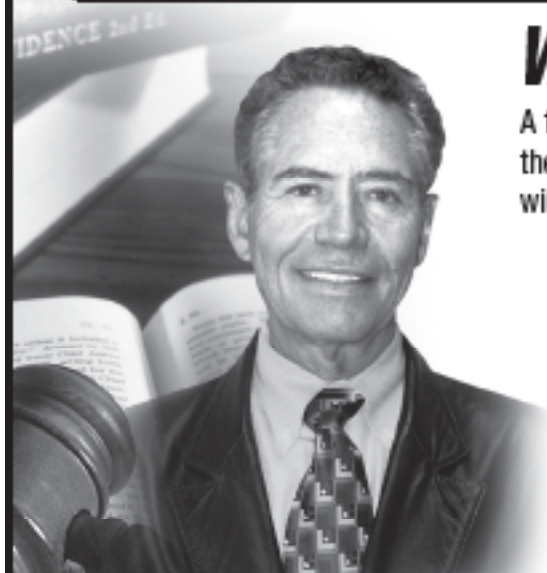
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## Changes to Local Rules Effective 1/1/2008

By Michael Strauss

The coming of the new year has brought revisions to our local court rules. These rules have changed as of January 1:

**3.10** – Deleted: there is now no local rule regarding filing a civil case information sheet with the first document in a lawsuit;

**9.03.1** – Implements a new and detailed case review system in family law cases;

**9.03.2** – Renumbers the rule regarding service of process in family law cases;

**9.05** – Sets new requirements for *ex parte* notice in family law cases;

**9.10(B)** – Deleted: there is no local rule allowing requests for prior review of pleadings as they relate to family law motions and orders to show cause;

**9.12** – Stipulations to continue hearings on family law matters must be filed within two days of the hearing and may be submitted to the Family Law Case Review Coordinator or the secretary of the assigned family law judge.

**9.19** – New requirements for MSC statements in family law cases; also states that, if the MSC does not resolve all issues, the court will set a family law case for trial only on a showing that the case is ready for trial.

**17.00** – Provides that the sheriff may now conduct pat-down searches and otherwise search the possessions of visitors to the Juvenile Courthouse; and

**18.00** – Court reporters are now required during proceedings of all juvenile calendars, except for cases filed under Welfare & Institutions Code section 601.

Finally, please note that about 20 local forms – including some mandatory ones – have changed, and there is a new fee schedule for filings in all state courts. You can find all of this information at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov>.

*Michael Strauss is a lawyer at Strauss Law Group in Ventura, and a member of CITATIONS' editorial board.*

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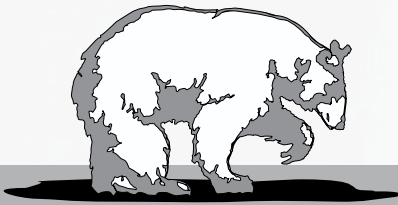
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**MEMORIES: The  
First Law Day 5K**

By Michael C. O'Brien



circa 1982

Yes, I do recall the first Law Day 5K held in 1982 at the County Government Center. I was still relatively young – 35 years old. A few years earlier, I realized that even though I was playing tennis on a regular basis, I was not in very good shape, so I started jogging on a regular basis with my friend, Spencer Garrett, at the Pierpont Racquet Club, and participating in the mini-triathlon the club had started a few years earlier.

My nemesis in the PRC Triathlons for years was also my nemesis in the first Law Day 5K... none other than Pete Dowler. I was still doing family law back in the early 80's, so Pete and I ran in the same category or competed for the same ribbon. Pete was running marathons at the time, while I was struggling to run three or four miles in my training sessions. Even though Pete was barely warmed up by running a 5K, he beat me that year and won the section race for several years thereafter.

I remember the race being a great deal of fun. People of all ages, sizes and speeds participated, all in good humor. Either that year or a few years later, I recall Gary Tuttle being the honorary starter and shooting the gun which started the race, if you could call it a race.

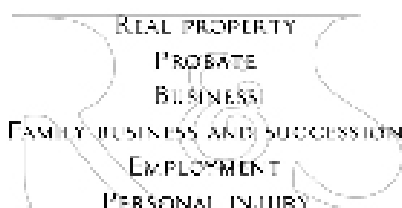
There were several outstanding runners. Rick Hawley, in the Public Defender's Office at the time, stands out in my mind running a blistering 15- or 16-minute 5K, whereas I was somewhere around 24 minutes.

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I also recall several judges participating in the race, including Judge Hadden, who was and is a very good runner, and Steve Perren, who also ran on a regular basis with Bill Paterson and others, although it may not have been until the following year that Steve was elevated to the bench.

The shirts we got were very well received and worn by me throughout the years to advertise the event.

I do recall one year, which may have been the first year, that one of the lawyers from our firm, Paul Kurzeka, put his name in the patent lawyer category because he figured he might have a chance to win a ribbon because there would be very few lawyers in that category. Well, he won the race but it backfired on him. The lawyer who really did do patent work called up Ron Gill and complained, "Who is this guy Paul Kurzeka who doesn't do any patent work?" Ron and I made Paul give the trophy to the real winner.

*Michael O'Brien is a partner at Nordman, Cormany, Hair & Compton in Oxnard.*

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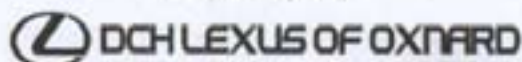
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# Problem-Gambling Awareness Week

March 9, 2008, marks the start of Problem-Gambling Awareness Week, a public education campaign about the warning signs of problem gambling and the help – and hope – available for those with gambling problems.

Problem gambling impacts people of all ages, backgrounds and professions, including attorneys, whose clients may have financial or legal issues due to gambling. But many California attorneys are also personally affected by their *own* problems with gambling.

As pathological gamblers, they have an increasing preoccupation with gambling and need to bet more money more frequently. They continue to gamble despite growing negative consequences, including serious financial troubles, family problems, and risk to their careers.

Maybe you are not sure there is a problem. If so, consider the following questions: (1) Do you lie to those close to you about your gambling? (2) Do you have to gamble more and more to get the same level of excitement? Answering “Yes” may be a good indication that you have a problem.

You are probably familiar with the State Bar’s Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP), which provides confidential rehabilitation support for attorneys dealing with substance abuse or mental illness. What you may not know is that LAP also offers help with problem gambling. Again, participation is strictly confidential, and because problem gambling can severely impact families and relationships, family members are strongly encouraged to participate in treatment programs.

If you need help with problem gambling, call 1-877-LAP-4-HELP or e-mail [LAP@calbar.ca.gov](mailto:LAP@calbar.ca.gov). You can obtain general information from the California Office of Problem Gambling at [problemgambling.ca.gov](http://problemgambling.ca.gov). Gamblers or concerned friends or family members may also call 1-800-GAMBLER for assistance.

Pathological gambling (“persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior”) may be indicated by five (or more) of the following criteria. The problem gambler:

1. Is preoccupied with gambling (e.g., reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money for gambling).
2. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
3. Has repeated, unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling.
4. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down on or stop gambling.
5. Gambles to escape from problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression.
6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses).
7. Lies to family members, therapists or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8. Has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling.
9. Has jeopardized/lost a relationship, job, or educational/career opportunity because of gambling.
10. Relies on others for money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling.

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# PRO BONO HIGHLIGHTS

By Verna R. Kagan

Dear Verna,

Thank you all for your help. You and everyone at the Ventura County Bar Association were helpful and kind. Have not found this at other services I have turned to for help. Ms. Susan Siple was also helpful and kind. This means more to me than you know. What a wonderful world this would be if everyone was helpful and kind to each other.

Thank you all.

It is always very gratifying to know from an applicant that we have performed a fine service and that the applicant appreciated what happened. This is true especially when we find a way to help beyond the legal question presented.

In this particular situation the applicant spoke to me about two non-legal concerns. The first one was that she was a single lady, living alone, her only companion being a small pet dog. She was deeply concerned about what would happen to the dog if she died before the dog did. I was able to direct her to the non-profit organization H.A.R.T., which takes dogs under just those circumstances. They try to adopt the dog out. If unsuccessful, the dog lives out its life at the facility due to a "no-kill" policy.

On another issue, I was able to direct her to some written material and some people dealing with the same issue. And, finally, we must express our gratitude to Susan Siple and her work on our applicant's legal issue.

*Verna Kagan is the VLSP Senior Emeritus Attorney*

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# EXIT PLANNING

By Thomas E. Malley

For many years I have conducted annual shareholder meetings for corporate clients interested in leaving their businesses. Each year I would inquire, make some suggestions, they would listen and that would be it. At the next annual meeting a similar discussion would take place with minimal or no progress occurring. There were many excuses, as founding principals were routinely distracted from strategic thinking by the daily need to manage the business. The exit process would cost money for appraisers, attorneys or brokers. There was uncertainty about how the founder would adjust to retirement and a suspicion that retirement income would be insufficient. Often they believed with some legitimacy that no one would want their business. After all, they were already sliding toward reduced revenue as they throttled back, fatigued by years of hard work.

In an effort to provide a solution for these clients I attended a program on exit planning strategies conducted by Business Enterprise

Institute (B.E.I.), a Colorado firm established by John Brown, an attorney with decades of estate planning and corporate succession planning experience behind him. I later became a member of B.E.I. and obtained ongoing training on the systematic approach to the succession needs of businesses. I have since formed Business Exit Advisors, Inc., a consultancy providing systematic planning for businesses in conjunction with their incumbent legal, accounting and financial professionals.

Various authorities examining Baby Boomer demographics and business trends note that a majority of closely held and family owned businesses will change hands within the next five years, though many owners have not taken active steps to transition out of ownership. Too many founders work in, not on, their businesses. The business has become a job rather than an enterprise. I find this description to be even more accurate for older business owners than for those in their forties or fifties.

Too often a business is sold by an exhausted owner at virtual garage sale prices. It is sold to someone who comes by making an offer when the owner is tired or fed up. Yes, in their asset sale agreement the founder will get something for good will in some instances, but they do not sell a going enterprise with audited financials, a legal audit, and a diversified customer base in a stock sale transaction with key management employees held in place through a variety of golden handcuffs. They therefore receive much less and payment is often stretched over years with a loan backed by questionable security. To receive top dollar in a well positioned sale the process must be conducted with careful tax consideration and terms tailored to the founder's customized needs in a bank-funded transaction.

This outcome is possible if the founder positions the business for sale over a period of years. The founder must reduce the reliance of the business on him/her so that the business is viable absent the founder. It turns out that the buyer will be willing to pay a premium if

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key management employees are held in place following the close and capable of serving the needs of the customers. Of course the buyer could be the key employees or the family of the founder. Those are all considerations to be examined in the process.

So how can the founder avoid the garage sale outcome of a life's work? The founder avoids that fate by adopting a planning process that the founder controls. The exit planning process begins with the founder asking him or her these questions:

1. Do I know my retirement goals and what it will take – in cash – to reach them?
2. Do I know how much my business is worth today, in cash?
3. Do I know the best way to increase the income stream generated by my ownership interest?
4. Do I know how to sell my business to a third party and possibly lower my taxes?
5. Do I know how to transfer my business to family members, co-owners, or employees while lowering taxes and potentially enjoying financial gain?
6. Do I have a continuity plan for my business if the unexpected happens to me?
7. Do I have a plan to help secure finances for my family if the unexpected happens to me?

These questions are almost misleadingly simple to ask, but to answer them affirmatively requires thought and action on the founder's part.

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*Thomas E. Malley practices business, real estate and estate planning law in Camarillo.*

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*"I have been a legal assistant/paralegal for 6 years specializing in civil litigation, construction law, employment law and eminent domain and working in General practice law firms. I am able to transcribe any type of legal document as well as preparing many types of legal documents."*

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It's none of my business of course, but I believe **Duane Dammeyer** will be a fine replacement for **Ken Clayman** in the PD's office. Duane's been a member of the bar and served in a leadership capacity; he's thoughtful, articulate and is a consensus builder...License Plate of the Month: ROKNESQ driven by new Ventura County Trial Lawyers President, **Dennis Jones**. It's located on the behind of a 2006 Mercedes 500 CLS...From Joseph H. Choate: "You cannot live without the lawyers, and certainly you cannot die without them."... The Ventura County Women Lawyers have selected their new officers for '08 and they are **Jodi Prior**, President; **Laurie Nintcheff**, Vice-President; **Robert Guerra**, Secretary; and **Nancy Goldstein**, Treasurer. **Susana Goytia Miller** will fill the role of Immediate Past-President. Am going to research the last time a male served as an officer...

**Glenn Dickinson**, of NCHC, has been elected Chair of the Board of the Ventura County Taxpayers Association for '08. Glenn serves on the board of the bar's Business Litigation Section too...From Groucho Marx: "Military justice is to justice what military music is to music."...The Ventura County Trial Lawyers have elected their new officers for 2008 and they are **Dennis Jones**, President; **Jack Futoran**, Vice-President and President-Elect; **Becky McCarthy**, Secretary; and **Jim Prosser**, Treasurer. **Joel Mark** will serve as Immediate Past-President. New board members are **Alan Templeman** and **Susan McCarthy**. After 10 years on the board, **Michael Walker** has graciously stepped aside...U.S.A.! U.S.A.!! In an average year, the United States has about 40,000 liability lawsuits filed. Britain has about 200...

Need to let you know when I mentioned that **Greg Herring** and **Wendy Lascher** were listed as two of Southern California's best lawyers in an advertising piece in the L.A. Times

## Exec's Dot...Dot...Dot...

By Steve Henderson, Executive Director, M.A., CAE

Magazine, they did not pay for that mention. Some of you were confused...The lawyer read the will and all codicils that left money to members of the family. Finally, he read the last codicil: "And to my secretary, Miss Ritter, whom I promised to remember even though she resisted all of my advances— Hi there, Miss Ritter!"...From Actual Court Records: *Counsel*: Judge, may I be heard on the matter of bond on appeal and possible stay of execution of this sentence? *The Court*: Yes. Denied...Ever since *Bonanza* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, I've been keeping a list of notable sitcom theme songs. Top Three? *Cheers*, M\*A\*S\*H, and *Hill Street Blues*. Willing to hear others...Going to Cabo? (lbarton@normandowler.com)...

**Robert Long** is quite sure his attorney friends realize the practice of law has become increasingly competitive, and clients have grown to expect immediate response, and not just during conventional office hours. In response to these changes, Robert is proud to announce that his office will, beginning February 1, be open for business 24/7. That's 24 hours per week, 7 months of the year... From John Sterling: "The ideal client is the very wealthy man in very great trouble."... Law in the Movies: Edward (Richard Gere): "What makes you think I'm a lawyer?" Vivian (Julia Roberts): "You have that sharp, useles look about you." — *Pretty Woman*, 1990. Am not a big Roberts fan, but was there a better paralegal presence than Julia in *Erin Brockovich*? Won the Academy Award and, of course you remember the Ed Masry connection. Did enjoy her only in *Mystic Pizza*, *Steel Magnolias*, and *Notting Hill*...From Mark Twain: "The departmental interpreters of the laws in Washington can always be depended upon to take any reasonably good law and interpret the common sense all out of it."...

**Jenna Strauss** joined the Law Offices of **McTague** and **Palay** January 3 after a year plus stint at **NCHC**. She will provide some much needed time off for Kevin...The judge was finishing his oral charge to a jury. Being a judge who keeps up with the times, he pointed out in the verdict form where the "foreperson" should sign the verdict. When the verdict was delivered later to the courtroom deputy, four persons had signed their names to the form. He now uses the old-fashioned word foreman... In late November, **Loye Barton** became the proud momma of an 8 year-old gelding, named Chance...From Will Rogers: "The minute you

read something you don't understand, you can almost be sure it was drawn up by a lawyer."... Law in the Movies, Take 2: "I see disaster. I see catastrophe. Worse, I see lawyers!"—Cassandra (Danielle Ferland), *Mighty Aphrodite*, 1995...

**Greg Ramirez** is the newly installed president of the Mexican American Bar Association. MABA meets the first Friday of each Month at Ruby's in Oxnard. **Al Vargas** is the new vice-president and **Michele Castillo** will be the secretary. **Andres Garcia** was elected treasurer while **Susan Goytia-Miller** will be the immediate past president...This is fun. Check out the newly married couple's first dance at [www.glumbert.com/com/media/wedding/firstdance...](http://www.glumbert.com/com/media/wedding/firstdance...) Fine article in Ventura Life Magazine about **Ted Muegenburg** and his META practice. You can find it at [www.ventutalifemag.com](http://www.ventutalifemag.com). I also noticed in the masthead NCHC provides their legal assistance...

Most of you are aware **Judge Vince O'Neill** has replaced **Judge David Long** in Courtroom #22. Judge Long's last day in Department 22 is February 1...**Robert Guerra** has replaced **Carmen Ramirez** as coordinator of the Oxnard SHLA Center. Robert's number is 483.1464, while Carmen's new one is 658.0810...After successfully trying her case, Clarence Darrow was embraced by his lovely client, who thanked him expansively and desired to know, "How can I ever thanks you?" "My dear," replied Darrow, "ever since the Phoenicians invented money, there has only been one answer to that question."...**Sandra Ruvalcaba** has joined **Wasserman, Comden & Casselman** in their Oxnard office...Quote of the Month, from presidential candidate Mike Huckabee: "But I believe it's a lot easier to change the Constitution than it would be to change the word of the living God. We need to amend the constitution so it's in God's standards." (on the campaign trail—January 16, 2008)...

*Steve Henderson has been the executive director and chief executive officer of the bar association and its affiliated organizations since November 1990. Bar officers, directors and leaders will be meeting February 2 making their long-term goals and strategic planning. Henderson hopes he will be part of that plan. Additionally, he picked the Giants back in August and will never watch another presidential debate during the '08 run.*

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*I am very proud of his accomplishments."*

*— Michael D. Sullivan, Esq.*

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