



CAL-ABOTA

California Chapters of the
American Board of Trial Advocates

www.cal-abota.org

CAL-ABOTA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Dennis LaRochelle

December, 2015

This was a year of transition and growth for CAL-ABOTA. Our new Executive Director, **Jenny Blevins** and her team at California Advocates Management Services demonstrated that they are a very good fit for our management needs. CAL-ABOTA became more involved in statewide issues and we all benefitted from bringing the leadership of every chapter together at board meetings to discuss and work on issues and projects we have in common. If you missed prior reports on those issues and projects, you can catch up by going to our newly rebuilt and expanded website www.cal-abota.org and clicking on "President's Reports" under "About".

Hawaii Conference

Our signature event for the year was a resounding success thanks to Hawaii Conference Chair **Michael Bradley** (San Francisco). More than 200 people enjoyed six days at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel in Kona, Hawaii with Trial Lawyer of the Year, **Bill Shapiro** (San Bernardino/Riverside). The conference had a perfect mixture of leisure time and fabulous events including cocktail parties every night, three gala dinners with outstanding entertainment, half-day of CLE and a golf tournament.

Denise Taylor (Los Angeles), next year's conference chair, already has big plans for 2016 commencing with a Halloween costume party on October 31st. **Denise** has some other surprises that she will reveal as we get closer to the conference.

Statewide Issues

As CAL-ABOTA's influence grows, we are taking on more issues of statewide significance. This year, in addition to formally supporting mandatory expedited jury trial legislation, lobbying for the publication of the civility issues case *Martinez v. CalTrans*, urging courts throughout the state to post our jury service video and adopting guidelines for recognizing chapter civility award recipients at the Hawaii Conference, we let the Chief Justice know that we will help in her drive to revitalize civics learning in public schools. Next year's President, **Mike Bradley**, promises to pursue CAL-ABOTA's involvement in that long-term initiative by the Chief Justice.

Special Recognition and Thanks

All CAL-ABOTA Board members served on at least one of our standing and ad hoc committees. Some stood out through their leadership role or the time and effort they devoted and deserve a special recognition:

- President-Elect **Mike Bradley** (San Francisco) who chaired the Hawaii Conference.
- **Rich Scott** (San Bernardino/Riverside) who chaired the Foundation Fellow membership drive.
- **Bryan Reid** (San Bernardino/Riverside) who chaired our Education Committee and **Mike Bradley** (San Francisco) who chaired the sub-committee on Civics in public schools.
- **Wally Yoka** (Los Angeles) who researched and reported developments on the mandatory expedited jury trial legislation throughout the year.
- **Doug DeGrave** (Orange) who chaired an ad hoc committee that drafted sponsorship guidelines.
- **Dominique Pollara** (Sacramento) who chaired the Bylaws Amendments Committee.
- **Steve Glickman** (Los Angeles) for his continuing effort to have our jury service video shown during jury orientation or posted on the websites of county courthouses.
- **Chris Wesierski** (Orange) for chairing the Long Range Planning Committee which led to the adoption of a board resolution to recognize recipients of chapter civility awards throughout the state.
- **Steve Glickman** (Los Angeles) who suggested that CAL-ABOTA lobby for the publication of *Martinez v. CalTrans* and who assisted me in writing a letter to the DCA and later to the Supreme Court.
- **Jenny Blevins** and CAMS for their outstanding work in developing the new CAL-ABOTA website.

I also want to recognize and thank those members of the Board whose terms are ending:

- **Jay Hieatt** (California Coast)
- **Richard Scott** (San Bernardino/Riverside)

- **Monty McIntyre** (San Diego)
- **Richard Schoenberger** (San Francisco)
- **Honorable Rosemary McGuire** (San Joaquin)
- **Steve Saldo** (California Coast) who, after serving several years as an officer representative of the California Coast Chapter, went on to serve for three years as an At-Large Member of the Board

And a special thank you goes to past CAL-ABOTA President **Jim Weakley** (San Joaquin) who is finishing seven years of service on CAL-ABOTA's Executive Committee and over ten years on the CAL-ABOTA Board. **Jim** did an outstanding job in every position he held. His sage, calm and thoughtful comments were always welcomed and often made a difference in the direction taken by the Executive Committee or the Board.

ABOTA Kinship

As President, I attended three national meetings and visited six of our eight chapters. In the years leading up to the Presidency, I was CAL-ABOTA's representative at TEX-ABOTA and FLABOTA meetings. Those opportunities reaffirmed in my mind that there is a special bond between members of ABOTA. To repeat some of the remarks I made in Hawaii, it is obvious to me that members of ABOTA enjoy a special kinship that binds us together and there is a reason for it. We have all participated in the unique life experience of trying cases before a jury.

There is really nothing in the vast field of law that is quite like preparing for and trying a case to a jury. Each of us has been through it many times. The hard work, the long hours, the high risk, the strong feelings and emotions have been shared by every other member of ABOTA.

The commonality of that special life experience not only binds us together but generates the deep respect we have for each other. Regardless of the size of the case or even the result, whether it is a \$50,000 case or a \$5 million case, if you have the guts to try cases to a jury time and again, and if you do so honestly and with integrity, then you belong in ABOTA and you feel that kindred spirit when you are with other jury trial lawyers. When members of ABOTA gather together, we all sit at the table with equal dignity.

Serving as President of this group, considering who makes up its membership, has been an honor and the highlight of my career.

I hope you all have a happy holiday season especially those of you who find yourselves in the midst of a jury trial at Christmas. We know what it's like.

Dennis LaRochelle
President