



## Band of brothers and sisters

### TAKE NO CHALLENGE ALONE

I am honored to stand before you as your 2018 OCTLA President! Thank you to the 2018 Officers and Board of Directors for agreeing to serve this great organization. I look forward to working with you and building a stronger bond among all of us. Thank you to Janet Thornton, our Executive Director, for running OCTLA seamlessly (and appearing effortlessly), tolerating a new administration every year, and keeping us focused on OCTLA's vision: Take No Challenge Alone.

I am very grateful for the band of brothers and sisters organized under the name Orange County Trial Lawyers Association, of which I have been a member since 2001 when I was in my seventh year of practice. At that time, I received a call from Yoshi Kubota who was campaigning to be Parliamentarian and told me that he needed to sign up a few attorneys as members. I had no idea at the time that the favor to Yoshi would be the greatest decision I made in my legal career.

When I attended my first OCTLA dinner meeting at the Santa Ana Performing Arts Center on Sycamore and 5th Street (now, the Church of Scientology), I was intimidated by the legal minds mingling with each other and with judges, and I hoped that no one could sniff out the rookie in the room. There was no way I belonged in this group of elite and successful attorneys, judges, practitioners. My attempt to blend into the old red theater carpet and historic stone columns of the meeting hall failed. Paul Kramer and Nigel Burns extended their hands, literally and figuratively, introduced me to other members, and helped me navigate through the night's events.

One of the members I was introduced to at my first meeting was Eric Traut. The name was familiar to me, but my awe was not from his position as OCTLA's President-Elect but because of how the insurance company recently revered him in a multi-vehicle car accident case that I was also involved in. The adjuster had said to me when I asked of the likelihood of settling before litigation, "This case is not going to settle quickly or easily. Eric Traut

has one of the cars, and he will be making us work."

That night, I met the "David" that "Goliath" feared. Again, I felt unworthy to be rubbing elbows with this group. A few months later, I shared the adjuster's comments with Eric at a deposition for that case. He laughed, and said, "Good!" I have respected him ever since, and am honored to have worked with Eric on a monumental case that spanned six years of litigation.

While by name I was a partner in a firm of three attorneys, I/we had no mentors and practiced law by working more than overtime, spending a lot of time at the law library, jumping into trials and hearings with naïveté and blind courage, and suffering through embarrassing errors and failures. Through the years of trial (excuse the pun) and error, I learned from my mistakes, but most importantly I learned to lean on my colleagues at OCTLA, one of whom is Keith More. Because of Keith's encouragement and support, I ventured courageously and confidently into an area of law that I had previously known only through osmosis from my two partners. Keith commands the niche of being a civil litigator practicing workers' compensation, and now I am honored to share a small quadrant with him. He is still the Jedi Master.

My appreciation extends to leaders at OCTLA who have created the footsteps for me to follow, from Wylie Aitken in the 1970s to our first female president, Jean Hobart in the 1980s, to each and every president from 1963 to 2017. Alan Brown appointed me into David Belz's seat on the Board of Directors in 2009 when Judge Belz was elevated to the bench mid-year. Shaina Colover offered me the chair next to her at my first board meeting; little did I know that I would follow in Shaina's leadership shoes throughout our eight-plus years' ascent into our respective presidency. Some of our OCTLA presidents and leaders have become judiciary officers and continue to make our organization proud of their achievements. I hope to carry on the legacy of our former presidents and to pave the path of those who lead after me.

Each year, I hear from our past presidents about how OCTLA struggled financially and organizationally for many

years (some referred to the problematic times as the "pre-Janet" years); but thankfully, OCTLA's leaders never threw in the towel. They became innovative and built the foundation of ideas that others after them were able to implement and improve upon. They fought legislation that would destroy consumer rights and cripple our practices. They forged partnerships with other organizations like CAOC, CAALA, OCBA, and CAOIE to collaborate with colleagues for the benefit of our clients. They should be an inspiration to all of us to take on the challenge for improvement.

Today, OCTLA holds numerous networking opportunities, MCLE dinner meetings, and social events including the coveted recognition for the best attorneys in Orange County at the annual Top Gun Awards Dinner. OCTLA currently offers its members instant ListServ access, a comprehensive deposition bank, and monthly networking and MCLE opportunities. I am proud each time an OCTLA member shares in their accolades and accomplishments; and we should continue to guide each other through the constantly evolving legal map so we can also achieve as they have.

In 2018, my goal for the organization is to continue to assist and mentor each other. We need to continue the growth and strength of OCTLA as being one large firm with one loud voice. The driving force of OCTLA is its individual attorney members and affiliate members. Your input and tutelage is crucial for our growth. We stand together on the front line to fight bad legislation, crooked politicians, unjust insurance practices, and those that prey on the weak. My OCTLA brothers and sisters should take credit for my success. I hope to help you with yours because your win is a win for all of us. Take no challenge alone.

*Geraldine Ly, the new president of OCTLA, practices at the Law Offices of Geraldine Ly in Santa Ana. Her practice emphasizes workers' compensation and personal injury law. She frequently handles cases that have an overlap between workers' comp and personal injury law. ☐*