



CAALA President

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## More than just great trial lawyers

CAALA'S HALL OF FAME HONORS BRUCE BRUSAVICH, JACK DENOVE AND CHRIS SPAGNOLI

CAALA can trace its roots all the way back to 1949 when we were known as the Lawyers Roundtable. Since then, literally tens of thousands of plaintiff trial attorneys have been members, and today CAALA has nearly 3,000 attorney members, making it the largest local association of trial lawyers in the country.

The CAALA President who convinced me to run for the Board of Governors was Ray Boucher, who is still a great trial lawyer and a great friend. Ray accomplished many things as 2005 CAALA President, one of which was his decision to create a Hall of Fame for the purpose of honoring the best of the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles.

Ray created a small committee made up of Buddy Herzog, Gary Paul and Joe Barrett, and together they established the CAALA Hall of Fame. They said that "those selected must have the highest integrity and standards in the legal profession. Hall of Fame inductees shall have had distinguished legal careers, significant contributions to the law and/or to society and have given back to the community and the legal profession."

Since 2005, even though CAALA has had thousands of members, only a small number have been honored by being named to the Hall of Fame. Ray and the original committee wanted the honor to be special, and they have succeeded.

When I was preparing to take over as CAALA President last year, I realized that 18 trial attorneys have been inducted into the CAALA Hall of Fame, but none since 2010. I made it one of my goals to induct new members to the Hall of Fame during my year as CAALA President. Following the guidelines established by the original Hall of Fame Committee, I established a small committee to identify deserving CAALA members for this special honor. Committee members included Bruce Broillet, Jill McDonell, Gretchen Nelson and Gary Paul.

The first thing I saw when I began researching the Hall of Fame were the words in the original purpose "have given back to the community and the legal profession." I realized that CAALA's Hall of Fame honors members who were more than just great trial lawyers. It honors members who have made great contributions by serving their fellow members as leaders of CAALA, and our brother and sister organizations, CAOC and AAJ.

As I looked over the list of Hall of Fame members, I saw that they all had earned much deserved respect from their peers, judges and other legal professionals as great trial lawyers. But it was also obvious to me that each of them made significant contributions in the political and legislative arena, spent thousands of hours serving as Association leaders and, to a person, gave back to the community and the legal profession.

They sacrificed their time to serve as leaders, not only in CAALA, but also in CAOC and AAJ. They put in countless hours to make a difference for their fellow members and all trial lawyers. I realized that this is the message that the Hall of Fame should send to CAALA's members today, especially to the young members just starting their careers: There's more to being a great trial lawyer than just your accomplishments in the courtroom.

Don't get me wrong, each member of the Hall of Fame is a great trial lawyer, but they are distinguished by more than just their outstanding trial skills. They are in the Hall of Fame because of all the things they did to make CAALA, CAOC and AAJ successful and to make CAALA's members the best lawyers they can be.

I knew the committee had a difficult job ahead of them, identifying three deserving candidates to be inducted into the CAALA Hall of Fame in 2018. But I was very glad when they came up with a list of members who are not only brilliant trial lawyers but have also dedicated hours and hours of their careers to give back and serve as leaders in CAALA and the other associations they are members of.

You probably know their names by now, but if you don't it's my pleasure to tell you that Bruce Brusavich, Jack Denove and Chris Spagnoli will join the 18 others as members of the CAALA Hall of Fame.

Each of the three has had great accomplishments in the courtroom. Each has been a pioneer in a specific practice area; Bruce in medical malpractice, Jack in med mal and major personal injury and Chris in auto product liability. All three have been honored as CAALA Trial Lawyer of the Year and each has been named the winner of the Ted Horn Award. Chris has the distinction of being CAALA's first female Trial Lawyer of the Year, its second female President and

now the first female inductee into CAALA's Hall of Fame.

But what's truly inspiring is that even though we all know what kind of time commitment there is to be a successful trial lawyer, all three have served their associations in leadership roles requiring hundreds of hours of their time and energy.

All three were President of CAALA, which is a 9-year commitment as a member of the Executive Committee. Chris and Bruce served as President of CAOC and Jack was President of LA-ABOTA, the Italian American Lawyers Association and the Cowboy Lawyers. Each has been involved with Consumer Watchdog and the Loyola Law School, speaking and putting in time whenever asked. I just don't know how they found the time to do everything, but somehow, they did, and we are all better off because of it.

Chris, Jack and Bruce have also put in countless hours in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. fighting for laws to protect consumers. All three have led the campaigns to elect legislators who support consumers, and each has been on the frontline of the fierce fights to defeat ballot measures that would have caused incredible harm to consumer attorneys and the people they represent. Every trial lawyer, not only in CAALA, but throughout California, owes a debt of gratitude to the dedication of Chris, Bruce and Jack.

The exciting thing about these three remarkable CAALA members, is they are just as engaged and active as ever, both as trial lawyers and as leaders. They still come regularly to CAALA and CAOC board meetings and still make their opinions and voices heard.

On June 7, CAALA will hold a special dinner at the Walt Disney Concert Hall to induct Chris Spagnoli, Jack Denove and Bruce Brusavich into the CAALA Hall of Fame. I will be honored to attend, and I hope you will be there to join us. As Ray Boucher wrote in 2005 it will be a night to honor the best of the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles. It will also be a night for us to say Thank You to Bruce, Jack and Chris for their years of dedicated service to CAALA and to trial lawyers and the people they represent.

