



OCTLA President
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Top Gun awards honor our top courtroom advocates

LIVE AWARDS CEREMONY NOVEMBER 13 AT LAGUNA CLIFFS MARRIOTT RESORT

“The most truly generous persons are those who give silently without hope of praise or reward.” — Carol Ryrice Brink

As my year as President of OCTLA nears its end my thoughts are filled with the many past Presidents and members of the Board of Directors with whom I have served. My mind is drawn to the countless years of commitment each of these individuals has dedicated to their colleagues, clients and OCTLA itself during their board service.

When I became parliamentarian, the ascension to the presidency was an eight-year commitment not including the prerequisite two years as a board member. Recently, the ascension has shortened but that has not diminished the ongoing commitment of time, talents and resources by those past and present serving board members. It has been a tremendous honor to serve alongside this year’s Board of Directors and those during my many years with OCTLA.

This year’s Top Gun committee demonstrated outstanding dedication and commitment in vetting the many nominees for this year’s OCTLA’s Top Gun Award dinner and charity auction.

Ever wonder where the term “Top Gun” comes from? During WWII and the Korean War, United States fighter pilots were highly successful in taking out the enemy’s air force. As a result, our young fighter pilots entered the Vietnam war with a certain level of confidence but without combat realism training. Because of advancements in technology, the north Vietnamese acquisition of MIG fighter jets and the fact that the north Vietnamese studied our fighter pilots’ tactics, our fighter pilots suffered significant losses in Vietnam. In response, a navy captain readied an extensive report including the need for advanced pilot training that included combat

realism training; this was the basis for the formation of the “Top Gun” fighter pilot training. We are all aware of the life-threatening risk involved in being a fighter pilot. These young men and women put their life on the line without hope of praise or reward in service to their county.

Each year the OCTLA Top Gun Awards honor attorneys who have dedicated countless hours advocating for clients to further their cause for justice and achieve an outstanding result. Contingency-fee lawyers engage in substantial personal risk by getting retained and taking these cases to trial – including financial risk, emotional risk, risk to their personal health and risks to relationships including friends and family.

I want to personally congratulate this year’s Top Gun Awardees: Ricardo Echeverria – Personal Injury; Steven Hillyard – Medical Malpractice; Mohamed Eldessouky – Employment Law; Greyson Goody – Young Gun; and Frank Valdez, Jr. – Distinguished Achievement.

In addition, OCTLA will honor Mark P. Robinson, Jr. with our Top Gun Hall of Fame Award. Over the years OCTLA has honored a very limited number of lawyers for their lifetime achievements and commitment to the legal profession. As our seventh Hall of Fame honoree, Mr. Robinson will join his former partner, Arthur Nestor Hews, Jr. as a recipient of the Hall of Fame Award.

This year’s Top Gun winners will be honored on November 13, at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort and Spa in Dana Point. The award ceremony will be in combination with our silent and live auction to benefit this year’s charity, AWOW (A Walk on Water). AWOW provides life-changing surf therapy to children with unique needs by harnessing the ocean’s transformative powers.

While many attorneys widely promote their successes and otherwise actively seek praise for their victories in the courtroom, OCTLA’s live and silent auction gives all attorneys the opportunity to demonstrate their inherent goodness by giving silently without the hope of praise or reward. I urge everyone reading this column to donate an item or service to our silent or live auction for this amazing charity. As always, 100% of the proceeds go directly to the charity. You can donate, become a sponsor or purchase tickets by going to www.octla.org.

In the constant quest for justice, we must all take time to celebrate our wins and those of our colleagues. But we must never become complacent and must always be vigilant about ongoing efforts to undermine our practices and the quality of representation to which California’s consumers should be entitled. As I write this column California State Bar task forces are pushing to allow non-lawyers to practice law and corporations to own law firms. While these efforts are being advanced under the guise of “access to justice,” such efforts actually would reduce the quality of representation for our clients, ultimately serving as an impediment to true justice. Thanks to all of you who have already testified or written letters to the State Bar on these issues. A huge deal of thanks is due to the CAOC advocacy team in Sacramento, who are fighting this battle every day on behalf of all consumers and all consumer attorneys. To maintain the integrity of the profession and protect the consumers of the State of California, I urge each of you reading this article to send a letter to the State Bar opposing their proposed changes to Rule 5.4.

