



OCTLA President

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Jet lagged

TOP GUN AWARD WINNERS: WILLIAM D. SHAPIRO, RICHARD A. COHN, ANGEL J. CARRAZCO, ANNEE DELLA DONNA AND CLARE H. LUCICH

Let me tell you, Mallorca to LAX is one *long* flight. I made it because I was lucky enough to win the bid at OCTLA's Top Gun Awards auction on a week at Nick Rowley's vacation property in Mallorca. The literature bears out that flying east is harder than flying west when it comes to jet lag. It is not the trip but the circadian rhythm sleep disorder that we dread – the jet lag. Traveling west simply means we wake up early – perhaps obscenely early – but with our day intact. But going east, we sleep when we are not sleepy and wake in the middle of the night. Then our bodies scream for the deepest slumber. We wake, or try to, and float through the day hungry, sleepy, wired, and nauseated. We spent 24 hours in travel time before we finally threw our bags on the floor and called it a night.

I tried to get up early and get into the office on Saturday. I felt like there was a fog covering my brain. But there were 203 emails to clear, so I got at it. Staring at me, glaring at me, was an email reminding me that this column was due. So here I sit, typing out what is on my mind. If there are typos, errors, omissions, or this just seems to *ramble on* . . . I blame jet lag.

I could not be prouder to be the OCTLA President this year and preside over our annual Top Gun Trial Attorney of the Year Awards Ceremony. Please save the date – November 12, 2022. The Top Gun Selection Committee worked overtime this year, and the results obviously show. Our slate of winners this year is second to none. One of the best parts of being President of the OCTLA is that you get to call the winners and let them know. Having won the award ten years ago, I can tell you there is nothing like receiving that call.

The Top Gun award winners

It's no surprise that William D. Shapiro is being awarded the Trial Lawyer of the Year in the Personal Injury category for his work in the case of *Hernandez v. Phenix Transportation*. Bill is a two-time past winner, and consistently brings in the big verdicts. In this case,

Bill represented a 17-year-old whose life was forever changed after the vehicle he was traveling in was broadsided by a freight truck. After a one-week trial, a Santa Monica jury returned a \$52.3 million verdict against the negligent truck driver and his employer.

Equally deserving is Richard A. Cohn, who is receiving the Trial Lawyer of the Year in the Medical Malpractice category for his work in the case of *Cozad v. Kaiser*. A botched ACL/MCL repair and reconstructive surgery performed at Kaiser Permanente on a former surfer and legendary surfing photographer resulted in sepsis and a near-death heart infection. Rich secured an arbitration award of \$4 million on behalf of his client.

Angel J. Carrazco is receiving the Trial Lawyer of the Year award in Workers Compensation for his incredible work and tenacity in the case of *Hindawi v. Value Cars, Inc.* In 2010, Angel began representing a man who was injured at work when the motorcycle he was driving malfunctioned, causing major spinal and internal injuries. After ten years of litigation, including opinions from both the Court of Appeals and California Supreme Court, Angel's client received the justice he deserved when a confidential seven-figure settlement was secured on his behalf.

Annee Della Donna is receiving the Trial Lawyer of the Year in the Civil Rights category for her work in the case of *Eisinger v. City of Anaheim*. Annee's expertise led to a wrongful-death jury verdict against the City of Anaheim Police department. The trial was nothing short of a masterpiece. Without a single eyewitness or piece of direct evidence, Annee proved liability against the city. She won through cross-examination alone, persuading the jury that the City of Anaheim was responsible for the death of Chris Eisinger, a homeless and unarmed, 35-year-old black male, who was approached by the Anaheim Police Department at midnight under suspicion of petty larceny. This wrongful-death jury verdict was a groundbreaking verdict,

making the front page of the OC Register, and received worldwide coverage. His parents received an award of over \$1 million each.

Clare H. Lucich is receiving the Young Gun Trial Lawyer of the Year. Clare is a passionate and skilled leader for the plaintiff's bar. Her dedication and experience include serving as co-counsel and second chair in numerous trials resulting in multimillion-dollar verdicts on negligence, products liability and government entity cases. As a partner at Bentley and More LLP, she works closely with founding partner Gregory L. Bentley on the firm's catastrophic injury case, and has secured nearly \$100 million in settlements in 2022 alone.

Last but not least, Daniel M. Hodes and Jeffrey A. Milman are the recipients of the OCTLA Hall of Fame Award. Dan and Jeff have represented victims of medical malpractice in Orange County for more than 25 years. Over the course of their careers, their leadership and dedication has resulted in verdicts, awards and settlements for thousands of clients in excess of nine figures. Their impact and influence go far beyond the exceptional results they obtain for their clients, and their desire to leave a lasting influence and legacy goes far beyond the pursuit of professional accolades and financial gain.

Their contributions to the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association over the past twenty-plus years have been unrivaled. Both Dan and Jeff are past presidents of OCTLA. They have also demonstrated a lasting commitment to mentoring future generations of leaders in the Orange County legal community. Even today, Dan and Jeff still regularly contribute to the OCTLA Listserv, providing guidance and wisdom and freely sharing their knowledge with other attorneys. Unequivocally, Dan and Jeff exemplify and embody the values, vision and mission of OCTLA, and the organization cannot be more honored to have had them amongst us for so many years. 📍