



**CAL-ABOTA**

California Chapters of the  
American Board of Trial Advocates

## CAL-ABOTA e-NEWS

MARCH 2018

Dear CAL-ABOTA Friends,

Welcome back for the second installment of the new CAL-ABOTA Newsletter. Each installment is saved on our website at [cal-abota.org](http://cal-abota.org).

Since January, I have visited half of our chapters: Los Angeles, Orange County, Sacramento and San Francisco. This has been an enlightening process because each chapter is unique and doing great things.



CAL-ABOTA is respected in California because it speaks with a balanced, authoritative voice for our 1,700 members who comprise one quarter of all of the members of ABOTA. CAL-ABOTA is in a position to do much more, and it is one of my goals to extend our influence.

We already are doing that by announcing our second statewide Teachers' Law School. This will educate teachers in teaching civics, which is part of the K-12 civics education mandate initiated by Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. This year's program will be in Los Angeles on September 29th, co-sponsored with the Los Angeles Chapter.

We also are forming a liaison with the California Judges Association to assist with rapidly responding to, and fighting unfair criticism of sitting judges who cannot fight back for themselves.

We elected the CAL-ABOTA Trial Lawyer of the Year on March 3<sup>rd</sup> in San Diego. The recipient is Chris Wesierski from Orange County. Congratulations Chris!

We will celebrate in Hawaii at the Mauna Kea on the Big Island, November 5-10. Registration is open for this event on our [website](#). Sign up while there are still spots available.

*William B. Smith*  
CAL-ABOTA President

**[BE SURE TO READ 'WHAT WE DO' AND 'CAL-ABOTA BY THE NUMBERS' BELOW]**

## CYNTHIA McGUINN IS INSTALLED AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Cynthia McGuinn being sworn in by Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye

## LEWIS SIFFORD RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

On January 20, 2018, at the National ABOTA Board meeting in San Francisco, National President, Cynthia McGuinn, presented Lewis Sifford of Dallas the highest honor ABOTA can give: *The ABOTA Lifetime Achievement Award*.

Lewis is a past National President, and CAL-ABOTA is claiming him because he owns a house in Newport Beach and spends a lot of time in California with his wife, Nan.



Congratulations, Lewis. We are adopting you!

## CAL-ABOTA CHAPTER EVENTS

### LOS ANGELES CHAPTER HELD ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S DINNER DANCE ON JANUARY 26th

The Los Angeles Chapter's President's Dinner Dance was held on 1/26/18 at the beautiful Casa Del Mar Hotel in Santa Monica.

The Chapter's new officers were sworn in. Jake Courtney is the 2018 President and Bob Morgenstern the new Vice President (see list of other officers below).

The Chapter honored Linda Miller-Savitt as the *Lee B. Wenzel Civility Award* recipient and she gave a very gracious acceptance speech. Linda dutifully served on the National Civility and Professionalism Committee for many years.

Tom Girardi generously provided the entertainment in the form of Michael Cavanaugh, who is a very talented musician and singer who played Billy Joel on Broadway -- the dance floor was hopping.



[L to R: Denise Taylor and Linda Miller-Savitt]

*L to R:*  
Bob Morgenstern, Vice President  
Hon. Joe Hilberman (Ret.), Elected Executive Committee Member  
John Sweeney, Appointed Executive Committee Member  
Michael Schonbuch, Elected Executive Committee Member  
Donna M. Maryanski, Appointed Executive Committee Member  
Linda Hurevitz, Secretary  
Jim Rosen, Appointed Executive Committee Member  
Jake Courtney, President  
Michael Strickroth, OC ABOTA President & Installing Officer  
Jesse Marr, Membership Chair

[Not pictured: Rahul Ravipudi, Appointed Executive Committee Member, Ricardo Echeverria, Elected Executive Committee Member, Thomas Johnston, Treasurer]

### **OC CHAPTER HELD ITS ANNUAL INSTALLATION DINNER GALA ON JANUARY 27th**

The Lyon Air Museum was a spectacular venue for this event where the Honorable Michael Strickroth was sworn in as President, taking the gavel from the Honorable Linda Marks who was the enthusiastic President for the Chapter in 2017. She is a hard act to follow but Mike is up to the task.

The bench-bar connection is stronger in Orange County than in any other chapter. For example, all three OC CAL-ABOTA Board members for 2018 are, or were, Superior Court judges! This is a first for CAL-ABOTA.





**Installed as OC 2018 Officers (L to R):**

Yoshi Kubota, Member-at-Large  
 Hon. Peter Polos (Ret.), President-Elect  
 Hon. Nancy Zeltzer, Treasurer  
 Jeff Braun, Secretary  
 Hon. Michael Strickroth, President  
 William Haggerty, Membership Chair

[sworn in by Hon. Charles Margines]

**SACRAMENTO VALLEY  
 CHAPTER INDUCTS ITS  
 2018 OFFICERS**

North Ridge Country Club was packed on Saturday February 3, 2018. Over 25 local judges appeared to watch one of their own, Hon. Dave Brown, be sworn in as President of the Sacramento Chapter.

National President, Cynthia McGuinn, and CAL-ABOTA President, Bill Smith, were present and made comments too.



Also inducted as 2018 Officers: Matthew C. Jaime, Vice President; Karen M. Goodman, Treasurer; Steven H. Gurnee, Secretary; Daniel V. Kohls, Membership Chair by Installing Officer Hon. Judy Hersher



The chapter also honored Don Heller as Trial Lawyer of the Year and Bruce Kilday as the Jim Gilwee Civility Award Winner.



[L to R: Bill Smith, Cynthia McGuinn, Dave & Debbi Brown]



The Sacramento Valley Chapter is a leader in education and support for the Foundation. It co-sponsored CAL-ABOTA'S first statewide Teachers Law School on 9/18/17. It also is second in California in percentage of Foundation participation and is third in the nation out of 96 chapters. Outstanding!

## CAL-ABOTA GENEROUSLY SUPPORTS THE ABOTA FOUNDATION

The ABOTA Foundation is the engine of ABOTA. It is what drives all of our national programs and many of our local ones.

Bryan Reid of the San Bernardino/Riverside Chapter serves as CAL-ABOTA President Elect but he also chairs the CAL-ABOTA Foundation Committee whose goal is to maximize support in California for the Foundation. It starts with his chapter because San Bernardino/Riverside is the #1 chapter in the United States in terms of percentage of giving, at a whopping 70.89%.



Bryan Reid  
CAL-ABOTA Foundation  
Committee Chair

In fact, CAL-ABOTA is proud to have four of the top six chapters in the country in percentage of giving to the Foundation:

- 1<sup>st</sup> San Bernardino/Riverside - 70.89%
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sacramento Valley - 58.60%
- 5<sup>th</sup> Orange County - 57.02%
- 6<sup>th</sup> San Francisco - 52.13%



San Francisco Chapter  
President, Rick Bennett

## SPOTLIGHT ON SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

By Rick Bennett

What I did not fully appreciate when I was first elected to be a chapter officer four years ago, was just how special ABOTA really is. The members I have met and interacted with going through the chairs, have been inspiring, rewarding and educational. ABOTA has helped me to greater enjoy my trial practice.

The San Francisco Chapter encompasses 12 counties. This year, I intend to educate the judges in all 12 about what ABOTA does. I also intend to emphasize our support of judicial Independence and let them know that they have a balanced chapter behind them if they are unfairly attacked. We and CAL-ABOTA speak with a powerful voice.

Our chapter also is working on an entirely new educational program in association with Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. It is called Law School for Leaders which will be aimed at California legislators. They make the law and it is crucial that they understand basic principles about the judiciary and how it works as the third branch of government. They need to appreciate the effect of their actions and inaction.

The San Francisco Chapter is well represented at CAL-ABOTA. We had 8 members at the important Trial Lawyer of the Year meeting in San Diego on March 2-3. Our chapter leaders include the President of CAL-ABOTA (Bill Smith) and three CAL-ABOTA Committee Chairmen (Civil Justice: Frank Pitre; Long Range Planning: Don Carlson; and Amicus: Mike Bradley). We also are the chapter of Chris Beeman, who was recently elected to be a National Foundation Trustee, and Cynthia McGuinn, National President of ABOTA.

All of these folks were in San Diego in March. We have a lot of energy in San Francisco this year and are poised to do great things. I am humbled to be the current Chapter President.

## CAL-ABOTA TRIAL LAWYER OF THE YEAR IS CHRIS WESIERSKI

On Saturday, March 3, 2018, the CAL-ABOTA Board of Directors selected **Chris Wesierski** of the Orange County Chapter as the 2018 Trial Lawyer of the Year. Recognized as the highest honor a California trial lawyer can receive, the CAL-ABOTA Trial Lawyer of the Year is awarded annually to a recipient exhibiting the best traits of a trial lawyer - excellence in advocacy, a distinguished career, and a reputation for civility, ethics and fair play.



[L to R: Bryan Reid, Chris & Maureen Wesierski, Bill Smith]



CAL-ABOTA Trial Lawyer of the Year,  
Chris Wesierski

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Come help us celebrate Chris's achievement at the Mauna Kea in November. Sign up below.



## REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR HAWAII CONFERENCE 2018

CAL-ABOTA will be back at the legendary Mauna Kea Beach Hotel on the golden Kohala Coast of the Big Island for the Hawaii Conference this year from November 5-10, 2018. Join us for a week of professional exchange, adventure, and relaxation. [REGISTER HERE](#)

## CONGRATULATIONS WALLY!

On 4/19/18, Southwestern Law School will honor Wally Yoka, CAL-ABOTA Treasurer, as its 2018 *Alumnus of the Year*. This follows 2016 honors from Loyola Law School as a *Champion of Justice* and also the honor of being the initial inductee into the Southern California Defense Counsel Hall of Fame.

Wally and his wife, Andrea, are loyal CAL-ABOTANS who usually are among the last to leave the dance floor.



[L to R: Justice Bill Murray, Judge Barbara Kronlund, Frank Pitre, Michael Vitiello]

## FRANK PITRE SPEAKS AT MID-YEAR/RETIRED JUDGES CONFERENCE IN MONTEREY

CAL-ABOTA Board Member and Civil Justice Committee Chairman, Frank Pitre of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP in San Francisco, participated as a speaker at the recent Mid-Year/Retired Judges Conference of the California Judges Association held in Monterey.

Mr. Pitre served on the panel with Justice Bill Murray (Third District Court of Appeal), Judge Barbara Kronlund (San Joaquin Superior Court), and Michael Vitiello (Professor, McGeorge School of Law).

The panel discussed preserving judicial independence in the face of mounting recalls. Mr. Pitre shared with the audience of judicial officers the importance and

components of responses to unfair criticism and recall campaigns. Mr. Pitre also discussed the value of involving diverse organizations and bar leadership, and how ABOTA can be involved in communicating the message of the importance of judicial independence.

## CAL-ABOTA DONATES \$2,500 TO BOTH CALIFORNIA MOCK TRIAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS

The California Mock Trial Program is statewide. National ABOTA is a main sponsor of this valuable program and for 2018, CAL-ABOTA has agreed to also support it by giving \$2,500.

CAL-ABOTA encourages the trial of cases, and mock trial is an excellent training ground for those high school students who want to be trial lawyers.

## SPONSOR HIGHLIGHTS



### Jane Riley Pugh, Arcadia

CAL-ABOTA Sponsor, Jane Riley-Pugh, has been a loyal CAL-ABOTA sponsor for eleven years making her our longest continuous sponsor.

Jane is a settlement specialist who loves her job and who recognizes and uses a team approach of vetted experts to serve our members and our clients. She is an expert in planning a financial future for injured clients, exploring Special Needs Trusts, Settlement Management Trusts, Structure Annuities, and Medicare Set Aside issues.

Jane has more than 30 years of experience as a Certified Structure Settlement Consultant.

She is not all work and no play as we have seen at the beach and on the dance floor. She fully participates in our activities and has become a loyal friend. She absolutely adores the *Trial Lawyer of the Year* annual event in Hawaii.

Jane also loves to travel and is off this year to visit Amsterdam and Belgium on a "bike and boat" adventure. She will not miss the plentiful breweries! However, her passion is her work and getting to know the lawyers and families she serves. This is the highlight of her successful career.

Jane is a true professional, and CAL-ABOTA is delighted and honored to have her as our most loyal sponsor. How do you find Jane? She's the one who always has a big smile on her face for us.



### Brice Karsh, High Impact

In a studio on a hill overlooking the majestic Rocky Mountains just outside Denver, a team of programmers and optometrists complete the finishing touches on a virtual reality experience that would soon be the centerpiece at a mediation to show a child's eyesight loss.

Nearby, a team of artists and physicians collaborate in building a 3-D interactive heart that would be used in trial to show how a cardiologist misdiagnosed patients for the purpose of profit.

While just down the hallway, a team of engineers return from a farm where they 3-D scanned a tractor, and collected lighting data for an animation that would be used to defend a farmer in trial.

At High Impact, this is just another day in the office. The people who work here come from vastly different backgrounds, educations and industries. The company integrates these different skill sets into a highly cooperative system of teamwork that has contributed to some of the most jaw-dropping presentations the legal community has ever seen.

High Impact started twenty years ago in Brice Karsh's garage in 1998 as a two-man operation with a lot of imagination and hard work. Since that time, the company has grown into a powerhouse in the legal industry -- expanding its offerings to include illustrations, animations, interactive exhibits and now virtual reality. Whatever is next is what High Impact envisions now.

High Impact does not sell a product. It sells a strategy for conveying your client's story. Driven by a passion to maximize the impact of that story, its diverse team of innovative thinkers are constantly pushing the envelope of what is possible in legal presentation. It is at the cutting edge of what is possible for those representing plaintiffs or defendants.

We are proud to welcome back High Impact as a 2018 sponsor.



## CAL-ABOTA BY THE NUMBERS

**1**

CAL-ABOTA is the largest state-regional ABOTA organization

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**1**

CAL-ABOTA is the #1 regional supporter of the ABOTA Foundation, having the highest percentage of donors and 4 of the top 6 ABOTA Chapters nationally with the highest % of contributors

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**1**

CAL-ABOTA was the first Regional ABOTA organization starting in 1979 but meeting informally since 1962 and selecting the California Trial Lawyer of the Year

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**\$75**

Your annual dues to CAL-ABOTA

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**24%**

CAL-ABOTA makes up nearly one quarter of all ABOTA members

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**34**

This is the number of CAL-ABOTA Board members. It is also the number of National ABOTA presidents from CAL-ABOTA to date. 34/60 or 57% CAL-ABOTA members

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**6**

The number of ABOTA Chapter of the Year awards awarded to CAL-ABOTA chapters

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**6**

The number of ABOTA National Lifetime Achievement Awards that have been given to CAL-ABOTA members

## WHAT WE DO...

### Educational programs for law students, lawyers and educators:

Masters in Trial  
James Otis Lecture Series  
Teachers' Law Schools  
Civility Matters Program  
Civility Mentorship Program  
Support for Loyola's Journalist Law School  
Support for California's new Civics Education Program for grades K-12  
Support for the California Council of Social Studies conference  
Support for California's Mock Trial Program

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### Protecting Judicial Independence:

Rapid Response Program for unfair judicial criticism (examples of responses on CAL-ABOTA website)

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### Recognition of California Judges, Justices and Lawyers:

Selection of California Trial Lawyer of the Year  
Selection of recipient of William W. Bedsworth Judicial Civility Award

California's New Civility Oath: California Rules of Court, Rule 9.4

Creation of jury service video for California courts

Amicus Committee to address important statewide legal issues