

Alumni Association
SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL
L O S A N G E L E S

Alumni Association Magazine

Winter 2020

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Southwestern Law School Alumni Association Magazine

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The Alumni Association Board of Directors is an active volunteer Board of Alumni of Southwestern Law School with several committees, and many access points for alumni to get involved with Southwestern. 2019-2021 Committees include: Alumni Awards Gala, Diversity Efforts, Career Services, Inn of St. Ives, Domestic Violence Advocacy Initiative (DVAI), CLE, and the Alumni Magazine Committee. To share your voice and get involved, please email alumni@swlaw.edu or call 213-738-6814.

This publication was developed by the Magazine Committee of the Southwestern Law School Alumni Association's Board of Directors. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various authors, article and interview participants do not (necessarily) reflect the view of Southwestern Law School or the Southwestern Alumni Association or its Board of Directors. Copyright ©2020 by the Southwestern Law School Alumni Association. All rights reserved.

Bison on the Move!

Leona Bahnam '17 and **Jamie Stein '01** joined **LightGabler**.

Isela Barrios '09 joined **Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai**.

Traci Briggs '97 appointed as the **Killeen City Attorney** in Killeen, Texas.

Tonya Butler LLM '04 recently appointed chair of the Music Business/Management Department at **Berklee College of Music** in Boston, Massachusetts.

Chris Chaplin '10 and **Hannah Sweiss '13** recently joined **Fisher Phillips**.

Hon. Shannon Faherty '05 appointed to **San Bernadino County Superior Court**.

Hon. Scott Freeman '83 reelected Chief Judge, **Washoe District Court**, Reno, Nevada.

Lester Friedman '76 elected **Mayor** of Beverly Hills.

Asa Hami '00 named Senior Counsel at **SulmeyerKupetz**.

MaryBeth Heydt '90 named partner at **Lewis Brisbois**.

Erin Joyce '90 named incoming Chair of **Los Angeles County Bar Association's** Small Firm and Sole Practitioner's Section, and elected to the Board of Trustees of the **San Fernando Valley Bar Association**.

Carole A. Klove, RN, JD '86 received the 2020 **Distinguished Alumna of the Year Award** from the Duke University School of Nursing.

Hon. Kerwin Miller '99 appointed to **Harford District Court** in Harford County, Maryland.

Linh Nguyen '98 appointed Chief Deputy Director of the **California Commission on Teacher Credentialing**.

Kymberly Peck '10 named partner at **Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP**.

Rajnish Puri '96 named partner at **Buchalter**.

Laurel Rimon '93 named partner at **O'Melveny**.

Susan Russo Klein '95 joined **Roberts & Stevens** in Asheville, North Carolina.

Barry Schirm '80 named partner at **Hawkins Parnell and Young**.

Scott Shea '88 sat on a panel at the Conference on Consumer Finance Law at **Texas A&M University School of Law**.

Bison Luminaries

Matthew Tobias '10 named partner at **Sheppard Mullin**.

Chinyere Abbey Abuka '13 serves as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Bernard Alexander '86 and **Geoffrey Sheldon '96** named to **Los Angeles Daily Journal** Top Labor & Employment Lawyers.

Robert Brandt '76 featured on the cover of *Super Lawyers Magazine*.

Celeste Brecht '05, Shawn Holley '88, and Dana Lowy '92 selected as *Los Angeles Business Journal* Top Women Lawyers.

Patricia Brum '13 joined the Board of Inner-City Arts.

Hon. Tara Flanagan '98 featured in the *LA Daily Journal* for her participation in the Paris-Brest-Paris bike race.

Karen Henry '03 named to National Black Lawyers' Top 100 Lawyers in California list.

Tara Hicks '10 traveled to Washington DC with Alzheimer's Los Angeles to meet with Congress. They successfully received an increase in funding of \$425 million for Alzheimer's research.

Neville Johnson '75 named a *Hollywood Reporter* Power Lawyer and secured a significant victory against Coca-Cola in right of publicity case involving the heirs of juice maker Hubert Hansen.

Lauren Leichtman '77 named one of the 2020 Most Influential Women in Mid-Market M&A by *Mergers & Acquisitions*.

Ashod Mooradian '95 received the ABA Center for Professional Responsibility Jeanne P. Gray Diversity Scholarship.

Frederick Norris '07 named to the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* 40 Under 40.

Brian Panish '84 and **Robert Brandt '76** named to Ten Year *Super Lawyers* Top List.

Alan Romero '06 secured a verdict of over \$8 million against the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in a case involving unlawful retaliation and harassment on behalf of a deputy.

Priya Vema '09 named to the *Hollywood Reporter's* 35 Rising Executives Under 35.

Walter Yoka '80 serves as President Elect of Cal-ABOTA, the statewide organization of the prestigious American Board of Trial Advocates.

The Southwestern Alumni Office promotes the activities and professional career growth of all alumni.

SUBMIT INFORMATION FOR BISON ON THE MOVE! AND BISON LUMINARIES
VIA EMAIL TO THE ALUMNI OFFICE AT DEV@SWLAW.EDU

Alumni Board President Address by Patrick Baghdaserians '07



As one of the largest law schools in California, the reach of Southwestern is virtually unparalleled. Thousands of our alumni work and live in this amazing state. Through their work, our alumni impact thousands of lives on a yearly basis. This impact often sets new standards in law, education and business. This magazine will not only help provide a mechanism to promote this work but will also help tell the human story.

Southwestern Law School is a pillar of the legal community in California. It is time we let people know with an Alumni Association Magazine.

Southwestern's First Family of Salsa



L to R: Roche McCoy '91, Dolores Saavedra McCoy '91, photo provided by Tapatio

You may not yet know the names Dolores Saavedra McCoy and Roche McCoy, but you have probably picked up some of their work at the grocery store. This Southwestern Class of '91 couple are the tough lawyers behind the Tapatio Hot Sauce brand. Tapatio is a fiercely independent, family-operated company founded by Dolores's parents in Southern California. Her father, Jose-Luis Saavedra, now 91, still works at the factory every day.

Tapatio is very much a family affair. Dolores' father started the company in 1971 when he was laid off from his job. He had to moonlight on other jobs for years in order to fund the business. The family, originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, would fill bottles at night after work and school in their first factory.

Dolores remembers falling asleep on the shipping palettes when she was a young girl. In addition to Dolores and Roche, Dolores's siblings (one a doctor, the other an accountant) also help manage the growing operations.

Dolores co-developed a number of the company's licensing deals, and now oversees the exponential growth of the brand's merchandising. Roche, an Air Force veteran, is currently busy working on new licensing deals. He recently concluded a major partnership with Budweiser's Michelada product. Many national brands are eager to associate with the Tapatio name, as the family has built a strong reputation for authenticity and quality in the rapidly growing Hispanic market.

Dolores says that her father has a strict policy not to allow the company to be acquired or give up equity, and Roche and Dolores are tasked with guarding Tapatio's full independence in every deal the company makes. Food conglomerates will sometimes deliver tough terms to the family business, and Tapatio has been willing to say "no" to take-it-or-leave-it demands.

The couple says they use their Southwestern training on a daily basis and are sometimes surprised at how much they remember from their student days. They first met at Southwestern and dated in secret, never sitting together in class. They warmly recall the professors who made a huge impact on them, including Joerg Knipprath, Ira Shafiroff, Robert Lind (emeritus), and Susan Martin (emerita).



Southwestern Receives AIC Charter

The American Inns of Court is a national organization established in the early 1980s to foster civility, professionalism and education in the legal profession.

On November 1, 2018, The American Inns of Court issued Charter No. 493 to alumni from Southwestern Law School. A Masters Committee was formed and the first plenary meeting was held at Southwestern on September 11, 2019, with 40 attendees, 13 of which were students.

The presentation was on ethics, civility and professionalism to introduce the new members to these concepts central to the American Inns of Court. Further meetings were held through February but were curtailed for March and April because of COVID-19. We are hopeful of beginning our second year in September and we are looking for additional members. If you are interested, contact Justice (Ret.) Gary Hastings (grhastings@aol.com) for further information.

Excerpt from the lecture at Southwestern Law School on Civility and Professionalism on March 25, 2020 by the Hon. (Ret.) J. Gary Hastings

Most people are not happy or eager to become involved in legal proceedings. They are most likely to be stressed because of the situation they find themselves in as well as their lack of familiarity with the system and how to navigate through it. On top of that they may have to pay an attorney to help them. But we rely on people accepting that our justice system is fair and unbiased so that they continue abiding by it rather than taking things into their own hands. What do people want of our system?

In 2006, Tim Tyler, a psychologist, published in California Courts Review a brief article titled "What Do They Expect?" outlining what he and others discovered doing empirical

studies about what people want when they are involved in the justice system. He references two types of justice: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural Justice is how the case is handled; distributive justice is the outcome of the case, in other words who won and who lost. He and others discovered that how the cases were handled was more important than the outcome.

"The idea that people might be more interested in how their cases are handled than whether or not they win often strikes people as counterintuitive and wrong-headed. Yet it is the consistent finding of numerous studies conducted over the last several decades, including a recent study of California state courts. These studies show that people use ethical criteria to evaluate their experiences, and that they particularly focus on their views about appropriate ways for authorities to act when deciding how to resolve legal problems." (California Courts Review, Winter 2006, pg. 22)

"Congratulations to the Southwestern Alumni Board on coming out with this magnificent magazine. The interviews with R. Rex Parris, Brian Panish, Shawn Holley and Arash Homampour by Judge Brazil address the issues of civility and professionalism so dear to the American Inns of Court movement. We look forward to our second year of existence beginning in September and obtaining new members, judges, lawyers, students and others working within the legal profession."

~ Justice (Ret.) J. Gary Hastings '72
President, Southwestern Inns of Court



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Judge Brazil '96 (center right) with DVAI Fellows Anthony Bonadies '14 (far left), Alice Nguyen '16 (left), and Sheena Powels '16 (far right), photo provided by Southwestern Law School

The Domestic Violence Advocacy Initiative

Usually, the Southwestern Alumni Association hosts an annual gala recognizing outstanding members of the Southwestern community for their contributions to the legal profession, their support of Southwestern, and their service to the community. This year the Annual Alumni Awards Gala had to be postponed due to the Coronavirus. We don't have a new date for the gala yet. We will reach out once we do have one.

We do however, want to continue fundraising for the cause the gala benefits, the Southwestern Alumni Association's **Domestic Violence Advocacy Initiative (DVAI)** which was created in 2015.

Each year, DVAI fellowships are awarded to recent Southwestern graduates who, in partnership with the Levitt and Quinn Family Law Center, provide high-quality legal services to the victims and survivors of domestic violence. Since its creation, the DVAI has provided legal assistance and

representation to hundreds of domestic violence survivors who otherwise would have had none.

Alice Nguyen '16, a graduate of Southwestern's SCALE Program, is now an Attorney at Law with the Baghdaserians Law Group in Pasadena. Nguyen was one of two graduates to receive the 2017/18 DVAI fellowship. She described her experience to us.

"The DVAI fellowship has been instrumental in shaping my career. I was allowed to learn and grow in an intense and impactful legal environment with an incredible amount of support and guidance from the staff at the Levitt & Quinn Family Law Center and the members of Southwestern's Alumni Association. Currently, I'm working for the President of the Alumni Board who founded the DVAI fellowships, Patrick Baghdaserians, and I am still in love with practicing family law. I cannot fathom where I would be without the fellowship and the mentorship from everyone I had encountered along the way."

Anthony Bonadies, the second recipient of the 2017/18 DVAI

fellowship, is now a Staff Attorney at the Inner City Law Center in downtown Los Angeles. He said, "The DVAI Fellowship was vital to my professional development. Through the critical work of the DVAI Fellowship in assisting victims of domestic violence and the mentoring provided by the Hon. Deborah Brazil, Hon. Timothy Weiner, Patrick Baghdaserians, and the Levitt & Quinn family, I gained extensive practical experience to transition from a recently-barred attorney to a confident legal practitioner. As one of the two inaugural fellows, my heart will forever hold a special place for the DVAI Fellowship."

Sheena Powels, the 2018/19 DVAI Fellowship recipient, is currently a Staff Attorney for the Catholic Charities of Los Angeles. She told us, "The DVAI Fellowship has had a huge impact on me in starting my legal career. I was given the opportunity to meet with clients and help them with their family law issues under the supervision of experienced attorneys. It was great having so many experienced attorneys who cared about my progress and who mentored me through the process. The work I do now, and the love I have for it, is a direct reflection of my time spent at Levitt & Quinn as a DVAI Fellow."

About Levitt & Quinn: Thirty-six years ago, federal budget cuts decimated legal services programs throughout the nation, including here in Los Angeles. In 1981, three retired grandmothers, one of whom is a Southwestern alumna, stepped up to keep over 400 families from losing access to the critical legal help they were counting on. From humble beginnings operating out of a small Silver Lake storefront, with borrowed furniture and no real budget, Levitt & Quinn has since grown into a million-dollar nonprofit whose staff has expertise in many areas of family and adoption law.



**Visit swlawgala.com
for updates on the gala.**

**To donate to the Domestic Violence
Advocacy Initiative, please send an email to
alumni@swlaw.edu.**



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M. LYNDA SHERIDAN is a top family law attorney with an Avvo "Superb" rating, and Super Lawyer 2020 designation. Atty Sheridan operates a boutique office in Century City devoted primarily to Family Law. The office handles issues related to asset division, dissolution of marriage, self employed income issues, child custody, visitation, paternity actions, business evaluations, debt and asset division, spousal support representation, "move-away" representation, and post- and prenuptial agreements. Since 2005, Ms. Sheridan has maintained the designation of Certified Family Law Specialist by the California Board of Legal Specialization. Atty Sheridan assists navigating her clients through complicated and emotional legal matters and difficult times.

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L to R: Mariana Kouloumian '19, Alice Nguyen '16, Patrick Baghdaserians '07, Daniel J. Leonetti, and Natasha Aminpour '19, photo provided by Baghdaserians Law Group

Baghdaserians Law Group Donation Funds a New Family Law Fellowship

The Baghdaserians Law Group has made a generous gift of \$115,000 to establish Southwestern's latest public service program, the Baghdaserian Law Group Family Law Fellowship. This 2020 donation is the largest received to date to support the work of the Alumni Association's Domestic Violence Advocacy Initiative. The donation will fund both full and partial fellowships at non-profit organizations that provide family law services for two years beginning in 2020. The gift will support the Fellow with a stipend, relieving the organizations from that expense and the Fellows will provide legal services to individuals and families with much-needed legal assistance on a pro-bono basis.

Family Law Fellow Kimia Karami '20, will join Public Counsel's Audrey Irmas Fellowship Project for Women and Girls' Rights after the October Bar. Baghdaserians Law Group's donation to establish the Family Law Fellowship will enable Karami's full-time employment. Karami will provide direct services in Title IX matters and lead student outreach teams. She will also join

a newly launched initiative to provide legal services to student survivors of sexual harassment and assault.

As we know, there is a global surge in domestic violence directed towards women and girls directly linked to recent at-home lockdowns imposed by governments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this gift, Baghdaserians Law Group has uniquely risen to support local domestic violence victims as well as Southwestern students and alumni during this unprecedented time.

Baghdaserian Law Group was founded by Patrick Baghdaserians, a Class of 2007 alum of Southwestern who has practiced Family Law exclusively since 2007 and was one of California's youngest Certified Family Law Specialists.

If you would like to make a donation to support the Southwestern Law School's Alumni Association's Domestic Violence Advocacy Initiative, please send an email to alumni@swlaw.edu.

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2021 Vision: Southwestern's Top Trial Pros Pick the Trends for the Coming Year

The legal profession may never be the same after this momentous year. With civil trials stalled, what comes next? We asked one judge and four top trial lawyers to share their insights on all the ways the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the civil court, and what else to expect in the year to come. Below are their answers in their own words.

Hon. Linda Marks '84 is a Superior Court judge in Orange County. She recently served as President of the Orange County chapter of the prestigious American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA).

Civil cases will bear the brunt during this pandemic with criminal cases taking precedent over civil jury trials. To move cases forward, lawyers need to practice civility. Everyone is anxious, concerned and stressed right now, and I encourage counsel not to make unreasonable demands, not to draw lines in the sand, to be patient, and to work together in order to get through what is a very difficult and unprecedented time.

Do not rely on emails and written correspondence. Pick up the phone and introduce yourself. Establish trust. Understand if you do plaintiff's work that, on the defense side, businesses may be closed, employees may be furloughed, and it may be difficult to secure witnesses. If you do defense work,



Hon. Linda Marks '84, photo provided by Judge Marks

understand that plaintiffs may not want to appear for an in-person deposition and/or appear for an IME and risk exposure to COVID-19. Both sides need to be up front about the issues they face, and while COVID-19 should not be the reason for all delays, counsel need to accept the challenges, and maintain flexibility when working with each other.

Counsel need to think “out of the box.” On many cases, remote depositions for third parties should be considered if not for party depositions. Also, in my court, I am inviting the lawyers on all my cases to set up an Informal Discovery Conference (IDC) to assist in moving their cases forward during this time. The conference setup is free, and Orange County Superior Court uses the TEAM application. C.C.P. §2016.080(a) states that a Court “may conduct an informal discovery conference upon request by a party or on the Court’s own motion.” I am not limiting the conferences to discovery issues, and would encourage all counsel to contact their individual courts to inquire whether the judge might be willing to set an IDC on their case.

Orange County Superior Court has geared up and is hearing remote court trials using a WebX platform, and conducting limited in-person jury trials based on numerous factors which may include a reduction in panel size from 12 to 8 jurors, and trial estimates of 4 to 5 days in duration. Counsel are encouraged to meet and confer, and discuss an upcoming trial in advance of the trial date with their trial judge. While the backlog is immense, Courts across the country are struggling with many issues associated with conducting civil jury trials during the pandemic. However, the civil jury trial has been at risk for some time, and is now at even greater risk as we struggle through this pandemic. Now might be the time to consider changing how we proceed with civil jury trials in California after this pandemic passes. To save the civil jury trial, a revamping of the trial itself might be considered. A reduction in trial time estimates, perhaps a reduction from twelve jurors to eight jurors, along with a reduction of preemptory challenges might be given some thought to avoid the civil jury trial going the way of the dodo bird, and insuring the right of the 7th amendment.

Peter Dubrawski '75 is a Senior Partner at Haight Brown & Bonesteel. His broad experience in litigation focuses on transportation and product liability matters. He is a proud member of the Los Angeles Chapter of American Board of Trial Advocates.

It is going to take an effective vaccine sufficiently distributed



Peter Dubrawski '75, photo provided by Mr. Dubrawski

to determine if we are ever going to be able to get back to anything close to a traditional jury trial process. It is probably a safe assumption that nothing will be precisely as it was. Even when we get a civil case to trial, what will it look like with physical distancing or other rules? Where do you put your jury panel in the courtroom? Who wears masks? How can a jury evaluate a witness or a lawyer if you can't see the expressions on their faces?

The idea of a remote jury creates a risk of losing the focus of the jury since they are not physically present. I have already experienced that in remote mock jury exercises. If they are not there, how do you present the evidence? Is it all going to be via video? When a juror is sitting behind a computer screen, it is a lot easier for them to be distracted. How are they going to deliberate? There is loss of the benefit of collaborating or exchanging ideas with other jurors during deliberations.

Another major question is, after heightened stress of the pandemic, what will a jurors' attitudes be towards people with claims for injury? Will that affect the size of the verdicts? Los Angeles County is already nationally recognized as a location where significant plaintiffs' verdicts occur.

The reputation for significant verdicts has another effect on litigation. Major injury lawsuits are often vehicles for investors. People who have financial stakes and expect a certain return on a case often make it difficult to get that case resolved. Medical expenses and liens become more difficult to compromise in order to get a case settled.

The practice of law has always been the vehicle by which society resolves disputes. The process and procedure has



Delmas Woods '99, photo provided by Mr. Woods

changed over time, and adapts to circumstances. While things will not be the same, it continues to be very interesting to see how the practice of law adapts. A significant factor in the success of any practitioner is civility. It continues to be remarkable how, in spite of serious differences of opinion, civil lawyers, who are cooperative with each other, accomplish so much for their clients.

Delmas Woods '99 is a partner at Resnick & Louis, and represents high-profile national brands in insurance defense. Prior to Southwestern Law School, he was a computer programmer for Litton Industries.

We are about to see a large shift in the way we practice law. My firm happened to have gone remote before COVID hit. Across the board in the legal profession, we will see a push to go remote. What the pandemic has shown everyone is that we don't need monolithic buildings with glass walls overlooking downtown. A lot of the firms are going to reassess where their money is being spent.

If you think of all the parts it takes to put a trial together, the big firms won't have an issue with their attorneys working primarily remotely. Some paralegal or clerical employees will need smaller spaces to handle physical documents. A law office could become something like a document center.

At the moment, the civil trials are stalled, as everyone knows. Criminal trials will always have priority, and civil trials will be the first to get pushed back. The courts are going to have to figure out how to incorporate more technology into the practice. For example, I'm not sure how we're going to handle things like jury selection under pandemic lockdown, or even afterwards. It

will be tough for a long time to get people feeling comfortable sitting together for the day. Maybe we'll need outdoor waiting areas, or a system that texts people to notify them when it's time to come in.

Parties on both sides seem to be questioning the effect COVID-19 will have on settlement and negotiations. I've been able to settle cases during this time.

There are other things going on not directly related to COVID matters that could make for an interesting year. For example, we have rules in federal law about electronic discovery (related to getting the actual computer the discovery was created on) so you can collect all metadata. Right now the tendency is to give away the result, not the physical device. I've seen in certain areas of federal law, people are now demanding the original computer. I don't know how big of a trend, but it's an emerging trend for discovery.

Maria ("Ria") Cousineau '84 is a Partner at Cozen O'Connor and the Vice Managing Partner of the firm's Los Angeles office, where she specializes in insurance coverage and coverage litigation. She graduated cum laude from Southwestern and is licensed in CA and NV. Her work for clients has resulted in numerous appellate opinions.

I don't know that we can begin to list all the ways in which this pandemic will have lasting effects on everyone involved in civil litigation.

For starters, the use of technology, especially video depositions, in trial is going to increase exponentially. As a result, unless there is a significant change in the situation—like a truly effective vaccine—cooperation among lawyers will



Maria Cousineau '84, photo provided by Ms. Cousineau

be essential to get anything done. For people coming out of law school now, who are accustomed to being 100% digital and not reliant on paper, the change to digital may be a non-issue. For those who have been around a few years, and were perhaps reluctant to make the shift before now, the change to digital-only may be a bit more challenging.

More importantly, courts will have to adapt to certain changes. For example, the concept of an “original” document or the “original” exhibit will shift as the “wet” signature is slowly replaced by the digital one. And while certain items may still require independent authentication, there may be more than one person who can authenticate a digital signature, and the steps for doing so will be different. This is one place where cooperation among counsel will go a long way.

And of course, time to accomplish anything, especially the time from filing to trial, is going to increase. As a result, I anticipate a shift toward alternatives to a jury trial—even more than we have seen in the recent past. We will have to advise our clients that their case may not get to trial for several years. Lawyers and litigants alike may be more interested in court trials, private trials, and/or binding arbitration rather than wait to present their case to a jury. And I am certain there are additional “out of the box” alternatives that no one has thought of yet. This means people may have to pay for justice, which will result in further disparity of the justice delivered to those without means.

And what if the parties want to proceed with a civil jury trial? How will the lawyers conduct voir dire? Will judges do all the inquiry in the future? How do you put 12 or 14 people in a jury box and meet the social distancing requirements? What about stipulating to a smaller number of jurors? Do you agree to six jurors? Eight? Nine? And once the parties agree to a number, they will have to agree on what constitutes a verdict. Will it have to be unanimous? Six of Eight? Seven of eight? Seven of nine? The possibilities seem endless. And the answers will be harder to obtain if the parties do not get along.

Those attorneys who are civil, cooperative, think outside the box, and have immense patience will surely be the ones to weather this storm most successfully.

Robert A. Morgenstern '80 is a Senior Partner and Founding Member of Maranga Morgenstern. He is the Immediate Past President of the Los Angeles chapter of ABOTA. He was named “Outstanding Litigator” by the Southwestern Law School Alumni Association in 2017.



Robert Morgenstern '80, photo provided by Mr. Morgenstern

We are in a new era. Jury trials simply aren't going to be as they used to be with 12 jurors in the box and live testimony in the courtroom. We're going to have to adapt to remote trials, minimal live participation, potentially video-taped witness testimony, and potentially fewer jurors per case. It is hard to anticipate what the trial dynamic would be.

Until this pandemic has a cure or viable treatment, it is going to be difficult to get our citizens in one room for purposes of *voire dire* and civil trials. You're going to have to look at different ways of selecting juries. Given the dimensions of most civil courtrooms, at least in the California system, it will be very difficult to have packed courtrooms with social distancing.

The fear for some trial lawyers is that the necessary changes will take the human emotion out of jury trials. A lawyer might not get to be in the courtroom with witnesses for direct or cross examination. They won't get to look the jurors in the eye. But those are the dynamics you have to face until the end of this pandemic arrives, or a viable treatment becomes available.

In light of the new protocols, the notion of civility between lawyers becomes even more important. In order for us to get cases resolved by way of jury trial, we're going to have to work together, and have good communication and cooperation. Honesty and trust will be needed to serve the interests of both sides so that a case can be presented to a jury ultimately for resolution. We need to respect each other's positions when we disagree, and do that in a manner that is constructive.

With the backlog developing in the civil courts, it will be harder to get a hearing. The only way our system will get back on track is if opposing lawyers work together.



L to R: Brian Panish '84, Arash Homampour '92, Judge Debra Brazil '96, Shawn Holley '88, and R. Rex Parris '80, photo by Richard Manirath

The Titans: R. Rex Parris '80, Brian Panish '84, Shawn Holley '88, and Arash Homampour '92

Four Southwestern alumni at the top of the legal profession discuss how they got there, their work habits, and the future of law.

We asked Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Deborah S. Brazil '96, Southwestern's Alumni Association Immediate Past President, to interview four very successful alumni. She spoke with all four in a group setting, asking them questions individually and as a panel.

R. Rex Parris '80 is recognized as one of the most successful and innovative trial lawyers alive today. Parris has been profiled in numerous national media outlets, including *20/20*, *Nightline*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, and a myriad of legal journals.

Parris has achieved outstanding results in the courtroom over the span of his career—he obtained the first million-dollar verdict in California's Kern County as a young lawyer and, years later, obtained an historic, record-breaking defamation jury verdict in Los Angeles for \$370 million.

In addition to managing his trial calendar, and along with his wife Carol, the firm's diversified practice, Parris also manages one of California's fastest-growing cities. As the mayor of Lancaster since 2008, he has gained nationwide media attention for his efforts to improve the wellbeing of the city's residents. For example, gang violence dropped 82%, the city's downtown area was completely redeveloped during the worst economic downturn in over 75 years, and all of the city's municipal buildings were converted to solar power.

Brian Panish '84 is one of the country's leading personal injury trial attorneys. He has obtained some of the most significant jury verdicts in United States history on behalf of plaintiffs. His courtroom victories include a \$4.9 billion record verdict in the landmark products liability case *Anderson v. General Motors*, over 100 verdicts and settlements in excess of \$10 million, six verdicts in excess of \$50 million,

and more than 250 verdicts and settlements of over \$1 million in personal injury, car accident, wrongful death and business litigation cases.

Panish has been appointed Lead Trial Counsel in the Porter Ranch/Aliso Canyon Gas Blowout Litigation and has served in leadership roles in the Asiana Airlines Crash Litigation, the Olympus Superbug CRE Litigation and DePuy ASR Hip Implant Litigation, among others.

Because of his expertise in personal injury, wrongful death, mass tort and product liability cases, Panish has been appointed to serve on the Plaintiffs' Steering and Executive committees in numerous high-profile mass torts and major disaster cases, including litigation involving train crashes, airplane disasters, pharmaceuticals, and defective product cases.

Shawn Holley '88 is a partner at Kinsella Weitzman Iser Kump LLP, a boutique entertainment and business litigation firm in Santa Monica. She began her career as a Los Angeles County Public Defender, handling hundreds of serious criminal cases from inception to trial. She was the Managing Partner of the Los Angeles office of The Cochran Firm and the head of its national Criminal Defense Section.

With more than sixty trials to her credit, Ms. Holley is the rare trial attorney who practices in the areas of both civil and criminal litigation. She was a highly visible member of the O.J. Simpson defense team and worked closely with Johnnie Cochran on a number of high-profile civil and criminal cases.

Among others, Holley has represented or currently represents Kanye West, Justin Bieber, Lindsay Lohan, Nicole Richie, Paris Hilton, the Kardashian/Jenner family, celebrated Black Panther leader Geronimo Pratt, Michael Jackson, Tupac Shakur, Snoop Dogg, Mike Tyson, "Sugar" Ray Leonard, Lamar Odom and Reggie Bush.

Holley was the chief legal correspondent for the E! Network and the on-air legal analyst for KABC Eyewitness News in L.A. She has appeared on the *Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *PrimeTime Live*, Court TV, Fox News and CNN. She was a featured lawyer on Fox TV's *Power of Attorney* for two seasons and the judge on MTV's *The Verdict*.

Arash Homampour '92 is a trial lawyer. His small law firm has obtained well over half a billion dollars in settlements, verdicts and judgments for his clients. He started his firm with no money, no cases, and no mentor. Today, he is a preeminent trial lawyer sought by other attorneys and clients to take on the most challenging cases. His firm

exclusively represents plaintiffs in catastrophic injury and death cases. His verdicts and his firm's settlements are routinely record-setting.

In the last five years alone, Homampour has obtained eight eight-figure verdicts and four seven-figure verdicts in a wide array of trials and cases involving dangerous products, roads, driving, and premises, including a record-setting \$60 million wrongful death/product liability verdict in Orange County Federal Court and a \$30 million wrongful death verdict in Ventura County.

In 2018 he was the recipient of the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles (CAALA) Ted Horn Memorial Award, presented to a lawyer who has provided outstanding service to the Association and the legal community. In 2016, he was named one of the Top 30 Plaintiff's attorneys in the State by the *Daily Journal*.

Homampour has also successfully briefed and argued many appeals, including successfully briefing and arguing before the California Supreme Court.

Judge Brazil began by saying, "I am simply awed at the contributions to the legal profession that each of you has made. After reading about each of you and your philanthropy and generosity, I'm not surprised that you agreed to sit for this interview to give alumni and the greater legal community a snapshot of four of our most accomplished attorneys."

What follows is an edited transcript of her questions and the answers given by Parris, Panish, Holley, and Homampour.

Brazil: Have any of you noticed a decrease or an increase in civility by attorneys to each other and/or the bench during your time in practice?

Holley: I practice in criminal court and in civil court. I have always found that the criminal bar is much more civil. The lawyers get along. In my civil practice, opposing counsel has said to me many times, "God you're so nice." And they say that with complete shock. It is important to me to be civil whenever I practice, because I respect and appreciate that we all have a job to do.

Panish: I think that it depends on the lawyer in the case. Certainly, we practice civility. I don't think it's taught in the law schools, and younger lawyers who are out to win at all cost really don't see the big picture.

Homampour: At my law firm I have a rule: be nice. If anyone sends a nasty, snarky email, or writes a motion in a snarky way, I tell them, "Cut it out." Because at the end of the day you get

more with sugar than you do with vinegar. Kindness, and being polite, and generosity always win the day over being a jerk. Being a jerk is a pedestrian way of being that really takes your eye off the ball—which is getting a case moving along into trial—and it's counterproductive.

Parris: To me it's a question of what's more persuasive. And the science behind this is pretty robust. When we're being a jerk, what will happen is the audience mirrors that.

And when they mirror that, they don't like the way they feel, especially the judge. So what do the jury and the judge do when they experience that? They turn away from you. And when they turn away from you, they can't hear you. You're totally ineffective at that point.

In our office, we're actually getting a computer program—it's artificial intelligence—that reviews everything that goes out for tone. And if the tone is negative, it goes back to the person who wrote it. If they still want to send it, it goes to me, and I will decide.

Brazil: Do you believe mentoring is an important component to a new attorney's success, and if so, why?

Panish: I think it's huge. I was fortunate myself to have great mentors, including my father who was a lawyer. In our firm, it's something that we do a lot with the younger attorneys getting ready to go to trial, having somebody assigned to them that they can talk to when there's a situation that comes up and they're not really sure what to do. I was fortunate to be mentored by some great lawyers, and great trial lawyers that I learned a lot from. Sharing with other lawyers, and helping younger lawyers, that's critical.

Homampour: At least once a week I meet with some law student or lawyer, and I give them the inspirational speech about how if I did it, you can do it. And they're so amazed, like, "Oh my God, how do you have the time to meet with me?" I'm like, "What do you mean? I get just as much out of being with you, and seeing your passion, as you do from me." We're here to help people, so it's really easy.

Parris: I don't think there's anything more important than



R. Rex Parris '80, photo by Richard Manirath

mentoring. But I don't think we spend enough time explaining to law students what it means, and how to get one, and how you change over the years. If you're a first-year law student, I don't know that you need Brian to be your mentor. I think you're better off with someone else who is going to give you the basics, and then you graduate up the scale. But you need people to keep you in the lines. And if you don't have relationships with people who know where those lines

are, you're lost.

Holley: Johnnie Cochran was my mentor. And kind of following up on your question about civility, one of the things that he taught me is how you can be civil. And he always was cordial and civil to everyone. And I think that in addition to fear, one of the reasons that young lawyers behave the way they do, is because they think that's how you're supposed to act as a lawyer. It's a cultural viewpoint, I think, that needs to be addressed.

Brazil: What are the most important skills in building a productive client relationship?

Holley: I think all of our practices are similar, in that we're dealing with clients who are going through incredibly difficult times. It's not like we're corporate lawyers. I mean, somebody has experienced a tragedy. Someone is being charged with a serious crime. They're looking at time in jail or prison. And so, it is particularly important in our line of work to be listeners, and show compassion, and be as available as we can possibly be.

Panish: The reason I do what I do is because of the clients. I love my clients. I stay in touch with them constantly, and it's all about communication. The state bar will tell you that the times lawyers get complained about most, is when they're not communicating with their clients. We're telling stories about our clients, so we need to know our clients. We need to know them deeply. And it's my favorite part of the job: talking to them, learning about their lives and what this has done to them.

Homampour: You'd be surprised how many plaintiff attorneys, because of the volume of their practice, are afraid

of their clients, or really don't know anything about their clients. Their client is just another case. But for the really successful trial attorneys, telling a client's story is about getting to know and love their clients so that we can express what they are going through to the jury.

Brazil: How did you do it in the beginning, before you were the superstars that you are now?

Parris: When I started out, I was very bad at it. But I viewed it as a character flaw. When I would go into court and do badly, or embarrass myself, I took it very personally, and I thought there was something wrong with me. Finally, I got disabused of that, and then it became very simple. And it's simple today. Every morning I spend half an hour trying to develop skills a little bit better. And I just measure it against myself. The only person I can measure myself against is me. Am I a little better today than yesterday? Once I started focusing on that, all of a sudden I had more than I ever dreamed I'd have. I was accomplishing things I never dreamed I could accomplish.

Panish: I'm competitive and I think that's very important in what we do, to be competitive. But I haven't changed that much since I started. I mean, it's hard work, and it's grit. Stick to it, keep doing it day in and day out, and learn every day. Once you think that you've reached it, that's when you're going down. You need to stay hungry, and you need to have passion. If you have the passion for what you're doing and you work hard at it, you're going to be successful. But you have to work, and it's work. It doesn't just happen. If it was so easy, everyone would be doing it.

Holley: It's interesting listening to you guys talk about competitiveness because I don't see myself as a competitive person, notwithstanding the fact that we operate within this competitive environment. I look at it more as: I am going to do my best job. I am here to advocate on your behalf. I don't look at it as: I'm going to beat that guy over there. I'm going to be the most passionate, zealous advocate for my client, in pursuit of justice. And I don't think that who I am today, in that regard, is any different from how I was as a public defender.



Brian Panish '84, photo by Richard Manirath

Homampour: I've used this analogy so many times. I was Kobe Bryant, just no one gave me the ball. The minute I graduated law school, I was ready to try cases. I was ready to dunk it and win. I just needed someone to give me the ball. And I tell a lot of young attorneys today, "The only one in your way of greatness is yourself."

Brazil: Is there any habit or custom that you developed in law school, that you still use in your practice today?

Holley: I write everything out by hand.

Homampour: For me, the most humiliating thing that ever happened to me in my life, was not passing the bar the first time. I was extraordinarily bright, I can say that. Teachers would tell me that all the time. I went to Southwestern. I winged all of law school. I would cram and prepare for tests. I passed middle of the class, and then I thought I could do the same for the bar exam, and I failed.

And it was so embarrassing, but it was the biggest and best life lesson I ever learned because from that moment on, I was never not prepared. In fact, now when I walk into a courtroom, I am more prepared than anybody. I know the material inside and out. I don't need to read anything. It's in my oxygen; it's in my blood; it's in my veins. So that sort of catastrophic event, personally, of not passing the bar, was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Panish: I make lists, still. In law school, I'd make lists of the classes I had to study for, and then I would create a calendar. I would put on the calendar what I'm going to study on each day and at what time, which I do now for the trial and the witness order, and how I'm going to lay out the trial. So that's how I organize.

Parris: When I was preparing for the bar, for some reason I started getting up at four o'clock in the morning. And I passed the bar. I would not have been able to do that had that habit not just evolved somehow.

Brazil: How did you grow your business to become the superstars that you are?

Homampour: I would take on the toughest of the tough

cases, because those are the ones where the defense wouldn't see you coming. Where they thought, "There's no way he could win this case. Who is this guy? What's he going to do with this ridiculous set of facts?" And it's always in those scenarios that you have an opportunity for justice.

Panish: I would say it kind of grew on its own. If you do great work and you get great results, people are going to come. Clients are going to come; other lawyers are going to refer cases to you. So, it's the quality of the work that is the most important, and the results.

Holley: Yeah, I agree with Brian. It really is just doing good work, making a name for yourself. I really have not done nearly as much networking as I probably should have. It's just a matter of doing a good job, and word of mouth.

Parris: I married well. I don't do any of the business. My wife handles it all. That freed me up to learn how to try a case, and learn how to be a lawyer, and deal with what lawyers should be dealing with. Not everybody has that opportunity, but you certainly do have the opportunity to find somebody that you trust to take care of the business aspect of it. And then that frees you up to be a trial lawyer, because I don't know of anything harder to be. I don't have the intellectual capacity to do both. I just don't. So that's something people should keep in mind when they go out on the road: How are you dividing up the responsibilities?

Brazil: How do each of you deal with the stress of the work that you do, and how do you recharge yourself?

Holley: I work out every single solitary day, and I have to. It's the mental piece of dealing with the stress. I'm up between 4:00 and 4:30 a.m., I'm working out by 5:30 a.m., and I don't know what I would do without that time.

Parris: [To Holley] We could be twins. That's exactly what I tell people: If you're not exercising, you lose. What we do is very, very hard, and that stress will eat you alive. If you're not taking care of the container, you're going to leak.

Panish: I agree with physical exercise. I'm into sports, and being involved. I coached a lot for my kids. Now they're passing me in that. I'm involved in sports still, and I enjoy it.

Homampour: I think it's such an important practice to let go, and not get stressed out. And hot yoga is the best mental, physical way to get to nothing, and to just breathe, and to not let life stresses overcome you. Because you're of no assistance to anyone if you're stressed out. So for me, it's hot yoga.

Brazil: What are the most exciting or promising changes that you see on the horizon in your area of law?

R. REX PARRIS

ONE OF OUR OWN

R. Rex Parris is a Southwestern Law alumni and trial titan. He built his personal injury and employment law practice into a powerhouse law firm that employs more than 100 people. Throughout his legal career, Rex and his legal team have obtained more than \$1.4 Billion for their clients.

R. Rex Parris has mentored many top trial attorneys. If you want to learn from one of the best, apply at PARRIS today.

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Holley: Well in criminal law, there was a time when it was all about being tough on crime, and all of the new laws and rules were “Three strikes and you’re out!” There now seems to be a greater understanding of things like drug addiction. Many things that used to be felonies are now misdemeanors. And that is very promising and encouraging. Perhaps things will continue to move in that direction.

Panish: I’ll say this, we want it to stay how it is, and we like how it is. Restrictions on cases and damage awards, that locks the courtroom for everyone. We just want our clients to have access, to be able to get to trial, and have a fair trial.

Homampour: Hallelujah. Absolutely.

Parris: This is blasphemy, but I don’t think the system is sustainable any longer. The verdicts are growing. Ten or 15 years ago it was the reverse. You didn’t get anywhere near what the client should have gotten. But now these guys walk into in their courtrooms, and the question is, “Is it going to be eight or nine figures?” At some point it’s not sustainable. And I think that what we need to do is recognize that, and then redesign the system so it is as close to fair as it can be. Because if not, we’re going to see this backlash hit us.

Panish: But the courtroom is the only place where there’s a level playing field, where a regular person can take on a General Motors or a large corporation. Arash and I, we totally disagree with Rex. [Rex laughs.] And we’d be campaigning against anything he tried in that regard, because we believe in the system, and we think the system is working. We don’t see a good alternative, and we think we should continue with the system.

Homampour: Yeah, we’re a critical part of the checks and balances of society. In a courtroom, you could have a single plaintiff take on the biggest corporation with unlimited resources, and they can’t escape accountability because a jury of 12 people can hold them accountable. And that’s a critical part of our democracy. It’s essential to our democracy. Our court system is considered the best court system, and is used



Shawn Holley '88, photo by Richard Manirath

as a model for court systems across the world. So I don’t think there’s anything wrong with our court system. I don’t believe there should be any tort reform. I think if anything we should get rid of caps, and that cases should be decided on their merits without artificial caps on value.

In wrapping up the interview, Judge Brazil asked each alum individual questions that pertained directly to them. She asked R. Rex Parris what initially

inspired him to run for mayor of Lancaster.

Parris: Well at that particular time in the office, I was moving it to the children to take over the office. I was probably bored if you want to know the truth. And the other reason is, I get to trial maybe two or three times a year, and I’m learning all these new things, the cognitive science that I’m just in love with. So, I wanted to practice. Well, where do you get to practice? The skill set of being mayor of a city is no different than the skill set of being a trial lawyer, that I can see. Except that you get to poll the jury. You get to poll frequently, which is a huge advantage. That was primarily the reason. But once I got there, oh my God, it is so fulfilling. You can actually make decisions and things change. We’re the first Net Zero [greenhouse gas emissions] City in the world. The EPA just designated me as the green power leader of the nation.

Brazil asked Brian Panish, “As you hire and work with new attorneys, what qualities do you believe most correlate with their future success as litigators?”

Panish: Well, I think grit. I mean that they’re going to work hard, and that they’re not going to give up. There are going to be a lot of hurdles in the practice that we’re in, and the cases that we’re in. You have to be tough. You’ve got to be sticking to it. But more and more today, there’s more legal writing involved, more paper. So they have to have done well in school, and they have to be able to write. You’re supposed to learn in law school how to write, and good lawyers, a lot of good lawyers, can’t really write so well. So I think it’s important that they can write.

But I’m also looking for people that are hungry, and that want to be in trial. In our business, that’s the ultimate thing—to be in

trial. And if you don't want to be in trial, it's like playing football. They tell you if you don't love it, you do not want to be in it, because you'll hate it. I've been in a trial where a lawyer had to go in the hospital. He had a flare-up of his colitis because of the stress. Some people just aren't built for that. I think the most important thing is to do what you love because you're never going to be a good lawyer, or good at anything in life, if you're not doing what you love to do.



Arash Homanpour '92, photo by Richard Manirath

Brazil asked Shawn Holley if she preferred practicing civil law or criminal law.

Holley: I prefer criminal to civil. My civil practice is very interesting. But for me, representing somebody who is facing what my criminal clients are facing—it's just an honor to stand up for someone in that position. And I find the criminal courts to be a lot more exciting and invigorating. I just feel like I can do justice more in my criminal practice than in my civil practice.

Brazil: And speaking of justice, please tell us about your experience in the Oval Office accomplishing what seemed impossible.

Holley: It did seem impossible. Kim Kardashian has been a client and friend for a long time. I was on the O.J. defense team with her dad, so I've known her since she was a teenager. She has always been interested in issues of criminal justice. And she forwarded to me something she'd seen on Twitter about a woman [63-year-old Alice Marie Johnson] who had served 22 years in prison of a life sentence. She was a first-time nonviolent drug offender who had been a good law-abiding woman, who fell on hard times and became a drug mule. But in federal law, you get life without the possibility of parole for something like that. And Kim said, "Let's get her out of prison."

I thought that sounded ridiculous, but I thought, "Well, I don't know, let's try." And it took many, many months of work. Kim knew Ivanka Trump, who put her in touch with Jared Kushner. I found out who the legal team was and hired lawyers. Kim never said "no" to any amount of money that we needed to get the best and the brightest. And all of that culminated in a meeting in the oval office with President Trump, who leaned

back and said, "Tell me about this woman." And I did. And at some point he said, "Let's let her out."

Brazil asked Arash Homampour, "When you were arguing in front of the California Supreme Court, were you nervous?"

Homampour: No. If you know what you're talking about, believe in what you're talking about, have a passion for it, there's no reason to be nervous. I actually found it exciting, exhilarating that I

had this opportunity to convince these judges of my position, and in one of the cases, we won. I mean at the end of the day we're here to make a difference, to make the world a better, safer place. So, of course, the ultimate goal is to change the law, or further the law in a way that helps human beings, because that's what I was put on this earth to do.

Raffi H. Ohanian - Trial Attorney



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Melissa Hanna '17, photo provided by Mahmee

Lessons from Southwestern Law School that Helped Build my Technology Company

by Melissa Hanna '17

Melissa Hanna is the CEO & Co-founder of Mahmee, a prenatal and postpartum healthcare tech platform backed by investors like Serena Williams and Mark Cuban. She received her JD from Southwestern Law School and her MBA from the Peter F. Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. She has taught as an Adjunct Professor of Corporate and Technology Law at Southwestern Law School and previously worked in operations and strategy at healthcare, education, digital media and consumer goods startups. She served as Assistant Director of the Eugene Lang Entrepreneurship Center at Columbia Business School. Hanna has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Business Insider*, *Forbes*, *Black Enterprise*, *USA Today*, and much more.

My journey into the maternal healthcare and technology space started thanks to my mother, Linda Hanna, a registered obstetrics nurse, international board-certified lactation consultant, and healthcare pioneer who designed maternity

and lactation programs at Kaiser Permanente and Cedars-Sinai. She gave me a front-row seat into some of the problems that new moms experience.

It's a critical issue to tackle right now, because the U.S has become one of the most dangerous places in the developed world to give birth, with 700 mothers dying from birth complications, and 50,000 becoming severely injured each year. What's more, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for every five mothers dying in the United States from pregnancy and childbirth, three could have been saved.

Combining my business and law backgrounds, I got to work alongside Linda and our Co-founder Sunny, to launch Mahmee (mahmee.com), a comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care management platform that bridges the tech gap in the healthcare system. Mahmee gives moms access to maternity coaches and connects all of their practitioners together to

ensure no patient falls through the cracks of the currently fragmented healthcare industry.

Much of what's helped me and the company succeed in this industry can be traced back to my time in law school. Specifically, I think there are four things I took away from my time at Southwestern that helped shape both my company and my trajectory to CEO.

Read Every Line

At my early-stage healthcare startup with limited resources and bandwidth, the devil is in the contract details when we partner with large healthcare organizations and maternity-focused brands. I learned early in law school that you can't just skim, you have to deeply understand every detail of what is placed in front of you. As our team begins to structure deals of increasing size and scope, it is important for me to take a keen eye to everything we write and everything we sign, so that I can be confident in our ability to deliver top-notch work with our partners.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

Early on, my ego stopped me from asking questions when I didn't understand something in a lecture or law book. My professors helped me accept that I didn't know everything, and that this was okay! Ego can plague lawyers and business owners alike, and I still occasionally struggle with this now as a CEO thinking I'm somehow failing my team or investors if I don't already know the solution to every challenge. I was reminded of the invaluable lesson of group problem solving during our fundraising process when a key potential investor turned us down. I felt it was all over for us. I called an emergency meeting of our existing investors and was preparing for the worst as I shared the bad news. Instead, everyone stepped up to the plate to help get the fundraising back on track and we raised twice as much money.

Plans Change, Be Flexible

I experienced a terrible and unexpected loss halfway through law school that rocked my family and brought me to the brink of losing the company and failing out of Southwestern. Investors told me to drop out of school; professors told me to give up the business. Both were incredibly important to me and I was torn about what to do. I understood that startups come and go, but law degrees are forever. And even still, I had an unshakeable feeling that now was the right time to build Mahmee, no matter the cost. To ensure that I would complete my degree, I worked with the Dean's office to transition into a

part-time evening program that would allow me to build the company during the day. I graduated, albeit two years later than expected. I remain grateful to Southwestern for giving me the chance to do both.

No Trust, No Team

I didn't expect law school to be a place where I would learn how to be part of a team. From evidence law workshops to the appellate case competitions, I was constantly faced with how to rapidly build teams with ambitious classmates. Trust is a key ingredient for big wins. I realized that in law school, and in life, I wanted people that I can rely upon, learn from, and be inspired by. To build the early team at Mahmee, I learned to trust high-performing people and empower them to succeed. I'm so glad I did.

It's been a tough journey from law student to CEO of a maternity health tech company, but thanks to perseverance, a great team, and the indelible lessons learned at Southwestern, I continue to navigate the ups and downs of startup life and the healthcare IT industry.

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change the lives of Southwestern
students tomorrow.**

For further information, please contact
Debbie Leathers at 213.738.6814 or
dleathers@swlaw.edu.

A Day in the Life of the Hon. Karla Kerlin '90

Karla Kerlin is a Los Angeles Superior Court Judge, appointed in 2008. Prior to this, she was a Deputy District Attorney for 18 years, specializing in sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, and high-profile homicide cases. She earned a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1986, and her law degree from Southwestern Law School in 1990. Judge Kerlin credits Dean Catherine Carpenter for her interest in pursuing a career in criminal law.

Judge Kerlin currently presides over three specialized courts collectively described as collaborative courts in which a team of specialists, including psychiatrists, social workers, and probation officers, assist Judge Kerlin in diverting qualified defendants from jail or prison into specialized treatment programs. Two of these programs are the Office of Diversion & Reentry (ODR) Housing Court and the Mental Health Diversion Courts which provide housing and mental health wraparound services for felons who are homeless and have severe mental health disorders. The third is the Maternal Health Court for incarcerated pregnant women.

6:20 a.m. - My second alarm goes off and I get out of bed. I hit the shower to get ready. While I do my hair and makeup, I **listen to a daily NPR podcast and then NBC for the local news.**

7 a.m. - I **wake my youngest child up** for school. I make a latte and let the dog out. I feed all the pets, pack my lunch, put snacks in my child's backpack, get the newspaper from outside, and pack my child's breakfast.

7:30 a.m. - My child and I **leave for school drop-off.** He eats breakfast in the car on the way.

7:40 a.m. - I use Waze to begin my commute to downtown LA. Most days I **talk to one of my girlfriends (also a judge) on the way to work.** We talk about current issues, books, movies, television shows, and mom issues.

8:20 a.m. - I **arrive in my chambers.** I make a hot tea and check emails.

8:30 a.m. - I usually enter the courtroom and greet anyone present (it might be defendants, attorneys, staff, or members of the ODR Team). I frequently bring breakfast, so I often set it up. I check to see if anyone has an urgent matter that needs to be called ASAP.

8:50 a.m. - I put on my robe and enter the courtroom. I **have a sidebar with the ODR Team** (psychiatrists, LCSWs, probation officers) and the District Attorney and Public Defender to discuss any cases with potential red flags, *i.e.*, people who might not be suitable to be in the program based on their current offense or criminal history.

9 a.m. - I **take the bench and call any ready cases.** The bailiff writes the names of the people in lockup on a white board. After the team interviews people in the lockup, they place a check by the names indicating the case is ready to be called. I pull those files and call those matters. The cases might involve a plea, a sentencing, a plea and sentencing, a probation violation, or a continuance. I consult the white board to see if there are any special issues like a specific prescribed medication or a need for residential treatment so I can discuss those items with the defendant during the proceeding.



Hon. Karla Kerlin '90, photo provided by Judge Kerlin

12:00 p.m. - I assess how many cases are left to see if we are on track to finish in a timely manner. I re-organize the files and **make sure all attorneys have checked in so every case is accounted for.**

12:15 p.m. - Back in chambers, I change into workout gear. I **do a 20-minute workout** using the Daily Yoga app. I then change back into work clothes and watch a one-hour show on Netflix or Prime and read the newspaper while I eat my packed lunch. Currently I'm watching season 3 of *The Crown*.

1:30 p.m. - **From 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. I have two very different afternoons depending on the day of the week.** If it is an ODR day with the intake team present, I am evaluating cases for admission into the ODR program. I am taking pleas and sentencing defendants to the program. I have sidebars with the attorneys and the ODR Team to discuss any potential red flags or issues with respect to particular clients. I also hear motions for Mental Health Diversion and make a record reviewing the six factors set forth in the law (Penal Code Section 1001.36) to make a determination as to whether a particular defendant is a good candidate for diversion. I am working against the clock to see that we finish by 4:30 p.m. On a typical day, we will have about 35 in-custody defendants.

If it's not an ODR day, I spend the entire afternoon reading and preparing the files for the next day. I review each defendant's criminal history and the facts of the case and check to see if there are any red flags that indicate it might not be safe to put a particular defendant on probation and in the program.

5:10 p.m. - I arrive at home. I check the mail, put the dog out, feed the pets, and **make dinner.**

6:00 p.m. - I **serve dinner to my youngest child** and ensure he has done his homework. I eat dinner solo and read the paper as my husband doesn't get home until 7:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. - I head out for a **middle school PTSA meeting.** I am the Secretary so I take the meeting minutes.

8 p.m. - I return home and check in with my husband and child. I clean up the kitchen, **set out my clothes for the next day,** and prepare my lunch.

9 p.m. - I pour a glass of wine, and **my husband and I watch a show together.** Currently, we are watching *Watchmen*, *Chernobyl*, and *Vikings*. Sometimes our child joins us, and we watch *His Dark Materials* or *The Mandalorian*.

10 p.m. - My husband goes to bed and I have an hour alone to read. **Currently, I am reading *The Starless Sea*.**

11 p.m. - **Lights out.**

A Day in the Life of Rear Admiral Les Reardanz '90

Rear Admiral Les Reardanz recently reentered law practice in Bellingham, WA representing port authorities and municipal governments after serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Everett, Washington. Reardanz made the transition to move closer to, and care for, aging parents and better meet increasing military reserve duties. Reardanz also serves as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy Reserves leading the Navy Reserve Law Program of over 600 attorneys and paralegals, and serving as the deputy commander of active duty Navy legal offices. He has had a varied career serving as a municipal and maritime attorney, a museum director, and the project manager for a waterfront redevelopment. He credits Southwestern's diverse student body with teaching him different problem-solving approaches.

4:30 a.m. - Finally turn off the snooze and roll out of bed; **make coffee**; do a quick email check.

5 a.m. - Join an **active duty Navy leadership synchronization call**; drink more coffee!

5:45 a.m. - Leave for the gym and **get some exercise** in. (If I don't do it in the morning, the day gets away!)

7:30 a.m. - Arrive at the office. Since moving back to Bellingham, my commute is about five minutes. Make more coffee (I'm seeing a theme, hmmm) and do a **quick review of news and notes pertinent to maritime and national security domains**.

8 a.m. - Prioritize and answer emails; get projects organized for the day or **participate in the office principal's meeting**.

8:30 a.m. - **Lead a Navy synchronization call of the Reserve Law Program leadership**. Currently, the call includes our strategic action planning process, stakeholder communications, funding, and training issues.

9:30 a.m. - Work with local port and municipal clients. For example, **advise the port authority** on developing a meeting agenda to be consistent with the state's open public meetings act law; advise on interlocal government agreements regarding a real estate development and airport fire protection; and work on an economic development grant agreement.

11:30 a.m. - **Circulate through the office** to check in with the team and socialize.

12 p.m. - **Walk to a nearby bagel shop** for a bagel or soup and head back to the office to answer emails.

1 p.m. - Take elderly parent to doctor's appointment. This varies depending on the type of appointment. On other days, it's spending time with my mom at home helping her around the house. This transition between practicing law, Navy reserve responsibilities, and elder care can get a little chaotic, but I am fortunate that co-workers are understanding and give grace as I shift among various responsibilities.

2 p.m. - Work with port authority on a **contract dispute and another on the sale of a rail line**, including researching regulatory authorities, and working with federal and state regulators and the buyer's attorney; negotiate a local government's franchise with a cable provider.



Rear Admiral Les Reardanz '90, photo provided by Rear Adm. Reardanz

4:30 p.m. - Review, prioritize and **answer necessary emails** from the afternoon.

5 p.m. - Log into the Navy remote websites to check Navy emails, complete travel documents, ensure medical, training, and administrative requirements are complete for military readiness; **update operational support plan**, review progress of Reserve Law Program strategic plan initiatives, and prepare for upcoming reserve duties.

6:30 p.m. - Head home (five-minute commute – yay!!) for **dinner and family catch-up time**. One of my favorite dinners is take-out from the local taco truck that's on my way home!

7:30 p.m. - **Continue Navy program matters**. For example, reviewing policy guidance on recruiting processes, developing remarks for upcoming conferences and trainings, develop upcoming travel schedule (and the required information for an ethics opinion on travel), and working on our common operating picture to understand where our forces are needed to support on-going and future operations.

8:30 p.m. - **Relax with my family**, watch TV, and get ready for the next day, which is mainly getting clothes laid out so I don't wake people up in the morning.

10 p.m. - **Head to bed to read**, which usually lasts about four pages before I fall asleep!

Patrick L. Radogna
Deposition Reporters
Call 626-331-9516

A Day in the Life of Lorraine D'Alessio '10

Founding partner of D'Alessio Law Group, Lorraine D'Alessio was the recipient of the Century City Lawyer of the Year Award, the 2017 Leader in Law Award by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, the 2018 Enterprising Woman Award, and has been recognized as an accomplished Super Lawyer since 2017 as well. A former Ford model turned legal powerhouse, D'Alessio is a multi-award-winning immigration expert. She serves on the board for Artists for Change and is the author of *Going Global: Investing in U.S. Immigration*, a highly anticipated guide to U.S. immigration expected to be published later this year. D'Alessio has helped countless entrepreneurs, artists, innovators, companies, and organizations find and retain international talent to gain a competitive edge in the United States and around the world.



Lorraine D'Alessio '10, photo provided by Ms. D'Alessio

4:30 a.m. - My alarm goes off and I start my day. **Over a cup of coffee I'll open my emails** and check in with our international team members to review operations.

5 a.m. - Time to lace up my jogging shoes and **get in a bit of exercise**. This energy will carry me throughout my busy day.

6:30 a.m. - I wake the kids up and focus on **making breakfast and their lunches** for them, while helping them get dressed and out the door for school.

7:15 a.m. - I **take a quick consultation call** with a European entrepreneur before driving the kids to school. Our client is eager to set up operations in the U.S. and to get the ball rolling on a visa petition that suits his needs.

8 a.m. - The kids hop out of the car and I make my way to the office. I might **stop for a croissant and coffee number two** to propel me through the morning.

9 a.m. - I get to the office and **check in with the LA team** on a number of ongoing plans and projects with our accounting and human resources departments, and continue through my inbox, while preparing for afternoon meetings and consultations.

11 a.m. - **Meeting with a leading Esports gaming team** at the office. I'm always amazed at how this new wave of gamers and entrepreneurs are setting the curve for an entire industry. As in any craft, getting to the top takes plenty of practice.

12:30 p.m. - **Lunch date with the DLG attorneys**. I think it's important to regularly check in with my team outside of the office, not only so we can all stay on the same page with changing policies and news items, but also to make sure everyone is happy, healthy, and has what they need to get the job done and serve our clients to the best of their abilities.

2 p.m. - **Call with a local tech hub** interested in learning more about the O-1, E-1 and E-2 visas for international employees. While the H-1B visa tends to get the most spotlight in tech, there are a number of alternative options for those hoping to continue their work in the U.S. I love opening their eyes to the many options at their disposal.

3 p.m. - **Office meeting with an LA-based production and visual effects company**. The company has helmed production for a number of esteemed

commercial campaigns and productions that have aired across North America and are preparing to hire a couple of accomplished international producers and directors for upcoming projects.

4 p.m. - It's crucial for me to have a **daily call with our teams in Asia** to make sure we are on the same page. Given the pace and ever-changing state of immigration law, these meetings are important for my knowledge of any changes we're seeing in international immigration policy. These conference calls with our Asia teams are necessary to stay on top of it all.

5 p.m. - Meeting with our communications department to **review an O-1B visa keynote address I'll be delivering** to a renowned Canadian acting studio next week. These presentations are key for educating Canadian actors on what they need to know before pursuing a work visa and are crucial for broadening my understanding of the issues they face in the industry.

5:30 p.m. - **Call with a client** whose visa petition is facing a Request for Evidence (RFE). We've seen an increase in RFE's in the past few years, and by now we've seen every sort of issue possible.

6:15 p.m. - I **step out of the office for a quick bite** down the street before heading back to tackle a couple more calls before heading home.

8 p.m. - After a few more calls, I head back home. I'm usually in the office pretty late and considering the varying time zones between our international teams, **I'm always prepared to take a call should anyone need to get in touch**.

8:30 p.m. - I arrive home and catch up with my family, making sure that the kids have tackled their homework before preparing them for bed. At home **I balance my time as a mom and as a business leader** and am usually still working until I go to bed.

9:30 p.m. - **Pack for an early morning flight to Thailand** tomorrow. I'll be there for a couple of days to give presentations to international entrepreneurs.

10:30 p.m. - Usually I'm a night owl and work well into the night, but **tonight I need my eight hours**. Typically I'll only get about four to six hours of sleep at home, or three to five hours when I'm traveling. Considering the week ahead of me, tonight is an outlier.

A Day in the Life

of

Matthew Alsberg '15

Matthew Alsberg is Manager, Business Affairs for PlayStation Vue at Sony Interactive Entertainment where he negotiates TV channel rights acquisition deals. Alsberg joined the Vue team prior to its public launch, starting out as a legal contractor and moving into a business role. He was initially recommended for the job at Sony by a Southwestern alum, and he credits the balance of intellectual rigor and soft skills he cultivated at Southwestern for his career success.

He spent ten years prior to law school as a producer, record label manager, and touring musician, performing on four continents and at some of the world's largest music festivals.

Alsberg is the proud husband of fellow Southwestern alum Alenoush Aslanyan '17, who is now an Associate at Tyler & Wilson LLP. They met while in law school and now are parents to a one-year-old baby boy.

In addition to working full-time at Sony, Alsberg maintains his own private practice, representing clients in the music, fashion, and motion picture industries.

Somewhere between 6 and 7 a.m. - I've had to shake myself awake a couple of times overnight to hunt for pacifiers and put my son back to sleep, but this time he's up for real. I get up to **get him from his crib and change his nappy**. I bring him back to bed with me for a bit of a snuggle.

7 a.m. - Once my son is over loafing in bed, I'm up to make his first bottle of the day and play with him in the living room while my wife sleeps in. She is resolute about him having no screen time, so I furtively check my calendar for the day and get to any pressing overnight emails while he's distracted with a toy or running off into another room of our home. My favorite musical performances these days consist of **morning jams with my son** as I play guitar and sing "Twinkle, Twinkle" and "Wheels on the Bus" and he "strums" with his little finger on the guitar with me.

8 a.m. - The baby and I wake my wife up, and she takes over hanging out with him while I **get to emails in earnest or read any documents that require a prompt response**. Once that's finished, I prepare the baby's breakfast and get him ready for the day.

9 a.m. - The nanny arrives and I either **start my day's phone calls with programming partners on the East Coast** or get ready to head into the office. If I'm on phone calls, I head to Larchmont Village and grab a breakfast treat. Ninety percent of the time, I get a call from our in-house counsel as we're both alone in our cars driving to work and we discuss our deals or any other projects.

10 - 11 a.m. - Upon arriving, I make rounds greeting colleagues and understanding their business development goals or project statuses. A holistic picture of the business is critical to successful negotiations, and building good relationships with your team is the best way to ensure you have all the necessary information. I **build and recheck my to-do list** to get grounded in any larger projects I have in order to stay on track.

12 p.m. - If I'm not having lunch with a programmer, I like to have lunch with folks from our Product, Ops, or Service Management teams. Our office is in a bit of a food desert, which means we either go off-site or eat at one of the three food trucks they've begun to provide. This casual info gathering always proves invaluable to my work negotiating deals, because **it gives me the boundaries**



Matthew Alsberg '15, photo provided by Mr. Alsberg

of what I can give or have to get in order to close a deal. I've found that people are much more open to discussion over a meal.

1 p.m. - At about this time, my son is down for a nap, so I check the cam in his room and ogle him for a couple of minutes before getting back to work. This is also usually the time of day that I might receive a flurry of emails relating to a **programming issue or product development snafu that requires my attention and critical thinking** to solve with colleagues.

2 - 3 p.m. - Since my office has an open floor plan and I sit in a cube and not a private room, I usually duck into a conference room to **chat with our lawyer and develop strategy** to address the day's issues.

4 p.m. - My last in-office meetings of the day take place involving stakeholders from across our business unit, from operations, to product, service management, marketing, legal, and business development. We are a small team and **these meetings are critical** to making sure everyone is aligned.

5 p.m. - I try and wrap up anything that needs input from colleagues at this time, trying to catch them before we head out for the day. Once that's done, I pack my things and head home. My commute isn't too long by LA standards, only about half an hour, but I **try to get a last phone call or two in on the way**. If there's no work to be done, I usually call my wife, who has returned home from work by this point, and talk to her and the baby.

6 p.m. - Once I get home, I try and **change clothes quickly and get some family time in**. That usually means some playing with my son and chatting with my wife about how the day went at her firm.

6:45 p.m. - Promptly! **Bedtime routine starts for the little man**. It's always the same order of operations: bath, jammies, bottle, story, kiss mama goodnight, and then I put him to bed. We've been reading the same book for about three months. Once he's down, my wife and I get back to work and discuss what to eat for dinner.

8 - 11 p.m. - At this point I open my personal laptop and work on any **freelance legal jobs I've taken on** or make some music. Recently, pals from my pre-law-school life have reached out needing legal help. It's given me the ability to keep my lawyering muscles in shape and most of the projects have been a blast. I've been working on a licensing deal for a start-up record label, an agreement for a creative direction services-at-large street wear retailer, and a life-story rights agreement with a person who recently faked their death.

11 p.m. - **Read or watch TV** before heading to bed to start the whole process over again tomorrow!



L to R: Justice Lidia Stiglich, her daughter Sophia Stiglich, Justice Abbi Silver, her husband Kirk Jaster, Justice Elissa Cadish, photo provided by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

Abbi Silver '89 Sworn In

Southwestern Alumna Abbi Silver was sworn in as a Nevada Supreme Court Justice during a January 10, 2019, investiture ceremony in Las Vegas. Justice Silver is the only judge in Nevada's history who presided at every level of the state's judiciary. In 2015, she was the first woman appointed to the Nevada Court of Appeals. She was one of three judges appointed to the inaugural Nevada Court of Appeals.

Attending the investiture ceremony to witness Justice Silver's incredible accomplishment were two of her biggest supporters from Southwestern: her criminal law professor, Catherine Carpenter '76, and Associate Dean for Institutional Advancement, Debbie Leathers. Professor Carpenter and Dean Leathers traveled to Vegas to honor one of Southwestern's most accomplished graduates.

Justice Silver grew up in Boulder City and graduated from Clark High School in Las Vegas. In 1986, Judge Silver earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

After graduation from Southwestern in 1989, she was a Judicial Law Clerk for Judge Earl White, Jr. and then served as a Deputy District attorney and later as Chief of the Special

Victim's Unit. Justice Silver penned legislation on Aggravated Stalking and Violation of Protective Orders against Domestic Violence. During her almost 14 years at the DA's office, she tried more than one hundred jury trials.

She prosecuted high-profile cases and secured convictions against John Wayne Bobbitt and Floyd Mayweather, Jr. for domestic violence and stalking. She also prosecuted and obtained convictions against the stalkers of Senator Harry Reid, Senator John Ensign, entertainer Jerry Lewis, former-sheriff Jerry Keller, and casino mogul Steve Wynn.

ABBI SILVER IN HER OWN WORDS

"I am so humbled and honored to be only the seventh woman ever elected as a supreme court justice in the great state of Nevada. I will do my best to serve all Nevadans utilizing my thirty years of experience in the law to shape Nevada's jurisprudence."

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PANISH CIVIL JUSTICE PROGRAM

Established following an endowment from Outstanding Litigator awardee and Southwestern alumnus Brian Panish '84, the Panish Civil Justice Program provides top litigation training to students, creating a crossroads for judicial bench and bar, and strengthening the foundations of the American civil justice system.