



## “Go Big!”

### MAKE THIS YOUR YEAR TO TRY A CASE – YOU DON’T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

Last year, OCTLA celebrated its 60th anniversary. What an incredible experience, looking back on 60 years of leadership, growth, securing justice and giving back to the community. This year, OCTLA turns 61 and we turn the page and press forward with renewed vigor and commitment to the pursuit of justice for our clients, ensuring that each of us takes no challenge alone. Welcome to our new members and board members, and congratulations to recently elected Parliamentarian Tom Antunovich, OCTLA’s newest executive officer. Immediate Past-President Lindsey Aitken-Campbell demonstrated exceptional leadership of OCTLA in 2023, and I have big shoes to fill. And so, fittingly, the theme for this year is “Go Big!”

In 2024, I am challenging every member to challenge themselves! No, I am not asking anyone to become the next Gerry Spence – no quantum leap necessary. Rather, I am challenging every member to stand on the shoulders of the giants and legends that have come before us and take your practice – and your life – to the next level. Expand your mind and ask yourself, “Where do I want myself and my practice to be in a year from now? Five years from now?” Big verdicts, arbitration awards and settlements, yes. Indeed, securing exceptional results for our *current* clients becomes the foundation for securing justice for our *future* clients. But also, big hopes, big dreams, big thinking, big courage, big commitment, and big hearts.

#### Go try a case

Perhaps most significantly, and specifically, I’m challenging every member to get into the courtroom and try a case to jury verdict in 2024. Now more than ever, we need *more* trial lawyers with *more* trial experience. And not just any trial experience, but experience winning – obtaining favorable jury

verdicts for our clients. We’re not here for our health. We’re here to secure justice for our clients. To be sure, this is often no small or easy feat. We must carefully evaluate our cases and the likelihood of prevailing at trial to provide sound legal advice when counseling our clients. Losing hurts...and it’s expensive. Increase your chances of success by handpicking a case to take to trial this year.

Identify a likeable client, a heart-touching story, clear liability, or substantial damages. Try a case you believe in, even if liability is disputed or you’re sitting on a zero offer. Avoid getting pushed into trial by the defense on your worst case – settle that case. Because we’ve all been there. Trying a loser *will* be a bad experience. It *will* drain you. It *will* leave a sour taste in your mouth. And it *will* hurt your confidence. But here’s a necessary truth to remember – we’ve all lost a trial (or more), but losing a trial isn’t necessarily a reflection of your skill or potential as a trial lawyer. After all, we can’t change the law, the facts or our clients. We just advocate as compellingly and persuasively as possible with what we have to work with.

So, win a winner and celebrate it and, if necessary, be the “man in the arena” and lose a loser, but not too many. There’s still value in going the distance, even in a loss. In the end, it only *really* hurts deep when you lose a winner.

#### Consider a co-counsel

If you haven’t tried a case, reach out to an experienced trial attorney and partner with them. They’ll show you the ropes and share some trial tips with you along the way. If you don’t have the financial resources to try a case, partner with a firm that does. Few plaintiffs’ attorneys have unlimited financial ammunition. Many defense lawyers can get free trial reps on the insurance

company’s dime. They get paid regardless, win, lose or draw. By contrast, we have to “assume the risk” of defeat (to use an insurance term). Co-trying cases is an effective way to pool risk and reduce the harmful effects of loss while gaining valuable trial experience.

So, where do you begin? *How* do you “Go Big”? It starts with taking inventory. Determine exactly where you are and then chart the course for where you want to go on the next step in your professional journey. Give yourself space to reflect, recover, brainstorm and create a vision – no one is going to hand it to you. Make a vision board if helpful. Then, set an intention, formulate a plan and dedicate yourself to executing the plan. As the poet once wrote, “Stick to your task until it sticks to you; beginners are many, but enders are few.”

Next, focus on the fundamentals. Remember that, perhaps paradoxically, to go big the *small* things must become automatic. Michael Jordan said, “Winners don’t just learn the fundamentals, they master them. You have to monitor your fundamentals constantly because the only thing that changes will be your attention to them.” Finally, double down on grit. Author and Harvard researcher Angela Lee Duckworth, best-known for her research on success, posited that, “The single biggest predictor of success is grit.” Sometimes, the secret is there is no secret.

Together, in 2024 not only are we going to take our professional and personal selves to the next level, we’re also going to give back big to the community and raise money for a worthy local Orange County charity. I can’t wait to see the big things OCTLA and our members will achieve this year. I have more to say, but alas I will heed the words of Polonius in Shakespeare’s Hamlet and remember that, “Brevity is the soul of wit.” So, just “Go Big!”