

REFLECTIONS ON OUR HISTORY AND
THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS

As we prepare for our 32nd Annual Las Vegas Convention, I want to look back and reflect on all the amazing Board members and Past Presidents who have built the foundation for this association. This amazing group of trial lawyers has given their time and energy to raise our association to a point where our education programs are at an all-time high in attendance. Our networking mixers are overflowing with lawyers eager to connect and share ideas. This year's Las Vegas Convention is sure to be our most successful ever. Our inaugural CAALA Trial Academy is going to give special insight to many of our members and this year's first graduating class is going to be acknowledged with Certificates of Completion in front of a large crowd at this Las Vegas Convention.

One of the joys of being President of CAALA is getting to meet so many young trial lawyers. However, it is also gratifying to see the old guard coming out to meetings and offering their advice and institutional knowledge. These veteran trial lawyers have given so much of their lives to the civil justice system and have helped to preserve the rights of our citizens in California and nationwide.

When I see the next generation of trial lawyers coming through the ranks, it is so rewarding to know that the fight for justice will continue long after I am President of this great association.

While writing the article this month, I had been participating in numerous phone banks to raise money for the Pack Patient Safety Act so that our message can get out to the voters in November.

When this initiative passes, the people of this State will get real improvements in the safety and the personal responsibility portions of our healthcare system.

To those of you who are sitting on the sidelines waiting to see if we can win what are you doing? Are you seriously sitting there while your brothers and sisters are in the trenches and battle, getting bloodied and bruised? What kind of a trial lawyer sits on the sidelines and doesn't grab a sword or a shield to enter the battle? I do not know a single trial lawyer who is afraid to fight in the battle it is in our DNA win or lose, we always get in the fight! Always! Don't wait for someone to call you. Go online at www.caoc.org/packact and contribute.

Death of a Father – A Special Challenge for Trial Lawyers

So, the moment of truth in your life is when your father is lying there in a hospital bed dying with no chance of recovery ... How will you respond as his child, as his legacy, as a human being? For those of us who have been lucky enough to have a father in our lives, the loss of a father is a devastating one. Communicating that loss of a father to a jury is a heavy burden for any trial lawyer. After having suffered that loss personally and having to tell the doctors to go ahead and turn off the life support system and then watching the soul of my father leave his body ... well, it is not something you ever get over or forget.

For me, I often reflect on the death of my father, Carl Wells. A person I miss every day, even though he passed away some 12 years ago. He taught me how to dribble a basketball with both hands and to always look up for the open man. He taught me how to throw a baseball correctly. He taught me how to be a good teammate and how to compete in sports and life. My father, who played in the Cincinnati Reds organization in the 1950's, loved to compete at everything from ping pong to basketball to life.

This summer, we lost an icon in Major League Baseball – Tony Gwynn, a classy, warm man, universally loved by everyone and not just in San Diego. Amazingly, he got to see his son, Tony Gwynn, Jr. make it to the Major Leagues as a baseball player. When his father passed away this summer, his son, who was playing for the Philadelphia Phillies, was allowed a bereavement leave in order to take care of the family business of a funeral and the grief that goes along hand-in-hand. The funeral was followed by thousands of fans and the outpouring to the family was amazing. One of the most amazing things occurred when Tony Gwynn, Jr. came back to work with the Philadelphia Phillies. He apparently arrived at Philadelphia and was sent into the game as a pinch hitter in the 8th inning. When he came to the plate, the Philadelphia crowd, which is notoriously tough, rose to their feet and started a thunderous standing ovation. As Tony Gwynn, Jr. tried to gather his composure in the batter's box, it was obvious at least to the Marlins catcher, Jarrod Saltamacchia, that this was a special moment. He called time out and walked out to the pitcher's mound to pretend to speak with the pitcher in order to allow the opposing player, Tony Gwynn, Jr., a moment to reflect and gather himself. This also allowed Tony Gwynn, Jr. to look up, acknowledge the crowd and stand there for a moment as his father's son. Can you imagine what he was thinking about his Dad and his life at that moment? He probably thought about all the Little League games and all of the batting practice, and all of the coaching tips and times

that he had spent with his Dad over the course of his life. He probably thought about how amazing it was that all these people in a City where his father never played on their team, would acknowledge what an amazing father and person had left the planet.

When you speak to a jury about the loss of a father to his son or daughter, remember the moment of Tony Gwynn, Jr. stepping to the plate in a Philadelphia Phillies uniform remember the magnitude of the loss that all fathers are to their children.