

The CAALA Installation Dinner was a real inspiration for me and I hope everyone in the room felt the same way. It was very interesting to hear Carney Shegerian speak about his life and what he has gone through on a personal level. I was so happy to see Ibiere Seck express her enthusiasm for being a rising star and, of course, who could forget Judge Rylaarsdam explaining why he chose to go to Loyola Law School over USC. The Ted Horn Award video of Scott Marks and his family brought me to tears. I have never been prouder to be a member of CAALA than I was that night when Mike Arias walked over to their table and presented the Award to Scott's wife, Sandy, and his daughter, Cammy.

I especially want to give thanks to all the people who showed up and showed such great deference and respect during my speech and the speeches given by many others. It was a night to give thanks to many of the people who have helped me in my life and career. Let's face it – we have all needed help at one time or another. It was also a night to reflect. A night to tell what I remember and what I believe.

As winter turns to spring, I want to encourage everyone to re-commit to the cause of civil justice. This is a tough job but sometimes the fight is just as important as the results. Reflecting on a tough case that I tried with Browne Greene several years back, it reminded me of why we do what we do. The case was trifurcated from liability to causation to damages. It involved an approximately eight-month pregnant woman who was making a left turn and was struck by a vehicle that was sort of curb sneaking around a construction zone and caused a t-bone type accident. Her daughter was born about four weeks later. She suffered hundreds of seizures at the beginning of her life and eventually was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. There were a ton of experts in the case and the case went on for many years. Just before the first trial date, the defense expert pediatric neurologist came up with a new theory that some anti-depression medication that was ingested by the mother was the likely cause of her child's seizure disorder and resultant Cerebral Palsy. We had no experts on this issue with respect to the medication and/or the doctors that prescribed it. The trial court would not let us amend our expert witness list and we were put in a tough position. We decided to have the case dismissed and re-filed because the plaintiff minor was only five years old at the time of the dismissal. We then re-filed the case and brought in the drug manufacturers and the doctors, who eventually filed motions for summary judgment, got out of the case and then we were back in action with our theory of just a regular negligence and course and scope of the defendant driver for his company.

The trial was extremely tense; however, the case settled while the jury was deliberating on the first phase of the trial. Although the amount was confidential, it is fair to say that all sides believed it was the right thing to do because of the risks involved to both the plaintiff and the defense.

After the trial, the client's mother wrote a letter on behalf of her Cerebral Palsy diagnosed daughter that was one of the most meaningful letters I have ever received as a lawyer. I thought I would share it with you because it is of such propound significance to what we do as trial lawyers.

Dear Geoff:

Words elude at describing my profound gratitude for all you have done for me. While words themselves are inconsequential, their meaning have consequence. For you have forever impacted my life. You believed in me. Now I will share what I believe in.

I believe that heroes exist. That warriors and peacemakers are two sides of the same coin and you need them both to win the war. I believe the truth shall set you free and so does the journey and closure of a case. I believe we work towards our fears and never give up. Perseverance means anything is possible.

I believe that we are magic, life is precious, peace is reasonable, laughter is special, blessings are defined and love is grand. I believe that kindness matters. Each human life matters. I believe these things because I see them in you.

Love,

AB, Age 8

Every time I read this letter, I still am moved by the contents and meaning on behalf of both the mother and the daughter.

Our clients do believe in us. So, at the very least, you should believe in yourself. This job has its ups and downs, wins and losses. However, my belief is that you never give up and you never give up on yourself and the cause you are fighting for each day -- simple civil justice for your clients. I do believe that kindness and justice matters in all of our lives. Make sure you practice a little kindness everyday as a trial lawyer too!