



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

NIKKI PRESLEY MILIBAND

Mentoring: From YLD to Masters

To file under the heading “people you should know,” I would like to introduce to you several members of OCBA committees who are instrumental in bringing together our newly minted attorneys who are just finding their way on the journey to the practice of law with our seasoned attorneys (some might say “legal giants”) who have reached incredible heights.

To say that I have been fortunate to have had numerous mentors throughout my twenty-seven years of practicing law would be an understatement of significant proportion. Practicing law is challenging and rewarding, but it is not always easy. And in the beginning, the most simple tasks completed with ease by more experienced attorneys can seem nearly impossible to the inexperienced. Mentoring is hardly a new concept. In fact, looking back through my husband's old President's Pages from eighteen years ago, the issue of mentoring was front and center. It remains equally important today. With so many new attorneys becoming solo practitioners, it is critical that they have someone to turn to for advice and guidance. Conversely, for the attorneys who have been practicing law the same way for many years, the fresh ideas and the exposure to newfangled technology that a new attorney can share may be equally beneficial.

The OCBA's Young Lawyers Division (YLD) will celebrate its twentieth anniversary next year. It was formed in 1999 by Magistrate Judge Karen Scott, when she was known as Karen Walter, and an attorney at Rutan & Tucker. This year, Kelly Galligan, also an attorney with Rutan & Tucker (thank you, Rutan!), is taking the helm of the YLD, which has over 800 members. I can't wait to see where she takes this remarkable group of new attorneys. The YLD is open to all attorneys in practice five years or fewer, regardless of age. The YLD Chair sits on the OCBA Board of Directors for the year he or she chairs. The YLD Chair-elect, Kristin Garcia, sits as the Co-Chair on the Mentor On Demand Committee, which produces videos posted on the OCBA's website by various judges and prominent members of our legal community. The YLD Diversity & Inclusion Chair also sits on the OCBA Diversity Committee.

The OCBA's Masters Division was formed in 2011 under then-OCBA President John Hueston. Julie McCoy (this

year's Franklin G. West award honoree) was the chair, assisted by honorary co-chairs Thomas Malcolm and the late Honorable Alicemarie Stotler. The Masters Division has over 1100 members—many of whom are legal powerhouses in Southern California—and has several well-attended programs each year. To be in the Masters Division, an attorney must have practiced law at least twenty-five years. I remember when I had practiced twenty-four years, and a great program was being put on by the Masters Division. I wanted to go, but thought I had to wait until I hit year twenty-five. Wrong! The Masters Division welcomes all attorneys to its events. Currently, the Master's Division is chaired by Chris Wesierski of Wesierski & Zurek, LLP, who has assured me their members will mentor new attorneys this year.

OCBA's Mentoring Committee was formed in 2005 under then OCBA President Dean Zipser. Michael Yoder (also a past president of the OCBA) headed the task force on the formation of this committee. I had the pleasure of co-chairing the Mentoring Committee with Dean for several years, and what a rewarding experience it was. Dean and Cherrie Tsai, co-chairs of the Mentoring Committee this year, agree that including the chairs of the YLD and the Masters Division would be beneficial in placing our new attorneys with mentors.

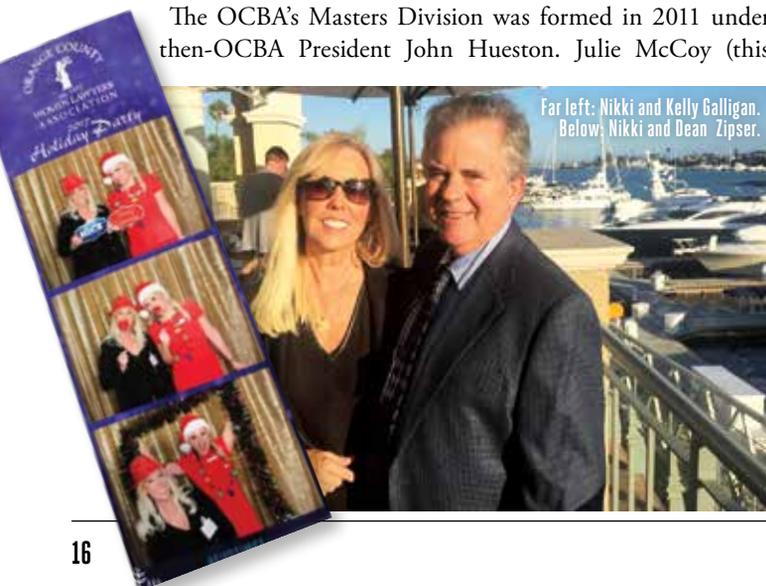
Mentoring can be formal or informal. Informal mentoring is the natural pairing of individuals, either in their firms or through happenstance, while formal mentoring is through a formal committee whose task it is to match attorney mentors and mentees. I urge all new attorneys practicing four years or fewer, and those practicing over seven years who have an interest in being a mentor, to fill out the applicable forms at www.ocbar.org/mentoring to participate in the OCBA mentoring program. The Mentoring Committee will then match the mentors and mentees (protégées) according to numerous criteria, including practice area, geography, practice size, gender preference, and so on.

Mentoring can also contribute to retaining diversity in the legal profession. Increasingly, there are multiple pipelines for diverse groups from high school to college, and college to law school. However, it should not stop there. Mentoring can be of great assistance in helping the diverse members of the bar to navigate the profession of practicing law, and data suggests that fewer women and minority lawyers leave law firms early when they feel more connected from successful mentoring programs.

George Washington Carver was quoted as saying “I wanted to know the name of every stone and flower and insect and bird and beast. I wanted to know where it got its color, where it got its life—but there was no one to tell me.” Let's not let this happen with new Orange County attorneys. Let's share with them our knowledge and insights. Please sign up to be a mentor—you won't regret it.



Nikki Presley Miliband is the OCBA's 2018 President. Nikki is also a probate and trust litigation partner at Good Wildman in Irvine. She can be reached at nikki@ocbar.org.



Far left: Nikki and Kelly Galligan.
Below: Nikki and Dean Zipser.