



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine, especially the many families emigrating in the midst of this brutal and unjustified war. The OCBA encourages all members who want to help support nonprofits providing critical resources and relief to those in need to visit our Community Outreach page at www.ocbar.org/Get-Connected/Committees/Community-Outreach

July 2022 Marks Fifteen Years for OCBA CEO and Executive Director Trudy Levindofske

If you were watching ESPN in the late 80's, you may have witnessed the work of a young, aspiring TV producer interviewing shark fishing competitors at an event off Martha's Vineyard, near the site where *Jaws* was filmed. Or maybe you saw another broadcast of a sail-fin competition off West Palm Beach, Florida.

For three years after graduating Cal State Fullerton with a Communications Degree, OCBA's fifteen-year CEO and Executive Director, Trudy Levindofske, travelled across the country as an associate producer for a company providing fishing and sporting events for ESPN.

"One of the hardest parts of my job was interviewing somebody talking about different fishing techniques while watching and smelling the chum they threw into the water to get the sharks to bite," said Trudy. Before each competition, she would help organize production logistics—securing permits, scouting locations, hiring local crews, and finding the right equipment. After each event, Trudy would help edit the footage, match it up to sound and background music, and then race it to New York City for final editing.

When hard-pressed for parallels between her past and present lives, Trudy acknowledged, "Dealing with talented, high-profile, and time-sensitive people that show up on set and you need to get them on camera quickly in and out, and also dealing with volunteers that don't have much time and need to know what their job was and where they needed to be, that attitude also works with nonprofits."

In the spring of 1989, Trudy set out for calmer waters and walked into a California temp agency looking for a publishing job. They submitted her resume to advertising giant, Foote Cone & Belding, but asked her to consider bidding her time at a three-week stint for the OCBA. She took the job and hit the ground running. While retyping old press releases, Trudy asked her superiors, "Do you mind if I change these up a little bit? I have a little background in communications." She did such a great job polishing them that she was asked to interview as the Assistant Executive Director with then-executive director, Lynda Cano. Trudy interviewed, got the job, and loved it so much that when the original advertising position opened for her to interview, she declined.

"I was looking to make a career change with a young family and not wanting to be on the road," Trudy said. "OCBA liked the idea that I understood budgets, management, logistics, working with independent contractors. I liked the idea of the job tapping into my various expertise. I thought I'd stay for three years and move on, but I never got bored because it is always evolving. There were different board members and different personalities and challenges."

Trudy later served as Communications Director and Associate Executive Director, working with Executive Director Donna Foust,

who held the position until retiring in early 2007. A search committee chaired by past president Dean Zipser, which included past presidents Tom Malcolm, Julie McCoy, and Dick Millar, was formed to conduct a nationwide search for Foust's replacement. The late West Award honoree John Hurlbut, Jr. approached Trudy at a Constitutional Rights Foundation event and asked, "Are you going to put your name in?" "Yes," she replied, to which John responded, "Well then, let me get to work."

"It was sort of like conducting a world-wide treasure hunt, all the while knowing that the treasure was buried in your own backyard," remembers Dick Millar. "We reviewed résumés from all over and held many interviews to confirm what we knew all along: there was only one Trudy! It was the easiest decision I have ever participated in and it has been confirmed repeatedly over the last fifteen years."

Trudy will soon be the longest-running CEO and Executive Director in OCBA's history. She is also presently its longest-serving employee. Always humble, Trudy tries to shift the credit to others for OCBA's success during her tenure: "A lot of the reasons we're doing so well is because of our wonderful presidents and their cautious approach to spending, as well as our incredible staff who work so hard every day."

But past OCBA presidents line up to attest to the impact Trudy's had. "We know well that she is the backbone of the OCBA, and what allowed us to maintain our sanity, and hopefully accomplish a few things along the way," said past president Michael Yoder. "The Orange County legal community is oh-so-fortunate to have her!"

"If I had to describe Trudy in a nutshell, it would be that she is the ultimate 'Positive Factor,'" said past president, Hon. Robert Gerard. "No problem was too large or too small—Trudy made sure it got done and was done right."

"Every year she has to pivot and adjust to the personality, style, and goals of a new president," said past president, Nikki Miliband. "Yet it is Trudy who maintains the continuity from year to year to make sure we stay on track. And she does it with humility, grace, and a wicked sense of humor."

I agree wholeheartedly. It is an absolute honor and privilege working with Trudy. Our entire legal community has been blessed to have such an incredible leader at its helm for fifteen years. So next time you see Trudy, please congratulate her, and make sure she knows she's beloved by her OCBA chums.



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