



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Thanking Our Veteran Colleagues

This month brings both Thanksgiving and Veterans Day. An anonymous passage I read says, “Thanksgiving is a day when we pause to give thanks for the things we have. Veterans Day is a day when we pause to give thanks to the people who fought for the things we have.” Let’s honor our fellow attorneys who have served in the military.

Recipients of the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, and Silver Star have all gone on to careers as attorneys. Pioneering Supreme Court Justices John Marshall and Felix Frankfurter were military men. Orange County’s U.S. District Court Judge David O. Carter, Appellate Justice Eileen Moore, and Superior Court Judge Francisco P. Briseño are among the decorated veterans who became attorneys and now preside over our cases.

Some of our colleagues began their legal careers in the military as members of the Judge Advocate General’s Corps, where lawyers have played an integral part throughout our country’s history. Military lawyers, referred to as “JAGs,” began in the 1770s.

Peter Hardin, for example, is an Orange County Deputy D.A. Before that, he was Battalion Judge Advocate with the First Recon Battalion at Camp Pendleton. In this capacity, he deployed to Afghanistan, where he advised the Battalion Commander and junior officers. His duties ranged from those we’d expect for a lawyer, like family law and personal matters for soldiers, to those particular to combat areas, such as life and death issues of the rules of engagement, interrogation limitations, combatant detainee rights, and civilian casualties. Though an attorney, he was foremost a Marine, where his job included going on patrol with fellow Marines in “kinetic environments” (*i.e.*, areas where bullets are flying). The Marines “taught me work ethic, attention to detail and decision-making, and gave me experience with a diverse group of people,” Peter says. “It’s rewarding to use those experiences every day in my civilian job at the D.A.’s Office where, like the military, the goal is to make my community a better place.”

Tom Umberg is a business litigator at Umberg Zipsper, after previously working as an Assistant United States Attorney, a two-time state assembly member, and a partner with Morrison & Foerster and then Manatt Phelps. Tom’s first career was in the military. Upon graduating from UCLA, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army and then promoted to Captain. His service included stints in South Korea, with NATO forces in Europe, and as a paratrooper with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, among others duties. While still in the military, he obtained his law degree and served as a JAG, acting as a prosecutor, defense counsel, and judge. After leaving active duty, Tom remained with the U.S. Army Reserves and rose to the level of Colonel.

Tom has been recalled to military service twice. First, as part of the U.S. War Crimes Commission to prosecute a very small set of Guantanamo detainees accused of committing war crimes. Second, he spent an eleven-month tour as Chief of the Anti-Corruption force

in Afghanistan, working with the Afghan army and police to stop corruption in their ranks. Tom was awarded the Bronze Star for his service in Afghanistan. Tom treasures his time in the military, noting there is “no tighter bond than being in the military with those you are deployed with.” The military instills “devotion to group mission and a sense of comradery,” characteristics that have remained important to Tom in his civilian practice.

The military has ongoing legal detachments that serve wherever and whenever needed. One such unit is the Army’s 78th Legal Operations Detachments (LOD), an Army Reserves unit based right here in Orange County, in Los Alamitos. Army Reserves LODs are comprised largely of attorney-soldiers, and must be ready to go to hot spots anywhere in the world to fill in when needed. “Ready” means being physically fit, ready in soldier skills, and ready in legal training. Whether doing so here in California or elsewhere as needed, LOD soldier-attorneys may advise Commanders on personnel and administrative matters (among others), and all Army personnel on deployment-related legal issues, ranging from wills to consumer protection or family-law issues.

The 78th LOD is commanded by Colonel Jacqueline Jackson, who began serving her country while in ROTC programs at Stanford University. After graduating from UCLA School of Law, she then spent eight years on active duty where she obtained broad legal experience, including military justice (criminal law), government contracts, general legal assistance, and labor law. She has been a member of the Army Reserves ever since, while also practicing federal labor law for the Department of Homeland Security. Colonel Jackson believes the wide breadth of experience she obtained in the military has greatly aided her work as a civilian attorney. Most importantly, she says, “the military gave me the courage to try new things, take chances and expand my legal horizons.”

Colonel Jackson’s counterpart in the other California LOD, Dave Wallace who commands the 75th LOD based in Northern California and is also an Assistant U.S. Attorney, perhaps says it best: “As a JAG, I learned both soldiering and lawyering, and they complement each other. As soldier-lawyers, we strive to become what we call, ‘twice the citizen.’ The sense of pride in what we do—and in our Army—can’t be measured, but it’s very real.”

This short column can’t even scratch the surface in highlighting our attorney colleagues who strove to be “twice the citizen” by serving our community both in military and civilian roles. They, and those caring and brave enough to follow in their footsteps, deserve our heartfelt thanks. I hope you’ll take the time this month to do so.



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