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LRIS Panel Attorneys Recover Multi-Million Dollar Settlement

By Carole Conn
Assistant Director, LRIS

At the close of 2006, the Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) received a call from a panel member stating that a case referred by LRIS in 2005 had settled for what is the largest award in memory by an LRIS panel attorney—\$4,150,000.

LRIS personal injury panel attorneys Charles Geerhart and Thomas Paoli, Paoli and Geerhart, LLP, knew that an airline case referred to them had some potential. As reported by the attorneys, the husband and wife plaintiffs were traveling on a twelve hour international flight. Over two hours after departure, the male began exhibiting symptoms of illness, including seizures. At the time, the flight crew considered it a medical emergency and paged the cabin for a doctor. In the meantime, the airline captain identified two major airports,

both over one hour away, for an emergency landing.

Although there was no doctor on board, a person identifying himself as a “medical student” looked at the plaintiff. Because the plaintiff seemed better after about 20 minutes, the airline captain decided not to divert the plane, and instead flew another nine hours to the destination. Unfortunately, the plaintiff had another seizure about two hours after the first, and was again examined by the medical student, who told the crew he could not provide a diagnosis. Upon his arrival at the destination, the plaintiff was no longer con-



LRIS Personal Injury Attorneys Charles Geerhart and Thomas Paoli of Paoli & Geerhart, LLP.

scious. His diagnosis: intracerebral hemorrhage from which he has never awakened, despite undergoing emergency brain surgery at the destination. The plaintiff remains in a persistent vegetative state.

Paoli and Geerhart argued that the

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Sister City relationships explored.
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NEW OFFICERS INSTALLED AT ANNUAL LUNCHEON

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BASF THANKS HEAD START HOLIDAY GIFT PROGRAM SPONSORS

More than 2,000 students received gifts this year from more than 45 law firms and legal departments.
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REMINDER



Don't forget - it's renewal time!

If you haven't renewed your membership yet do so now. Don't miss out on a single issue of *The BASF Bulletin*.

Return your renewal notice, renew online at www.sfbar.org, or call 415-982-1600 and renew over the phone.

New Year Brings New BASF President

Nanci Clarence installed as 94th BASF President at Annual Luncheon

By Sayre Happich
Asst. Director of Communications, BASF

More than 500 members were in attendance at BASF's annual luncheon and installation of officers held on December 14 at the St. Francis Hotel on Union Square.

Saying farewell was 2006 President Joan Haratani of Morgan Lewis & Bockius, LLP. Haratani marked her year as president with several initiatives, including Work/Life Balance and Putting a Face on the Homeless.

Incoming President Nanci Clarence of Clarence & Dyer, LLP spoke to the crowd about her goals for the year, which include expanding BASF's ongoing diversity agenda, with more focus on LGBT lawyers and lawyers with disabilities; launching a BASF College of Trial Advocacy for juvenile defenders; appointing a Standing Committee to Defend the Independence of the Judiciary, and working to find ways to guarantee that people who can't afford lawyers get meaningful representation.

Awards of Merit and Barristers of the Year honors were also presented at the luncheon.

William Alderman and Melinda



Photo by Jim Block

Jodi Linker; Edwin Prather, Nanci Clarence, Kate Dyer, Abbie Chin and Fanny Lay, all of Clarence & Dyer LLP. Chin, is a member of Phoenix Rising, a dance group that performed at the annual luncheon.

Haag, both of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe; Dick Odgers, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman; and Jack Londen, Morrison & Foerster, LLP were presented with the Awards of Merit for their contributions to BASF and the legal community in 2006.

Erin Dolly, Baker & McKenzie and James Mink, Heller Ehrman LLP were presented with the Barristers of the Year awards for their contributions to the Barristers Club in 2006.

The other officers of the Board of Directors installed were President-Elect James Donato, Cooley

Godward Kronish LLP; Treasurer Russell Roeca, Roeca Hass Hager LLP; and Secretary Arturo González, Morrison & Foerster LLP.

The Barristers Club installed their new leadership, including 2007 President Farschad Farzan, Bingham McCutchen LLP; Vice President Sandra Geiger, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis LLP; Treasurer Robert V. Hale III, HSBC Card Services; and Secretary Kevin Montee, Berding & Weil, LLP.

Pictures from the luncheon can be seen on pages 4-5.

Attorney Spotlight: LRIS Personal Injury Panel Attorneys Thomas Paoli and Charles Geerhart

By Carole Conn
Assistant Director, LRIS

Lawyer Referral and Information Service Personal Injury attorneys Charles Geerhart and Thomas Paoli relish the challenge of plaintiff's work, especially that which draws upon their combined 42 years of trial litigation experience.

Paoli and Geerhart, attorneys in practice 25 and 17 years respectively, formed a partnership almost a decade ago which specializes in serious personal injury and products liability cases. In addition, Geerhart currently sits on the Board of Directors for the San

Francisco Trial Lawyers Association.

Each had previous experience in trial litigation, but from different sides of the courtroom. Geerhart

"There is no substitute for the personal connection that is made with a human client who needs your help."

Paoli & Geerhart, LLP are pleased

"There is no substitute for the personal connection that is made with a human client who needs your help."

-Charles Geerhart

started his law career defending companies, whereas Paoli honed his trial skills handling asbestos and personal injury cases. "I'll never go back to defense work," says Geerhart.

to provide clients the level of attention and expertise partners in a law firm can offer. And when a substantial fee comes their way, it allows the firm to engage in civil rights work on

behalf of prisoners and pro bono work for children being placed into foster care.

All the while, LRIS provides a steady stream of referral calls regarding screened, personal injury matters. According to Geerhart, "We have had about 20 really good personal injury cases through LRIS, and have now settled or tried our fifth, six-figure, case through the service."

If you cannot assist an inquirer who contacts your law firm, consider telling the caller about LRIS, where over 60,000 callers turn each year for information and referrals to experienced attorneys. The direct line is 415-989-1616.

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SAN FRANCISCO

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LRIS panel attorneys recover settlement for stroke victim

Continued from front page -

airline should have attempted to make radio contact with a qualified physician, and failing to do that, they should have landed the plane as soon as possible. According to the attorneys, the airline's policies and procedures manual stated that in a medical emergency, the crew should attempt to locate a doctor on board; initiate radio contact with the ground; and if necessary, land the plane at the nearest airport.

The defendant airline contended that it had fully complied with its own procedures and also stated that it was reasonable to rely on the medical student who told the crew that the plaintiff appeared to be okay

after the initial symptoms. Whether the delay in medical treatment exacerbated the plaintiff's condition was contested, with differing medical experts.

The attorneys reported that the turning point in the case was the medical student's testimony at deposition. As it turned out, the medical student was in training to become a physician's assistant and had received one hour of training on identifying strokes. The student agreed that he knew almost nothing about strokes, and also confirmed that he had told the airline crew at the time of examination that he did not know what was wrong with the plaintiff.

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CITY HALL

Ever been a mayor or spent time on a planning commission or town council?

An upcoming issue of *San Francisco Attorney* magazine will feature BASF members who practice law by day and devote hours at night fulfilling civic responsibilities.

Contact Ann Murphy at amurphy@sfbar.org if you have a story to tell.