



OCTLA President
Doug Vanderpool
 VANDERPOOL LAW FIRM

Journal of Consumer Attorneys Associations for Southern California
ADVOCATE
 November 2022

The reluctant president

REFLECTING ON AN INCREDIBLE YEAR THAT IS ABOUT TO COME TO AN END

The Advocate copy editor has informed me that I only have two columns left before I hand the presidency off to Lindsey Aitkin Campbell. Looking at my calendar, we have one more Board meeting, our Top Gun Event, and then our Holiday Lunch. This year has really gone by in a blink of an eye. Of course, this got me thinking about the last year and all that has happened. Which got me thinking about history and other “reluctant presidents.”

In April of 1789, George Washington wrote to General Henry Knox, his friend from the Continental Army who served as Secretary of War. Washington accepted the inevitability of his election to the presidency, but with remarkable reluctance:

“I feel for those Members of the new Congress, who, hitherto, have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of business: – For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I can assure you – with the world it would obtain little credit – that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill – abilities [inserted: & inclination] which is necessary to manage the helm. – I am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own, on this voyage, but what returns will be made for them – Heaven alone can foretell. – Integrity & firmness is all I can promise – these, be the voyage long or short, never shall forsake me although I may be deserted by all men. – For of the consolations which are to be derived from these (under any circumstances) the world cannot deprive me. – With best wishes for Mrs. Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself – I remain

Your Affectionate, George Washington.”



Not to wax melancholy, but...

This makes me think of another saying: “A great leader does not seek to lead. He’s called to it. And he answers.” Which brings up the old saw: “Be careful what you wish for.”

I will try not to wax melancholy, but this really has been an amazing year for me as President of the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association. It was not what I expected. It may sound strange, but in my wildest dreams I never saw myself as a leader in this organization. Over ten years ago I was approached by several members of the Board, who encouraged me to run for the Board of Directors. After a couple of years on the Board, I was again approached by several members of the Executive Committee, who encouraged me to run for Excomm. I did, and for whatever reason, the Board voted me in as Parliamentarian. Now eight years later, here I am, reflecting over an incredible year that is about to come to an end. And what a year it was.

I took on these assignments with a great feeling of dread and insecurity. My year absolutely started out as a “Reluctant Presidency.” I, too, felt “that my movements to the chair of President would be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution.” I did not think I was worthy of leading this great organization. I believe that I would eventually be exposed as a complete fraud. Thankfully, no one caught on (yet), and it appears I will be able to successfully pass off the reins to Lindsey.

Let me also dispel any notion that I think I am or was a “great leader” this

year. While I do believe that we have had one of the best years in our history, I know that this was almost exclusively due to the incredible Board of Directors and Executive Committee. The average age of our Board of Directors is 38! Such excitement and enthusiasm from this group. I cannot thank you all enough. Lindsey Aitken Campbell in particular provided such incredible support and guidance. I tried to lead with a very light touch on the reins and let the committees do what they were supposed to do. Everyone exceeded my expectations. I also cannot thank Janet Thornton enough for all she has done and continues to do for the OCTLA and its members.

Top Gun November 12 – sold out!

I know I have been beating this drum all year, but it is now less than a month away from the Orange County Trial Lawyers’ Association Top Gun Awards Dinner and Charity Auction. We are very excited to have selected Operation Helping Hands as the recipient of our Top Gun silent and live auction proceeds this year. Kim Valentine’s story leading her to start this charity, and the time, heart and soul she dedicates to strengthening and broadening its mission, moved our hearts tremendously. We are honored to be able to give back to Operation Helping Hands. The Top Gun event will take place on Saturday, November 12th at The Westin South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa. It is sold out, so if you do not already have tickets . . . sorry! 🙏