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YOU WORK:**
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HIGHER EDUCATION

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FLEXES ITS MBA
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OLD HOLLYWOOD
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*Move over, LA and New York. Trial attorney
DANIEL CALLAHAN and others have made
OC a destination for top firms.

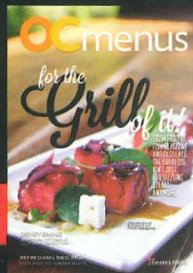
ANNUAL ISSUE

OUR GUIDE
TO THE OC'S
**MOST NOTABLE
LAWYERS.** FIND
OUT WHO IS ON
THIS YEAR'S LIST.

TOP ATTORNEYS

From second tier to
top shelf, why Orange
County has emerged as
one of the nation's **most
vibrant centers of law**

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FOR THE
GRILL OF IT

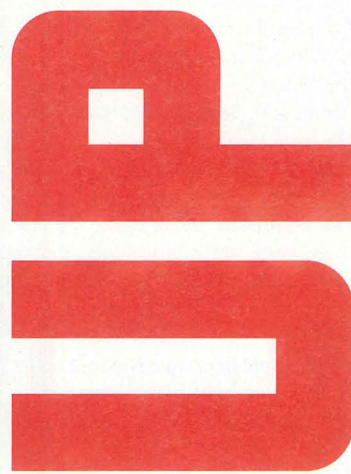
OC MENUS INSIDE



CHALLENGE RODDIE (CHALLENGEPHOTO.COM)

FROM THE

GROUND



Trial attorney Dan Callahan arrived in Orange County 31 years ago and today is one of a growing number of success stories on a legal landscape that is garnering national attention. by Steve Churm

As Dan Callahan finished law school at UC Davis, he surveyed his classmates and asked them where the best place was in California to ply his trade. The response was split: Santa Barbara or Orange County. Like any eager young lawyer with a crisp new diploma, Callahan did what he has come to do best: He took a first-hand look for himself. What he found in the early 1980s in Orange County was a burgeoning market with elbow room to grow a practice and a family. He was sold on the Big Orange and within three years of landing his first job here, he opened his own firm on St. Patrick's Day in 1984. ("I needed all of the luck I could muster," he recalls.)

Today, Callahan & Blaine has 28 attorneys, 56 employees and a name atop one of the gleaming office towers on Hutton Centre Drive in Santa Ana. From the firm's ninth-floor offices, Callahan has seen the transformation of the

sleepy Orange County of 31 years ago into a world-class economy with a law community to match.

Born into an Irish-Catholic family and raised in middle-class Chicago, Callahan is an Orange County trial attorney success story, both in terms of settlements and judgments, who has built a practice from the ground up.

Confident and colorful, Callahan has won some of the biggest cases in Orange County in the past 10 years, including the largest business litigation jury verdict in O.C. history: a \$934 million win for Beckman Coulter in Beckman Coulter vs. Flextronics.

OC METRO recently sat down with Callahan to talk about the state of the Orange County legal community and how it escaped the shadow of Los Angeles and other big cities to make its own mark. We also pulled the curtain back to peek at why Callahan's firm is one of the best trial law establishments in the region.

OCMETRO: What was Orange County like when you arrived here in 1981 as a young lawyer?

DAN CALLAHAN: It was dynamic and growing. It was an exciting place. Construction was really starting to take off. There were not many law firms indigenous to Orange County. Those firms that were here did not have much of a profile statewide or nationwide. The local legal community was dependent on firms in Los Angeles for support and to handle big cases. Large companies that were based in Orange County always looked to L.A. to find their attorneys. That's not the case anymore. Now, the large companies based here – Beckman Coulter, Allergan and Broadcom, for example – now look to find local counsel rather than trekking up the freeway to L.A. We've grown as an industry. The number of lawyers practicing here has just about tripled since the '80s, and the number of judges has tripled, going from 41 to 119.

OCM: It's remarkable how much things have changed.

DC: Without question it has changed. I remember driving from San Clemente in 1981 to my first job interview. I took the "Beach Cities" turnoff from the I-5 and thought that Newport Beach was a few miles ahead. By the time I turned off Coast Highway and headed toward the airport, there was nothing but rolling hills. The airport was tiny. No toll roads. No Irvine Spectrum. And the law community was small. Some firms like Rutan & Tucker were here, but it was a very local industry.

OCM: And now?

DC: Orange County stands on its own, equal with any other metropolitan area in the country in terms of law expertise. Orange County firms like ours increasingly get recruited to handle cases in other states. Our legal community has a growing and strong reputation.

OCM: Does the legal industry outside Orange County, particularly Los Angeles, see it the same way?

DC: I think the law community there, if forced to admit it, would say that the Orange County powerhouse firms here are as good as or better than what exists in L.A. today. However, there is unwillingness on the part of L.A. to acknowledge that their younger brother can beat them in a fight. It's competitive.

OCM: Your track record as a firm has been impressive, particularly in the past decade. What sets you apart?

DC: What I've been doing for my entire career is looking at things from a different angle. I don't look at a challenge straight on. I try to turn it to the left and turn it to the right to see if I can find an opening to exploit and find

the solution. As a result, we've had some of the biggest settlements and judgments ever: the largest business litigation jury verdict in O.C. history, at \$934 million, which remains the largest verdict of *any* sort in Orange County history; the highest settlement in a personal injury case in U.S. history, at \$50 million, and the highest employment settlement and judgment in O.C. history, at \$38 million. We look at things

differently. Orange County has grown because it is a community of innovators. We like to think we are, too.

OCM: So what drives you to be different?

DC: It's just an unwillingness to accept defeat. We have a will to win. But, equally important, I hate to lose. So rather than concede, we continue to focus on finding a way to win. On your typical case, you just follow existing law and hope to persuade a judge or jury that your position is just. But on the tough cases, those that test the bounds of existing law, you have to look outside the box. You have to be inventive and willing to push yourself to think differently. What drives me is a desire to win and a desire to help my clients.

OCM: Besides a burning desire to win, what sets you apart from other trial attorneys?

DC: When I have a trial approaching, I go into what I call "lockdown." Thirty or 60 days from opening arguments,

I bring all of the documents, depositions and other pieces of the case into my office. I go from supervising the case to personally reading every page of every document. I get as close as possible to the case. I dictate ideas and summarize key parts of the case. The key to winning is in the preparation. I simply don't want to lose. When I go into a case, there is a certain fear because there is a mountain of documents, and I always

assume that my opposing counsel is quite good. To combat that fear, I put that individual in my mind on a pedestal and view him or her as a 10-foot-tall giant. By the time I walk into trial, I'm an 800-pound gorilla because I have studied so long, and he's not really 10 feet tall at all. I suddenly have the mental edge I need.

OCM: Sounds like this is your go-to strategy heading into a big trial.

DC: If you are really going to be ready, you have to have read all of the documents yourself. You have to digest the material. You have to be one with it. It's the only way you can be ready when witnesses start changing their stories.

OCM: Success can dull the drive and make even the best professionals soft as they slow to enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Have you gotten soft?

DC: No. It's in my DNA to push and stay sharp. I enjoy what I do. Besides, this firm is much more than me. I have an

obligation to build this firm for the benefit of everyone here. I have a responsibility, and we're not done yet having success.

OCM: In baseball they talk about the "five-tool players," stars who bring exceptional skills such as speed, power and fielding. Assess your attributes. What are you best at?

DC: Simple: I get results. I'm the Angels' Mike Trout of Orange County litigation. What

Orange County stands on its own, equal with any other metropolitan area in the country in terms of law expertise.

distinguishes us from other firms is a commitment to the client. We've built this practice by getting results, and that has led to referrals. But we've also done it by getting out of the office. At one time, I wrote a column for the Orange County Business Journal. I've spoken many times to industry groups, and we market ourselves.

When people need a lawyer, I want them, in half a second, to think of our firm first. The only way that will happen is by getting more exposure.

OCM: You do traditional advertising, unlike many of your peers in the legal community. You are a contrarian on this topic.

DC: That's right. But I couldn't build the firm just relying on the phone ringing randomly. As a business owner, you want to do the best job you can. I wouldn't be doing that if I didn't share our successes and tell our story. I have an obligation to keep the business moving. As a result, I'm fortunate that I have something to talk about. We've had success. **ocm**