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Establishing Trust

Injury firm Peacock Law has worked hard to earn confidence in the safety personnel community.

By Shane Nelson

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Newport Beach plaintiffs' attorney Mark J. Peacock knows what it's like to share a bathroom with O.J. Simpson.

"We represented the estate of Nicole Brown Simpson back then," the founding partner of Peacock Law APC explained, recalling a strange restroom encounter before a deposition not long after Simpson was acquitted of murder.

"O.J. and I are together, taking a leak or whatever, and he starts telling me stories about Paula Barbieri, trying to hint to me questions to ask her during the depo," Peacock said, chuckling some. "And I just remember standing there staring at him."

Peacock, who worked at the time for celebrated trial attorney Michael Piuze, said he didn't ask Barbieri any of the questions suggested by the onetime NFL star. And, according to Peacock, Simpson later sat quietly through the entire deposition.

"It was a wild and crazy time," Peacock said, laughing outright now.

Peacock clearly still harbors tremendous respect for his mentor Piuze, who died in May this year.

"He was the greatest trial lawyer," Peacock said of Piuze. "He took on the tobacco industry as a solo practitioner and won. ... And he really showed me what it meant to help people as a lawyer and how to effectuate change."

Peacock said he makes use of those lessons regularly today in his personal injury practice, where he only represents safety personnel who've been hurt on the job – including law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and parole or probation agents.

Megan K. Bartlett, who joined Peacock Law in January of 2017 as an associate, described her boss as an attorney who frequently applies a



Courtesy of Peacock Law APC

From left, Mark Peacock and Megan Bartlett

creative approach, one that contrasts with her more analytical tendencies but provides a nice work balance at the two-attorney shop.

"He's got more of a creative mind, which sounds funny when it comes to the law," Bartlett said of Peacock. "But it definitely is beneficial in certain situations, and I've certainly learned from that."

Bartlett's father is a retired police officer, and she said her background in that tight-knit community plays a role in the satisfaction she takes today from her firm's focus.

"I grew up in law enforcement," she said. "And I have a lot of friends that are firefighters, so it's nice to help those people when they've been injured."

Peacock, who noted his firm doesn't ever handle the workers compensation side of safety personnel injury cases, said it took time for him to develop trust within that community, a process he understands far better today.

"They feel very protective of each other," Peacock said. "And they don't let a lot of people into their group to help. ... You have to earn your way in."

That community's protective na-

ture has developed in the face of frequent attacks, Peacock said, referencing as an example the backlash law enforcement has been subject to in the months of protests after the killing of George Floyd.

"They're constantly attacked by the media," Peacock said of safety personnel. "It's really, really unfair. It's understandable in certain situations when things go bad. That part is understandable, but generally speaking, the vast majority of these people are fantastic people just doing the right job the best they possibly can."

Peacock said his firm is exploring a few cases in which law enforcement officers were injured during protests and riots this summer, but no lawsuits have yet been filed in the matters.

"We get involved and say, 'OK, who is the third party?'" Peacock explained. "If it's Joe Blow in a crowd, throwing something at an officer, it's kind of challenging to identify that person."

The firm frequently handles auto accident cases in which safety personnel are hurt while responding to emergencies, and Bartlett mentioned a recent matter involving a firefighter

who was struck by a car while on foot at the scene of a fire.

The fireman has a workers comp claim, but that doesn't cover pain and suffering nor does it cover the substantial overtime pay firefighters typically accrue, according to Bartlett.

"A lot of firefighters live off their overtime and count it as part of their income," she explained. "So he's off work and has been for a while, and he and his wife, who's home with three kids in the middle of the pandemic, are now struggling with a significantly reduced income. So that's where we come in, and we are pursuing a case against the driver who wasn't paying attention and hit him."

Orange County workers comp attorney S. Henslee Smith, who has worked for years on cases with Peacock Law, said the firm's founding partner is tenacious.

"He scrupulously represents his clients," Smith said of Peacock. "They have no grounds to complain at the end of the day when Mark is finished with their case."

Newport Beach plaintiffs' attorney Theresa J. Barta, who's known Peacock for nearly 30 years and still consults with him on cases from time to time, described him as "calm under fire" in a trial setting.

"And he's very charismatic in front of a jury," Barta said. "He's the kind of attorney jurors see and think, 'This guy has a great personality. I'd like to get to know him.'" Peacock, meanwhile, had nothing but high praise for his associate.

"Megan is a wonderful blend of brilliance and common sense," he said, again mentioning her law enforcement upbringing and the importance of trust in the safety personnel community. "Ernest Hemingway said 'The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.' Guess what? Our clients trust Megan."