

Mentor as...Model of Work-Life Balance

By Karie Boyd, Associate

I can still remember the scenario. Having made the bold decision to strike out on my own fresh out of law school, it wasn't long until I was desperately looking for a mentor. And in retrospect, I got really lucky. I joined the Young/New Lawyers Division of the San Diego County Bar Association and enthusiastically signed up for their mentorship program, requesting a mentor in the civil litigation arena. As fate would have it, the president of YNLD advised me happily that I was in luck, because one of the best mentors in town happened to be available to be paired with me, a woman from her office named Susan Hack.

From the moment I met Susan, I couldn't believe my good fortune. She was one of the most well rounded individuals I had ever met, being able to balance family with her workload, all while devoting literally hours of her time selflessly assisting a new lawyer like me. I remember the first time I asked her for help – I was preparing for my first deposition and civil litigation trial. Without missing a beat she offered to meet me and review the facts and the pleadings. I should add that at the time she was getting ready to go on vacation, run a marathon, and prepare a federal court trial! As my case moved forward, she actually was able to assist me with depositions and offered to co-chair the trial. When I nervously asked her how much that would cost me, she astounded me once again by telling me of course she was going to do it pro bono. While we ultimately settled the case, she explained to me that it was well worth her time and effort to bring me up to speed so that I would feel confident in my first trial.

In addition to her help on specific cases, Susan also graciously loaded me up with practice guides and legal information, and introduced me to lots of important people in the legal community. She was an excellent resource, sounding board, and friend.

In retrospect, I recognize that while there were other lawyers in the community that assisted me over the two years now that I have been practicing, no one even came close to helping me in the ways that Susan did. It was more than legal assistance; it was practical advice about life. Having a two year-old daughter myself, I learned a lot from Susan's ability to balance her legal practice with her personal life. She was somehow always able to succeed famously at work yet always have plenty of time to spend with her family.

Since I began my relationship with Susan, I have actually had the privilege of mentoring four or five young protégés myself, who came out of law school with the same dreams that I had of opening up their own practice. As Susan was there for me, I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to get to know them and help them decide if opening up their own practice is the right decision for them. I have been able to provide similar advice and assistance to the interns with whom I currently work. In short, I feel that my mentoring experience has come full circle, allowing me to give back the selfless time and wisdom Susan gave to me.