

ELITE TRIAL LAWYERS

The National Law Journal recently honored law firms and lawyers handling cutting-edge work on behalf of plaintiffs in practice areas ranging from mass torts to securities litigation. Here's a look into the works of our winners.

AVIATION—LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

CLIFFORD LAW OFFICES

■ **WHAT WILL BE THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN YOUR PRACTICE IN THE NEAR FUTURE?** The greatest challenge in the future of personal injury litigation is technology – from the perspective of discovery to the requirement for lawyers to be tech-savvy in order to be deemed competent. Clients expect faster replies, courts require e-filing, and researching online is now an everyday occurrence. Clients trying to represent themselves through online forms, fee-sharing with online non-lawyer client referrals, and online research of voir dire are just some of the technology issues we face as information continues to grow exponentially.

■ **WHAT CLIENT WIN IN THE LAST THREE YEARS HAS LEFT THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR FIRM AND WHY?** Obtaining a \$101 million verdict on behalf of a baby born brain damaged was most heartwarming. The hugs from a young woman who received a \$35 million verdict after a truck dragged her for blocks was very satisfying. But being named Lead Counsel in the litigation involving the Boeing 737 Max8 for the

March 10 crash in Ethiopia has had the greatest impact on our firm. Of the 157 people aboard that ill-fated flight, we represent 68 victims from 35 countries in a tragedy that has bound them together in a fight against a major corporation to keep that plane grounded. Their dedication to not witnessing a third crash is a testament that their loved ones did not die in vain.

■ **WHAT SOCIETAL ISSUES OR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS DO YOU SEE IMPACTING YOUR LEGAL PRACTICE IN THE YEAR AHEAD?** The greatest challenge in the year ahead is juggling being a trial lawyer, mentoring young lawyers and running a law business all at the same time. As the world moves faster, the ability to grow one's firm for the next generation of lawyers is a daunting task. It appears that finding one's niche – much like medical specialties – is the best way to serve one's client and achieve justice. That allows the lawyer to be cost-conscious as well as to hone



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one's skills in taking cases to verdict. It also is important to pass on what one has learned to younger lawyers. They need to know the necessary skills of being a trial lawyer while at the same time being a wise business person who knows how to develop relationships. I hope by setting an example of hard work and earning the respect of one's peers that I pass on the importance of the various responsibilities of being a successful trial lawyers for the next generation.

Submitted by Robert A. Clifford, Partner.