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TOP LAWYERS OF THE DECADE 2011-2020

Brad D. Brian

The captain of the team

Brian, who chairs the firm he joined 39 years ago, recalled his key relationships with people who have helped him throughout his career and stressed the value of providing opportunities for others.

Early on, following his graduation magna cum laude from Harvard Law School, came a clerkship with the late Judge John J. Gibbons of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals followed by a stint working for Andrea S. Ordin, the Central District's first female U.S. attorney.

"She transformed that office into a first-rate diverse law firm, and she had a huge influence on how that office runs today," Brian said, noting that almost no one advised him to take the prosecutor job. "Of all the Los Angeles law firms I talked to, only Munger Tolles thought it was a good move," he said, where he got great trial experience, learned to build cases and broadened his outlook. "That's obviously changed, as now all the firms want to hire lawyers out of the U.S. attorney's office."

The job with Ordin was transformative and set in motion a working life that would lead to major successes in Brian's career as he came to specialize in litigation, investigations and trials.

When he was ready to move on, name partner Ronald L. Olson

took him to lunch. "He picked me up in his old Volvo with a hole in the floor and told me how Charlie Munger had started the firm with Roy Tolles, with the idea to hire the best and give them early opportunities," Brian said. "Ron took that vision and told me he wanted to build something special. That's what drew me in."

Brian's most recent decade began with his role as lead counsel for the offshore drilling company Transocean Ltd. in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill trial in New Orleans over the human and environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

"After almost three months of trial, Judge Carl Barbier ruled that BP was grossly negligent but Transocean was not, requiring BP to indemnify Transocean for the tens of billions of dollars in damages in the case," Brian said. He credited law partners Michael R. Doyen, Luis Li, Daniel B. Levin and the now-retired Susan E. Nash for helping achieve a successful outcome.

"We were the captain of seven or eight law firms," Brian said. "Others had more lawyers, but our team was in charge. You know, our ratio here is one-to-one partners to associates. That's the Munger Tolles approach, and that only works if the partners work really hard and the associates are really talented."

The decade ended with another tragedy, the 2020 helicopter crash that killed Kobe Bryant, his daughter, two other children, the pilot and four other adults. Brian represents the basketball superstar's



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widow Vanessa Bryant in her suit against Island Helicopters Inc.; in December, she won the additional right to sue Los Angeles County and the sheriff's department over photos that deputies allegedly took at the scene. "Luis Li is leading that part of the litigation. He's a wonderful trial lawyer," Brian said. "It's an honor to be sought out to handle a case like this."

Brian guided client MGM Resorts International to an \$800 million settlement with victims of the 2017 mass shooting outside the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip. Brian worked with Doyen and Bethany W. Kristovich. "Bethany became co-lead on that case. She's extraordinary," Brian said.

Also in the decade Brian represented PG&E in the 2017-2018

wildfire cases, opened a Munger Tolles office in Washington, D.C. and co-chaired a \$15 million campaign for the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles' new headquarters.

Along with the others he named, Brian said he'd been fortunate to work over the years with top current and former lawyers at the firm like Carolyn B. Kuhl, Carl H. Moor and Gregory J. Weingart — all now judges — along with Alan D. Bersin, Bart H. Williams, Lisa J. Demsky, E. Martin Estrada and Hailyn J. Chen.

"All of them have made me a better trial lawyer, and I like to think that I helped bring out the best in them as well. Providing opportunities for others may sound selfless, but it's self-serving, too," Brian said. "It makes us all better."

— John Roemer