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TOP BOUTIQUES 2018

CIVIL LITIGATION

Miller Barondess LLP

LOS ANGELES

Louis R. “Skip” Miller knows that, in litigation, size doesn’t matter.

What matters is “the quality and the ability of the lawyer,” Skip Miller said. “Because it’s just one-on-one when you’re in court.”

Noting that, when a firm is trying to get a deal done, it needs lawyers in a variety of disciplines, Skip Miller added, “In litigation, you’ve just got to be smarter and better than the opposing counsel.”

Miller Barondess was founded in 2006 by Skip Miller, his two sons, partners Jim M. Miller and Dan S. Miller, with Alexander “Sasha” Frid and Brian A. Procel, who attended UC Berkeley Law with Dan Miller.

They wanted to create a high-end litigation boutique, employing the best and brightest young attorneys from top law schools who had been trained at the best big firms.

The firm is actively recruiting, and according to Skip Miller, has seen a plethora of good recruits this year.

Asked what sets Miller Barondess apart from bigger firms, Skip Miller said, “Young lawyers are looking for hands-on experience, good training, and they don’t necessarily get it at every big firm.”

“Some do, some don’t — we do it,” Skip Miller added. “That’s our culture, that’s how I am and that’s passed down through the ranks to everybody.”

Miller Barondess doesn’t hire lateral partners or acquire other practice groups, which has allowed the firm to keep its quality high.

“It’s all organic,” Skip Miller



Sam Diephuis / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Brian Procel, Amnon Siegel, James Goldman, Dan Miller, Mira Hashmall, Christopher Beatty, Skip Miller, Jim Miller, Jason Tokoro and Sasha Frid of Miller Barondess LLP.

said of the firm’s growth. “That’s the way we did it at my old firm and that’s the way we do it now.”

With the exception of partner James L. Goldman, who went to law school with Skip Miller, all of the firm’s partners started as associates, trained by Skip Miller, and grew their litigation careers at the firm.

“I’m totally hands-on,” Skip Miller said. “We bring them in when they’re young, we train them, we get to know them really well and if they have the talent and the ambition and the drive, we promote them.”

The firm staffs cases leanly, saving clients money and allowing the firm’s young attorneys to grow their legal skills.

“On big cases ... we typically have four or five, maybe six attorneys,” Skip Miller said. “These other firms we go up against have double that.”

Asked if the firm ever feels disadvantaged when going up against

larger firms, Skip Miller was quick to say no.

“We cut through it, we focus on the pressure points [and we] go for the jugular,” he said.

In a recent case, the firm worked with the Los Angeles County Counsel office, representing the county in multiple actions against Southern California Gas Company arising from the Aliso Canyon gas leak disaster.

“This was the largest natural gas leak in history,” said Miller Barondess partner J. Mira Hashmall. “The county stepped up to provide support for the community ... as well as to ensure the gas company was doing everything possible to improve the safety of these storage units.”

According to Skip Miller, the case is very close to being resolved. The firm took a very active role and was “instrumental in ... the government

part of it,” he said.

On behalf of the county, the firm successfully obtained court orders extending the resident relocation program and for SoCalGas to clean the homes of thousands of affected residents.

On Aug. 8, the parties reached a settlement of \$119.5 million subject to court approval. *County of Los Angeles v. Southern California Gas Company, Southern California Gas Leak Cases, Judicial Council Coordination Proceeding, JCCP 4861* (Los Angeles Super. Ct. Aug. 8, 2018).

Hashmall expressed excitement about what’s next for the firm.

“We’ve got some great lawyers, some really remarkable young women lawyers, who I’m thrilled to be in a position to mentor and help [with] their development as trial lawyers,” she said. “We’re excited about our future.”

— Skylar Dubelko