

Speaking Opportunities



Chris Searcy participated in the "Masters in Trial" seminar presented by the Palm Beach County Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), held January 27, 2012, at the Marriott Palm Beach Gardens, Palm Beach

Gardens, Florida. The seminar presented a mock trial demonstration from opening statements to jury deliberations, complete with judge, jury, witnesses, experts, and courtroom visuals. As a member of the Plaintiff's Team, Mr. Searcy provided the opening statement. A primary goal of ABOTA is educating lawyers in the art of trial advocacy. ♦



Greg Barnhart spoke at the Florida Justice Association's seminar, "Advocacy in the State Legislature – Lobbying Techniques to Protect Your Practice and Effectively Represent Your Clients in Tallahassee," held January 10,

2012, at the Riverside Hotel in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His topic was "Lobbying 101 for Fun and Profit." On January 12, 2012, Mr. Barnhart spoke at a combined meeting of The Palm Beach County Bar Association and the Broward County Bar Association, on the topic of "Effective Techniques of Lobbying the Legislature on Civil Justice Issues." Mr. Barnhart also spoke at the Florida Bar's Annual Civil Trial Certification Review 2012 Seminar, held at the end of January 2012 in Orlando, Florida. The topic of this presentation was "Trial Skills: Opening and Closing Arguments." ♦



Brenda Fulmer spoke to the Trial Lawyer Section of the Martin County Bar Association at a meeting held in January 2012 in Stuart, Florida. Her topic, "Mass Tort Litigation Basics," covered how mass tort cases are litigated

and provided an overview of several cases involving drug and medical devices. ♦

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Hallgren v. Reynolds and Philip Morris: Eighth SDSBS Victory in Engle Progeny Trials

In January 2012, SDSBS attorneys **Brian Denney** and **Hardee Bass** tried the first Engle tobacco trial held in the Tenth Judicial Circuit Court in Highlands County, Florida. After a hotly contested three week trial, the jury awarded 92-year-old Theodore Hallgren \$3.5 million against Philip Morris USA Inc. and R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company for the wrongful death of his wife, Claire. She had died of lung cancer after nearly 60 years of smoking cigarettes made by the two companies. The verdict included \$1.5 million in punitive damages. This was the eighth victory in Engle progeny cases tried to verdict by SDSBS.

Claire Hallgren started smoking as a teenager nearly 30 years before the first warning labels appeared on cigarette packs. Under the standard required by the Florida Supreme Court's "Engle" decision, plaintiffs had to prove an addiction to nicotine, and that the addiction was the cause of death. The jury was asked numerous questions on the verdict form concerning whether Claire Hallgren relied on statements or omissions of the defendants. The jury answered all of the questions on the verdict form in favor of Mr. Hallgren.

Theodore and Claire Hallgren met at Chicago's Hurst High School in 1938. They were married four years later, shortly before the U. S. Army deployed Theodore to Europe to fight in the war. After the war was over, the Hallgrens settled in the Chicago area. They moved to Florida in 1975. Claire continued to smoke throughout her adult life despite numerous efforts to quit. Her addiction to nicotine was powerful, a direct result of the tobacco companies' intentional marketing efforts. Claire was eventually diagnosed with lung cancer, and she later died. Theodore Hallgren's lawsuit was part of the original 2006 Engle class-action case.

"The jury in this case was presented with a lot of evidence of tobacco industry conduct and practices, covering a large span of time," Denney said. "The jury's verdict is not only an indication that they understood the addictive power of nicotine, it is also recognition that these defendants deserved punishment for their intentional misconduct." ♦