

# DISCOVER

North County Edition

MAGAZINES



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# LiMandri & Jonna

By Jonathan Lancaster

*“Going to trial speaks of a failed diplomacy and it comes with a certain amount of risk. Over these past 35 years we have settled thousands of cases, although when we do go to trial, we have won the vast majority of times.”*

**Had you always had in mind a return to San Diego?**

Yes, that was my ultimate goal with an initial stop in Los Angeles. I then chose to join a firm in San Diego, one of the top 5 in California at the time, and made my move back home.

**When did you first hang your shingle in Rancho Santa Fe?**

I first hung my shingle in Old Town in an office space within the building occupied by Edmund Gann, who became my client and who happened to own the largest tuna-fishing fleet at the time. When Gann moved offices to the Ranch in 1995, I opened my office in the Ranch as well.

opponents’ attention. I am proud to be one of the few attorneys in San Diego that is both a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates and double board certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. There are likely less than a dozen attorneys in San Diego that have that kind of credential.

**Having been admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court, have you ever chosen to sit in on hearings?**

I did sit on some cases that we had a special interest in and actually helped support many cases with written briefs submitted to the Court.

**In conversation about your firm, what would be the keynotes that make you a proud founder with the selection of attorneys on board?**

This firm has the reputation of doing excellent legal work, and we are actively responsive to our clients when they contact us. We have the goal in mind to make the client better off than when they came to us, and we take a sincere interest in their wellbeing.

**San Diegans contribute heavily to non-profit organizations that help so many. Have you your own favorites that you support?**

We as a firm do a lot of non-profit work and I have worked closely with the local Rotary, which I have in the past presided over as President and held membership with since 1985. We also launched the Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund that supports religious liberty, and people’s right to self-determination, allowing them to follow the dictates of their conscience. It does put me in the limelight when being involved on the conservative side of some very controversial issues; however, it is who I am, what I believe in, and I shall continue to follow my heart and good judgment in supporting such important causes.

**Had you not chosen the law as a career, what might you be doing?**

When a student at USD, I completed a career survey and the results were that I should become either an attorney, a minister or a social worker. For me, being a legal advocate seems to cover all three. I have also taught on occasion, and one day, I may return to when it is time to slow the tempo.



Charles S. LiMandri

**What led you to San Diego?**

I’m one of those rare native San Diegans.

**Have you siblings within the family?**

I have one older brother and one sister.

**When did it first enter your mind to study law?**

Would you believe that on career day in kindergarten, I dressed in a sport jacket and tie with briefcase in hand? I never wavered from that day forward in my desire to become an attorney.

**Having studied at the University of San Diego, how did your time on the USD Program at Oxford, England compare?**

I chose USD to begin college and simply because I had spent all of my younger years in San Diego, I eagerly joined their Graduate Program at Oxford, England. I knew that I would be going to law school, so my experience there was just an enjoyment of learning. I studied Sixteenth Century English literature and history. I enjoyed it so well that I applied for an International Rotary Graduate Scholarship at the University of Wales, which had the oldest International Politics Department in the world. I was accepted, and with the vast number of foreign students in attendance, it was an incredible opportunity.

**How did you come to choose Georgetown University for law?**

I developed a great interest in international law from my studies at Wales and it so happened that Georgetown had an excellent international studies program.

**Your firm certainly covers a wide breadth of civil litigation. Would you say that personal injury and business litigation top the list?**

Probably so. Our practice is about one-third personal injury, one-third business, much of which is insurance litigation, and the remainder a mixed variety. I actually spend about 40% of my time doing not-for-profit work. We were the lead attorneys representing the City of San Diego in keeping the Cross at Mt. Soledad. It took 12 years of my time mustering community effort and enlisting political and legal support. The great thing was that over 75% of the San Diego community supported the effort with the focus on honoring our veterans.

**Certainly you have tried your fair share of civil trials. Does your firm try in earnest to settle a case first and foremost?**

Of course. Going to trial speaks of a failed diplomacy and it comes with a certain amount of risk, however strong a case may appear beforehand. Over these past 35 years we have settled thousands of cases, although when we do go to trial, we have won the vast majority of times.

**Most who graduate law school, seldom enter the courtroom, much less try a case. How crucial a factor is that when selecting an attorney?**

Having an experienced, successful trial attorney as your advocate is a huge asset. It provides the client with a realistic perspective regarding the strength of their case. Importantly, during negotiations, that same experienced trial attorney will be far more likely to have their

# Litigators Par Excellence

— PROMOTIONAL —

*“Our primary role is to effectively advocate for our clients – in court in front of a judge and jury, in our legal writing, with opposing counsel, and in any other context that serves their interests.”*

## Are you a born and raised San Diegan?

Yes, I was actually born and raised in La Mesa. I attended Santa Sophia Academy from Preschool to Eighth grade, and then University of San Diego High School, which is now called Cathedral Catholic High School. The furthest I went from San Diego was LA to attend USC for undergrad. But I came back here for law school and graduated from USD School of Law. We recently moved to Rancho Santa Fe.

## Were you a large family?

I only have one sibling, my younger brother Peter. But we were fortunate to have many relatives, and most of them lived near us in East County. A good priest once told me that the best gift you can give your children is siblings. My wife and I now have 5 children and they're the greatest blessing.

## Was the law something that interested you at an early age?

At an early age, I had a strong interest in writing, debate, and breaking down arguments with logic. But my mom really wanted me to become a doctor, so I'd always say that I wanted to become a neurosurgeon when I grew up. In high school, I realized that being a doctor was not for me. Around that time, I was taking a Government class and participated in a mock trial. I really enjoyed the experience and began seriously considering a career as a lawyer. I spoke to as many lawyers as possible – my Dad's lawyer, my friends who were in law school – and I eventually interned at a law firm while I was an undergrad at USC. I quickly realized that I should apply to law school.

## Having earned your degree at the Marshall School of Business at USC, what led you to USD law school?

Even though I knew I wanted to be a lawyer, I decided to study business as an undergrad. My Dad had a successful career in business – as a small business owner, real estate developer/investor, and much more – and I worked closely with him as a young boy and into law school. He encouraged me to study business for the practical benefits. I've found that my business background has served me well as a lawyer – helping me to better understand the different corporate and business clients that we represent, and that we may sue. I chose USC's Marshall School of Business

because it had one of the best undergraduate business programs in the country – particularly in Entrepreneurship, which was my focus.

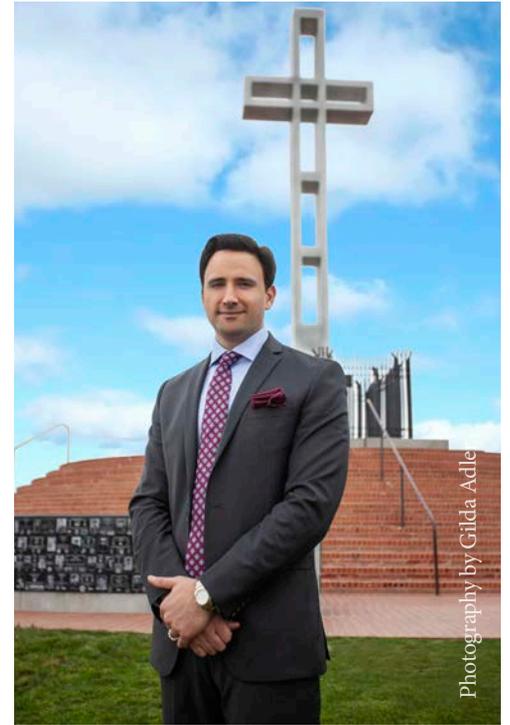
I chose USD School of Law because I was impressed with its academic program and faculty, and because it's the best law school in San Diego. I knew that I wanted to live and work in San Diego, and I figured I'd have an advantage continuing to develop my network while I was in law school.

## Was there any inclination to enter the business world other than as an attorney?

Many people told me that a law degree would be useful in the business world – even if you never practice law. That may be true, but law school is a lot of work and it's not cheap. My advice to young people who are drawn to business and law is generally to focus on one or the other. I originally wasn't sure how much I would enjoy practicing law, and I figured that I could always fall back on my business degree. But I love the practice of law and see it as a vocation. You're constantly learning and using your intellect, and you have the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of your clients and society at large. And I love being an advocate and the constant adrenaline rush of trial work.

## Having joined the LiMandri team in 2013, what primarily led you to this firm?

I started out the first four years of my legal career with large national firms handling multi-billion-dollar cases and representing large corporate clients. I really enjoyed the work, but I saw many battles in the religious liberty context that troubled me, and I wanted to join the fight. Two good priests told me that I should talk to Charles LiMandri. Chuck's practice interested me because he was involved in important pro bono work (like helping to save the Mt. Soledad Cross), but he also had a successful private practice. I was also attracted to the firm because Chuck actually regularly tried cases. It's hard to get trial experience on the civil side, and I knew that a great way to advance in civil litigation was to get in the courtroom and try cases. Chuck became a mentor of mine for three years until he eventually had an opening at his firm in 2013. Three years later, I became a named partner at the private practice, LiMandri & Jonna LLP, and a Vice President of our



Paul M. Jonna

public interest law firm, Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with my mentor, handle and try a diverse array of complex litigation, and still be able to represent very deserving clients on a pro bono basis in important religious liberty cases. There's also a number of practical benefits to the small firm setting – both in terms of effectively serving clients more intimately, and cost effectively while enjoying a healthy work-life balance.

## Your practice seems quite diverse, from highly complex business cases, real estate, and insurance litigation to personal injury cases. Is there a common thread that runs through the legal analytics of each unique case that ties it all together?

We do have a very diverse litigation practice, and we have significant experience in all of the areas that you mentioned. There are many common threads. Our primary role is to effectively advocate for our clients – in court in front of a judge and jury, in our legal writing, with opposing counsel, and in any other context that serves their interests. For the most part, the same rules of procedure and evidence apply to all of our cases, and we've mastered them. We approach every case the same way – whether it's a complex business dispute or a serious personal injury or wrongful death case: we aggressively prepare our cases for trial, explore settlement only if it's in our clients' interests, and effectively use discovery and pre-trial motions to narrow issues or dispose of meritless cases. We have a proven track record with extensive trial experience, and a passion for the practice of law, which really sets us apart.