

# Daily Journal

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## Top Boutiques IN CALIFORNIA 2019

### TRUST AND ESTATE LAW

## Hartog, Baer & Hand APC

ORINDA

An adult theater, the founder of an outdoor apparel company and a multi-generational music family would seem to have little in common. However, their surviving relatives sought the counsel of Hartog, Baer & Hand to resolve estate matters.

Along with estates, this Orinda-based firm started by John A. Hartog in 1991 specializes in trusts, planning, post-death administration, litigation and mediation.

In the past two years, Hartog himself has prepared estate plans for clients and administered estates worth up to \$1 billion, according to the firm.

Regardless of how much money is involved, settling a will or estate can be legally complex, fraught with emotion and cause tension within a family.

“We really try to maintain the highest commitment to the quality of our work as lawyers, but we also want the highest level of compassion when it comes to our clients,” said partner Ryan J. Szczepanik.

Margaret M. Hand, the



Gary Wagner/ Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Ryan Szczepanik, Margaret Hand, John Hartog and David Baer of Hartog Baer & Hand APC

firm’s managing partner, said she views the relationship with her clients as an opportunity to help them “rise above it.”

While her clients can’t control what others do in an estate dispute, she strives to help them “be the best person they can be.”

“Even before we’re done, people are starting to feel a lot better,” Hand said. “My clients walk out of my office like a burden has been lifted.”

Over the years, firm attorneys have represented the children of Jim Mitchell, an adult film producer and owner of the O’Farrell Theater in San Francisco, who died in 2007;

the daughters of North Face founder Douglas Tompkins, who died in 2015; a trustee in a prominent family business in Contra Costa County; and a prominent, multi-generational music family in Los Angeles.

With a dozen attorneys, including four senior lawyers or principals, the firm’s influence in the estate field goes beyond the courtroom. Hartog was a lead consulting editor and co-author of “California Wills & Trusts,” and worked on other important publications.

Four of the firm’s lawyers are members of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, a number that is “pretty

impressive,” Szczepanik said.

Hand said the firm is small, but also “big enough to hire staff that work solely within this practice area. The clients get really good service up and down the ladder.”

Hartog, Baer & Hand also gives back to the Bay Area community by supporting Legal Assistance for Seniors and the East Bay Children’s Legal Organization.

They also sponsor the Contra Costa County Bar Association’s Bar Fund, an event that offers pro bono legal advice and representation to the poor.

— Karen Weil