

TOP BOUTIQUES

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Sam Attal / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Anthony Label, Andje Morovich Medina, William Veen, Elinor Leary and Craig Peters of The Veen Firm P.C.

PERSONAL INJURY

SAN FRANCISCO

The Veen Firm P.C.

William Veen's 12-attorney group at The Veen Firm P.C. epitomizes the kind of advocacy the average Jane or Joe hopes for when facing a large institution in a catastrophic personal injury case.

Veen and his trial teams have garnered millions of dollars in victories over the past few years. High-profile cases the firm has taken more recently include representing a victim's family member in the Oakland ghost ship fire tragedy. One of Veen's trial teams also won a nearly \$15 million verdict against Mazda. In another case, a nearly \$45 million judgment was obtained on behalf of plaintiffs shot at a warehouse party.

"I think the recent cases are emblematic of our willingness to try difficult cases against no offers, against very well-financed and sophisticated defendants," said Anthony Label, a trial team leader who's been with the

firm for a decade. Label said a lot of the firm's cases are uphill battles other firms might not consider worthy of pursuit.

"We'll try these cases even if they might not be the best business decision because we believe in justice, we believe in our clients, we believe in not backing down, and making defendants and insurance companies know that when we say we're going to try a case, we mean it," Label said.

What began as a single-attorney operation in 1975 blossomed into a powerhouse boutique for the new millennium. The firm has grown substantially since its first \$50-a-month office in what is now the UC Hastings College of the Law library.

"Eagerly awaited the world to beat a path to my door," Veen said with a laugh as he recalled the firm's early days. Thanks to Veen's background in workers' compensation and understanding of the interface between the

practice and personal injury, he said, he started getting cases. Pretty soon, he had to hire another attorney. "I said, 'I can't guarantee you're going to be here 60 days from now, but if it works, it'll work out just fine,'" he said he had told the new hire.

More than 40 years later, The Veen Firm is set to expand yet again. Next year the firm will relocate to the former location of a local law school. The new building, Veen said, has over 10,000 square feet and will add new dimensions to what they'll be able to offer clients, including 30 parking spaces and even a mock courtroom.

The firm's hallmark, in addition to their expertise in workers' compensation, personal injury, and premises liability, has been the development of in-house trial teams to take on big cases.

"Each team is three or four attorneys deep, and so we can handle the really heavy-duty attacks that we get from large institutional defendants who have three or four attorneys to try to throw things at us," said Veen.

Unlike many firms with one attorney handling each case, Veen noted, their cases employ "cross-pollina-

tion" by multiple attorneys who put all their efforts into advancing matters toward a satisfactory conclusion.

"Which means, we can only handle certain kinds of cases, very large cases, because otherwise it would be very uneconomical. By doing this, we have the ability to go in, and to multitask, to do our discovery, and to prepare for trial and do everything else, using the team approach," he said.

"[It] makes us a boutique," Veen added.

Veen said when he hires an attorney, he looks for somebody with life experience, not someone just out of a high-profile law school who's never had a job or doesn't understand real-world situations.

He added they're not there to bill out billable hours. Rather, Veen said, he seeks people with commitment and compassion who can grasp the complex concepts of their cases and bring them to fruition for deserving clients.

"In the end it's about taking cases that you believe in, I think," echoed Label, "and fighting hard for clients to make sure that you get somebody who's had something happen to them that was somebody else's fault, that has really kind of wrecked their life, and helping them put the pieces back together."

The lawyers at The Veen Firm seem to recognize a good case — and a good cause — when it appears at their door. Over the years, Veen said, he's seen hundreds of cases where people have come to them for help at a time when they didn't have a lot of hope. Perhaps their reputation for succeeding where others may have flinched or floundered is because, when their attorneys take on a case, they go all in.

"We take cases to try them, not to settle them," said Veen, adding that by taking a case, and putting money and effort into trying it, they get the best results for their clients when they do settle.

"You see the whole way the case comes straight from into the door and out the door," Veen summed up. "And that's a long process."

— David Mendenhall