

To Whom it May Concern,

I am pleased to provide my strongest possible recommendation for both Angela Jae and Tom Tosdal whom my wife and I have come to know as honest, straight forward and very skilled litigators. My wife and I lost our home in the 2007 Witch Creek – Guejito Fires. The fire destroyed our house and virtually everything we owned. Over the next five years we endured five separate litigations concerning the insurance company, the cable company, the mortgage company, the propane company and finally the gas and electric company.

During these five years we worked with multiple law firms on various matters with varying degrees of difficulty and outcome. My wife was a court reporter for 20 years and she has dealt with hundreds of law firms in New York, Hawaii and California, both as a Grand Jury Court Reporter as well as in major civil litigation so I think it is fair to say she can properly evaluate attorney performance and behavior. My background is as a Naval Aviator for 25 years. My wife and I started a software technology company in San Diego and we have dealt with dozens of law firms over the years on a full range of issues. I think it is fair to say we have seen it all from attorneys.

On October 21, 2007, we awoke at 5 am with 80 miles per hour winds rattling our windows and saw the fires outside our windows. The night before the TV news channels had told us the fire was safely passing us by to the north so we did not have the luxury of taking much of anything with us. We were focused on our children and we stuffed what we could in our vehicles as we drove down the mountain with trees falling on our cars and dirt and dust swirling up from the road and obscuring our view as we drove down the hill.

After we escaped the fire we slept on the floor in our office for several weeks because FEMA had rented ALL of the available hotel rooms in San Diego county, but would not release them to people who actually needed them. Friends eventually brought us camper trailers which eased our situation and our landlord ran electrical power from the building to help us out. Many in the community showed great kindness to help those who lost homes and we have a special place in our hearts for those wonderful neighbors.

After more than four years of constant frustration and virtually zero progress with the gas and electric and cable companies we were fortunate to meet a very experienced attorney from a major Los Angeles law firm who had extensive experience with fire litigation. He explained to me in great detail why our current law firm was not capable of prevailing against the Gas and Electric Company and their insurer and he recommended that I call Tom Tosdal and try to get Tom to take us on as a client. He stressed to me that I would need an attorney of Tom's capabilities in such a situation.

I called Tom the next day and he was quite friendly and understanding. After covering all of the specifics he agreed to take us on as clients. We spent the next year and a half working though many issues with Tom and Angela Jae who worked on our case. Angela helped us assemble and process the endless documents, estimates and evaluations that had to be produced ranging from rebuilding estimates, personal property losses, landscaping, medical injuries, lost wages, out of pocket expenses, relocation costs, etc. The list of items that needed to be researched and prepared really was never ending.

We had to somehow find records that were lost in the fire and Angie greatly reduced the burden of this effort far more than any law firm we have ever dealt with her competence and timely responsiveness on the organization, tracking and assembly of the most critical content necessary to prove our case. I cannot really explain just how much work this really represents after a total loss, nor can I exaggerate how helpful Angie really was with her immediate responses, total understanding and compassion for what we were dealing with on a daily basis. It is said that if an attorney does not return your calls you need a new attorney. I still am amazed just how much work we did and just how rapidly Angela Jae always responded to us as we went through this tremendous amount of detailed research and record production. Angie's support was outstanding from the beginning to the end which allowed us to produce the facts necessary to prove our case.

The tactics of the gas and electric company, their attorneys and insurance carrier through out the ordeal was nothing less than despicable. At the mandatory pre-trial settlement conference that required us to travel back from the east coast, the opposing counsel told the Judge that my wife and I deserved zero compensation for our loss in spite of the fact that the gas and electric company had been found to have caused the fire that claimed 20 lives, 2,300 homes and burned 350,000 acres. Opposing counsel continued to tell the Judge that my wife and I were guilty of criminal behavior, having falsified our claims and we were lying about the facts of the case. We were not just livid, but really totally demoralized.

Both Tom and Angie were very supportive and understanding during these very disturbing times and gave us the encouragement we needed that this would indeed end, that we had a solid case and everything would eventually work out. As the case progressed opposing counsel stopped negotiating altogether and refused to settle any more cases. This left us in no-man's land. For my wife and I this pushed us emotionally right back to the immediate aftermath of the fire. Our ability to endure was severely tested. Tom and Angie both explained to us that we should hang on and not lose faith. Tom said that this is not totally unexpected behavior in such litigation and he was developing a strategy to counter their position. Well Tom was right. His strategy won the day. The gas and electric company ultimately capitulated to his plan and all of the outstanding claims were settled to the benefit of Tom and Angie's clients.

It is a sad but true fact that a percentage of people die when fires destroy their home and everything they have worked for their whole lives. An additional percentage will sell their burned-out lot and move away. Another percentage will take all of their money, rebuild their home and then are forced to sell and move away because they cannot afford to pay the new mortgage. And there is another percentage who will fight to the end of the earth for what they think is right, either because they have no other choice or they are hard headed.

Whichever group you may be in, you need attorneys like Tom Tosdal and Angie Jae to help you navigate such an ordeal. You can be made whole again, but you will need help. My wife and I remain so very grateful to both Tom and Angie for their professional behavior, their integrity and their compassion. They have made a difference in our lives and the lives of our children. That is a rare something that we do not encounter very often in life and cannot be underestimated.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Deehan
Mclean, VA