

# • BULLETIN •

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## Bruce Varner Tapped for John B. Surr Award



By J'Amy Pacheco

More than 50 years ago, then-college students Jack Brown and Bruce Varner faced one another as rivals on a football field. Brown went on to become CEO of a Fortune 500 company, and

Varner became his corporate secretary and director, as well as the head of a prestigious law firm.

"Selecting him as counsel was the best business decision I ever made," Brown said.

It came as no surprise to Brown to learn that Varner was selected to receive the San Bernardino County Bar Association's John B. Surr Award in October. The periodic award honors attorneys designated as best exemplifying the high standards of the profession and the administration of justice.

Brown knew the attorney for whom the award is named, and said the qualities he has observed in Varner "absolutely reflect the integrity of John Surr."

"He has been counsel for Stater Bros. for 29 years, and a director and corporate secretary for 28 years," Brown said. "No attorney could have better represented his client than has Bruce Varner."

Congressman Jerry Lewis described Varner as a "very dear friend."

"Bruce is an outstanding local lawyer who has made a tremendous difference for our community, and I'm very proud of my association with him," Lewis said. "I feel strongly that everybody should recognize what a great contribution he has made as a regent to the University of California." He was appointed to the Board of Regents in 2006.

Varner said he was "deeply honored and frankly, surprised" to learn that he had been selected to receive the award.

"There are so many talented and qualified members of the bar, and I know a lot of the former recipients, who are friends and colleagues," he said. "I am deeply honored to be included among that group of distinguished lawyers."

Varner practices in Riverside, but has deep roots in San Bernardino, where he previously practiced and continues to represent clients and maintain contacts. He earned his undergraduate degree at the University of California, Santa Barbara, majoring in Political Science. He served in the U.S. Army, then earned his law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of Law. He was admitted to practice in 1963.

For the past 22 years, he has practiced with Brendan Brandt, litigation managing partner for Varner & Brandt. Brandt described his colleague as "a great role model."

"He has helped guide not only my legal career, but the careers of the attorneys who have worked at our firm, and many outside," he said.

"Any young attorney looking to contribute to both the community and the legal profession just has to look at the list of groups he's volunteered

with to model a career of giving back to the community and providing legal services," Brandt observed. "I'm proud to continue to practice with Bruce, and we continue to have a law firm that provides excellent legal services, and strives to give back to the community."

The list of Varner's community involvement is lengthy, and includes positions on the boards of the National Orange Show, the President's Advancement Council at Cal State San Bernardino and the Inland Empire Economic Partnership. He has served as a judge pro tem, as a Superior Court arbitrator, and as a volunteer lieutenant for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Specialized Services Bureau. Varner has been named one of the Best Lawyers in the Inland Empire, and in the nation.

He handles business and corporate matters, including banking, finance, mergers & acquisitions and real estate.

Attorney Bill Lemann described Varner as "a very able quarterback of complex and challenging litigation."

"He began his career with one of the oldest and most prestigious firms in Southern California," he stated. "He continued his career, developing his own firm, and he has done so with the unique skills and genius that have served his clients so well."

Attorney Paul Shimoff - who will also receive the Surr Award this month - said Varner "exhibits those qualities which one would expect of a superb attorney."

"Bruce brings to a business transaction respect for other professionals; the ability to listen to everyone's views; insight into complex problems; and, a tremendous sense of equity to enable the business matter to be fairly concluded for all involved."

Varner's "humble demeanor" and "quiet command," Shimoff said, enable the attorney to achieve solutions that would not be possible in a contentious environment.

"I refer to Bruce as the dean of business attorneys for San Bernardino and Riverside Counties," he said.

Brown pointed out that if Varner had been taller, "he would have been in the NFL." He said his friend possesses the aggressiveness of an NFL candidate; graduated first in his law school class and was editor of the Law Review as well as a member of the Order of the Coif.

"When you put all of those characteristics together, you have a strong winning combination," he opined.

"I'm very fortunate to have as my attorney one of my best friends," Brown added. "He's homegrown. His integrity is impeccable, as is his dedication to his clients."

Varner downplayed his achievements, and said his firm encourages its employees to do charity and pro bono work.

"It's extremely rewarding to be involved, and we do it without expectation of recognition and accolades," he explained. "I do my best to keep a low profile. When accolades come along, I'm deeply humbled - and sometimes, a little embarrassed."

Varner will receive the award Oct. 18 during the SBCBA's annual Installation of Officers.

## Porter, Shimoff, Varner to be Honored for Professional Excellence

Attorneys Grover L. Porter, Paul M. Shimoff, and Bruce D. Varner will be honored October 18 during the San Bernardino County Bar Association's annual Installation of Officers, held at the San Bernardino Hilton Hotel. Porter will receive the *George W. Porter Criminal Trial Attorney Award*, while Shimoff and Varner will each receive the *John B. Surr Award*. Profiles of each of the awardees are featured on pages 8 and 9 of this issue.

The Board of Directors of the San Bernardino County Bar Association would like to encourage all to attend and share this special evening with these esteemed honorees. See below for the program details.

*The San Bernardino County Bar Association  
requests the pleasure of your company at the  
Installation of 2012-2013 Officers and Directors  
and Celebration of our 137<sup>th</sup> Year*

*Thursday, October 18, 2012*

*Social: 5:30 p.m. • Program at 7:00 p.m.*

*San Bernardino Hilton Hotel*

*285 East Hospitality Lane • San Bernardino, California*

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*Judge John P. VanderFeer, Master of Ceremonies  
Presiding Judge Marsha Slough, Installing Judge*

*Award Presentations*

*The John B. Surr Award*

*The George W. Porter Award*

*Installation of Officers*

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