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Small Firm Profile

Familial Territory

Family law specialist Andy Cook and his 22-year-old firm are known for being prepared.

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Daily Journal Staff Writer

SAN DIEGO — Six years after he set out on his own, Andrew D. “Andy” Cook received an invitation that ended up solidifying his career path. Though a bit of a jack of all trades, Cook had worked enough family law cases as a sole practitioner that the State Bar sent him a postcard notifying him of a certification opportunity.

“I probably wouldn’t have done it if the postcard hadn’t come,” Cook said. “Then it just changed everything.”

Cook began focusing on family law after earning his certification in 2001. He’d always worked those cases since opening his own office in 1995 while also working civil litigation and criminal defense. But he knew his status as a certified family law specialist gave him a new edge. He tailored his marketing to reflect that, and within a couple of years found himself immersed in only family law cases. He hired an associate in 2007, and the Law Offices of Andy Cook has been a two-attorney team since. Vicky Mejías joined last year, and she and Cook work cases together.

Other attorneys say the firm has built a strong reputation in San Diego’s family law community and beyond. Cook, who completed a three-year term on the San Diego Bar Association Board of Directors in December, has a reputation for being not only articulate and well prepared, but willing to negotiate.

“In a courtroom, it’s adversarial; there’s no way around that. But outside, you have more time to be solution oriented, and Andy’s always been good in that sense,”



Thomas Kurtz / Special to the Daily Journal

Andy Cook and Vicky Mejias at the Law Offices of Andy Cook in San Diego.

said San Diego sole practitioner Bruce M. Beals.

Also a certified family law specialist, Beals has known Cook professionally for at least 10 years. They’ve opposed each other in cases, and Beals’ has seen him in action in other matters.

“He’s always well prepared, and he knows the subject matter well, which is obviously important in a specialty area like family law,” Beals said. “Some attorneys never take their gloves off, but that’s not been my experience with Andy.”

Cook grew up on the East Coast and earned a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Vermont. He spent six years as a radio broadcaster before earning a law degree from California Western School of Law in 1993. He interned in the civil division at the San Diego City Attorney’s Office, then clerked at an insurance defense firm. He worked as an associate at what’s now Neil, Dymott, Frank, McFall, Trexler, McCabe & Hudson for about seven months before an experience involving a family

wedding encouraged him to try something new.

“Even when my brother got married, I had to ask permission to go,” Cook said. “I didn’t want to be in that position forever. I didn’t want to be 30 years down the road and have to ask for time off.”

Eager to answer only to himself and his clients, Cook set out his shingle on May 8, 1995. It was a perfect time in his life. He had no children but a lot of freedom and a supportive fiancée. His now-wife, Marcia, helped him when he opened, and he credits advertising and networking with his gradual expansion.

Cook estimates he’s worked about 50 trials, and he’s served as a temporary judge in family law departments in San Diego County and Los Angeles County superior courts. He also sometimes serves as a temporary judge in small claims departments, and as a settlement conference judge for family law matters. He’s also been a judge in a teen court program and a fee dispute arbitrator for the state

Mandatory Fee Dispute Arbitration program. He and Mejías handle divorces, child custody and support disputes, prenuptial agreements, paternity cases and more.

“He’s just got a very energetic personality,” said John S. Addams, a partner at Niddrie Addams Fuller LLP in San Diego. “You know when he’s in the room.”

Addams met Cook when they were insurance defense litigators early in Cook’s career. They’ve remained friends, and both are members of the San Diego Downtown Breakfast Rotary Club. Cook was on the board of directors, and his duties involved introducing new guests.

“He was a natural at it,” Addams said. “He’s just got this great broadcaster’s voice that I’m sure translates into court well.”

Addams, a certified appellate specialist, worked with Cook on a case a couple of years ago that involved a writ. Cook’s wit and integrity were obvious.

“I saw the quality of the work that he did,” Addams said. “I could tell that he really cared about his client and went the extra mile.”

Cook said he and Mejías enjoy a steady yet flexible caseload. Though they have no expansion plans, they’re always open to more cases. Cook points to his father’s work ethic when asked about his future plans. The medical school professor still is working at age 80.

“I like to travel and take vacations, but I like working, and I intend to keep doing it,” Cook said.

LAW OFFICES OF
Andy Cook