

Cole, Scott & Kissane

10th Anniversary Special Report

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Special Advertising Supplement

Florida's 'Quiet' Law Firm Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A.

By Richard Westlund

Last March, the attorneys at Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A. (CS&K) helped the City of Miami residents recoup \$7 million by successfully arguing against a controversial fire rescue fee settlement. In recent nursing home, assisted living and day care facility jury trials, CS&K attorneys also successfully achieved defense verdicts. CS&K attorneys represented a homeowners' association on the appellate level in the successful defense of a country club membership requirement.

Since 1997, the attorneys at Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A., have been providing the firm's clients with experienced counsel in diverse types of civil litigation. "We've been a quiet firm that has grown steadily through the years," said Managing Partner Richard P. Cole. "Rather than seeking out publicity, we strive to provide high-quality legal work, please our clients and grow organically through referrals."

Today, CS&K has ten offices throughout Florida and 120 attorneys, including name partners Thomas Scott, a former Federal District Court Judge and U.S. attorney, and Gene, Joe and Dan Kissane, who focus their practices on healthcare, nursing home, Bad Faith and Products Litigation.

"We have assembled a group of highly dedicated individuals who understand the desires of our clients to resolve matters promptly, achieve the maximum results and do so in an efficient and cost-effective way," Cole said. "We approach the attorney-client relationship as one of a partnership nature with each of us bringing a common dedication and commitment to ethical handling of legal matters in a consistent basis across geographic areas and product lines."

CS&K's practice is 100 percent civil litigation and business consultation, with no plaintiff's work other than in a commercial setting. "We don't feel it is appropriate to take legal positions in defense of clients in cases such as medical malpractice, and at the same time handle a plaintiff's case, even if it is not the same client," said Cole. "That's true across the board – whether a matter involves product liability, maritime, personal injury defense or similar matters. It's just inconsistent with our view of the ethical requirements within our firm."

A decade of steady growth

CS&K's ability to serve clients with excellence, consistency and integrity has resulted in steady growth over the past decade. The firm was founded in 1997 as Cole, White & Billbrough, P.A. with eight attorneys in

Miami and five attorneys in West Palm Beach. Today, CS&K has 39 lawyers in Miami and 27 in West Palm Beach, and 54 in other offices throughout Florida.

"We are frequently asked about the consistent growth of our firm," said Cole. "The best answer to that question is that we have great lawyers who truly care about our clients, who are really a 'who's who' of business, manufacturing, healthcare and insurance organizations."

In 2001, Judge Thomas E. Scott joined the legal team and Gene P. Kissane became a name partner, and the firm became Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A.

Responding to requests from clients, the firm in 2001 began a steady expansion throughout Florida. That February, CS&K opened a Tampa office with three attorneys under the direction of partner Daniel Shapiro. Today, the office has grown to 23 lawyers.

Two years later, CS&K opened its Fort Lauderdale office. Since 2003, that office has grown from three to eight attorneys. The same year, CS&K also opened satellite offices in Naples and Key West as well.

Next came the firm's Jacksonville office, which opened with two attorneys and two staff members and today has 13 lawyers and a staff of 21. The Jacksonville team includes Gene Kissane's two brothers, Joe Kissane, who heads the firm's bad faith division and Dan Kissane, who along with Henry Salas in Miami, leads the product liability division.

"We don't open any offices without having high-quality attorneys in place who share our philosophy of client service," added Cole.

In 2007, CS&K opened a South Miami office with seven attorneys and a staff of seven, and an Orlando office that gives the firm a stronger presence in the Central Florida market.

"While the initial growth of our firm was specifically driven by client requests, our new offices in Jacksonville and Orlando help us provide regional representation to clients with operations throughout Florida," said Cole. "At some point in the future, we also plan to add an office in Fort Myers, and one in the Panhandle."

Serving clients effectively

CS&K has adapted to the changing needs of its clients through the years. "When we started in 1997, the large corporations either had long-term relationships with larger law firms that did not offer them personal relationships or they were selecting individual lawyers or small boutique firms to represent their needs," Cole said. "This has changed over the last ten years. Now, clients want to have a consistency of legal representation in larger geographic areas, such as the entire state of Florida, and they no longer are wedded

to firms that no longer offer them personal and common relationships and aspirations."

Cole also believes that large corporations and the insurance industry have begun to focus more closely on competitive pricing and efficiency in selecting attorneys for their legal work. "Our firm has been at the forefront of trying to accommodate the changing needs of these clients through efficient staffing and proper use of technology," Cole said.

While CS&K has a full complement of attorneys, paralegals, and office staff, not every case "requires an army," said Cole. "At the commencement of each matter, we discuss with the client who will be the appropriate lawyer or lawyers to handle the case."

This analysis is done based on the complexity of the matter in conjunction with the individual talents and expertise of the firm's lawyers. Every case and every project is administered to be cost-effective, without sacrificing quality.

A leading litigation firm

As a leading litigation firm, CS&K has taken steps to educate insurance and healthcare organizations in recent legal cases and market trends. In 2000, the firm launched *Litigation Quarterly*, an in-house publication with a circulation of 300. Today, the publication reaches more than 7,500 readers throughout Florida and beyond.

Since 2005, CS&K has offered a complimentary "Claims Management Seminar" for attorneys and adjusters in Orlando (see related article). Attendance is expected to surpass 1,000 for the upcoming seminar on March 27-28, 2008.

"CS&K has probably tried as many lawsuits to verdict as any non-captive firm in Florida," said Cole, "and we draw on that experience in preparing for every case."

In handling litigation matters, CS&K's attorneys strive for a comprehensive, accurate evaluation at an early stage in each case. "Absent a significant or unexpected event, we don't alter that evaluation," said Cole. In insurance defense matters, for example, the firm's attorneys are confident in taking cases to trial when the initial evaluation indicates that strategy is best for the client.

Reflecting on CS&K's evolution into the leading ranks of Florida law firms, Cole said, "We're proud that our fellow lawyers respect the capabilities of our legal team and frequently refer their clients to us for consultation or litigation of complex matters. Our firm is firmly committed to providing quality legal representation as efficiently and effectively as possible."

Cole, Scott & Kissane

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COLE, SCOTT & KISSANE, P.A.



Attendance Grows for Firm's Claims Management Seminar

In 2005, Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A. launched its first Claims Management Seminar in Orlando for attorneys, clients and interested parties. Approximately 200 people attended that complimentary session, whose central location drew professionals from throughout Florida. Since then, the firm's annual seminar has steadily increased in attendance, attracting nearly 800 participants in 2007.

The firm expects more than 1,000 attendees for its 2008 Claims Management Seminar, "Guide to Claims Handling and Breakthrough Strategies," which will be held March 27-28 at the JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes Resort in Orlando. Attendees at the day-long event will be eligible for continuing legal education (CLE) credits and adjuster licensing credits for the various classes and lectures.

The seminar will be divided into two groups featuring general liability defense and workers' compensation defense. There will also be approximately 15 breakout sessions in various areas of the law, including insurance bad faith, product liability, PIP and medical malpractice claims.

Traditionally, the Claims Management Seminar also includes a session focused on a jury trial, including the use of jury consultants in the voir dire [jury selection] and trial process. There may also be a plaintiff's attorney as a guest speaker.

Visit www.csklegal.com for more information, or contact seminar coordinator Shelly Cartaya at 305.350.5329 or shelly.cartaya@csklegal.com.



Serving the Community

Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A. is committed to the principle of community service. "We believe it is both an ethical responsibility as attorneys and a moral obligation as human beings to give back to the communities in which we live and work," said, Managing Partner Richard P. Cole. "Whether providing services to a legal aid society or dedicating time to a local charity, we approach community service with the same level of integrity and insightful, innovative thinking as we do in our client service."

In the legal profession, the attorneys at Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A., and other organizations, serve on federal and state grievance committees, court-appointed committees which provide pro bono representation to numerous community organizations. Members of the firm have been recognized for their contributions, including:

- Community Leader for Pro Bono Legal Services
- Volunteers with Lawyers for Children of America
- Volunteer Lawyers' Project for the Southern District of Florida
- The Florida Bar Mentor Program for Minority Students
- Commissioned Officer (Major) in Judge Advocate General's Corps

In the community, the firm's lawyers and staff members play leading roles in a wide range of charitable, community and faith-based organizations, including:

- Pillar of the United Way
- William F. Blews Service Award (for Commitment and Dedication to Community Service), multiple recipients
- International Red Cross
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters
- Habitat for Humanity
- President of 200 Club of Miami-Dade County
- Jean Day Fundraiser for the American Cancer Society
- Canned Food Drive for the Daily Food Bank
- Corporate Run
- Kristi's House
- Give a Kid the World
- Members of the National Guard Officers Association

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