



Alton C. Todd and Chief Weiners

Alton C. Todd Presents Award to Friendswood Police Chief

Serving as chairman of the April Boy Scouts of America Bay Area Council breakfast in Friendswood, Alton C. Todd presented the Golden Eagle Award to Police Chief Robert Weiners for his service to the community. Under Weiners' direction, in 2009, *CNN Money Magazine* recognized Friendswood as one of the most desirable cities in America to live. In 2011, it was voted the 3rd safest city in Texas, and, in 2013, Neighborhood Scout recognized it as one of the country's safest cities. The breakfast contributes to the community by raising money to support scouting and invests in various area programs to inspire leadership in over 8,000 youth.

Chief Weiners was instrumental in the search for 12-year-old Laura Smither who was abducted while jogging near her Friendswood home on April 3, 1997. At that time, he was a Lieutenant Colonel inspector-instructor on active duty with the Marine Corps preparing reservists for field exercises at Fort Hood. Instead, the League City father of a daughter about Laura's age deployed 600 reservists to participate in the search. Laura's body was found on April 20 in a Pasadena detention pond. In October of that year, Lt. Col. Weiners

moved to Friendswood and attended the Alvin Junior College Police Academy. In 1999, the Marine became a patrolman and, in 2001, the Friendswood Police Chief.

Alton C. Todd to Speak At CLE Austin Seminar

Alton C. Todd and Thomas W. Duesler of the Beaumont firm of Harris Duesler & Hatfield will address the plaintiff and defense positions, respectively, on "Handling Your First (or Next) Wrongful Death Case" at the Texas Bar CLE annual seminar on Oct. 20. Their Austin LIVE presentation at the Texas Law Center will also be webcast. Registration for the webcast can be completed online at TexasBarCLE.com

Topics related to wrongful death cases to be addressed by Attorneys Todd and Duesler include informal discovery (accident scene, police reports, tire tread); other cases that may exist in conjunction; seat belts; spoliation; keeping costs down—social media and investigations; things to look for—TABC records in the DRAM shop case; and formal discovery—what's available.

Jeff Todd Chosen As ABOTA Member

Jeff Todd, who spoke at the annual Galveston County Bar Association's ad Litem Seminar on September 17, has been named a new member of the American Board of Trial Advocates. He will be inducted at the Houston chapter's annual dinner on October 24 at LaColombe D'Or. At the Galveston seminar, Jeff was involved with the mock friendly suit along with other attorneys and Judge Michelle Slaughter of the 405th Judicial district Court.

Admitted to practice in Texas, New York, Georgia and New Jersey, Jeff earned his J.D. in 1999 at Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark, NJ. Upon graduation, he practiced reinsurance law at Chadbourne & Park in Washington, D.C. After relocating to Atlanta,



Jeffrey N. Todd

he initially served as in-house counsel to Delta Airlines, and, seeking more courtroom experience, later joined a high volume workers' compensation firm in Decatur, GA, where he successfully represented hundreds of injured workers throughout the state. Prior to joining his father at The Law Firm of Alton C. Todd, he was associated, from 2003-2007, with Greer, Herz & Adams of Galveston, practicing with some of the most highly regarded attorneys in Galveston County.

As an ABOTA member, Jeff is committed to the organization's primary goal of educating the American public about the history and value of the right to trial by jury and to its requirement of responsibility for elevating the standards of integrity, honor, ethics, civility and courtesy in the legal profession.



Todd Family and Swahili Friend

Todds In The Mist

By Nari Todd

Our 2015 vacation destination has been a bucket list item for over 10 years. Our summer visit to the mountain gorillas in Rwanda lived up to all our great expectations. The mountain gorillas that American, Dian Fossey, made famous and saved, reside in the Virunga Mountains, a remote location within Rwanda. Getting to the village in Rwanda took days, but that was nothing compared to trekking the gorillas.

There are ten habituated gorilla groups, and for one hour a day eight people visit each family. The long treacherous hike to see these magnificent creatures up close begins after getting your assignment and guides early in the morning. Alton claims it was the most physically challenging thing he has ever done! After walking in the rain through hilly farmland for over an hour, we reached the edge of the park and the base of the mountain (over 12,000 feet) and started our upward hike through thigh high mud and dense vegetation, cleared with machetes by our guides. It was steep, muddy and miserable. After about four hours of wondering if we could do this, we finally met our gorillas, the Titus family named after its deceased

patriarch Titus, the star of *Gorillas in the Mist*. This family has three silverbacks and a very playful, entertaining curly-haired youngster. We stayed exactly one hour and it was time to say goodbye. The journey down was no less arduous. We were the dirtiest we have ever been!

The next morning we channeled the Hirwa family because of their silverback, Mr. Lucky, who has many wives and children and even a rare set of twins. This journey was much easier. Our introduction to Mr. Lucky and his family was unbelievable. It was like all 17 of them were sitting in a living room, just hanging out, and we were so close, sometimes we had to get out of their way. We loved these gorillas.

Because we love all animals, many of our trips are motivated by the opportunity to see rare animals, but the gorillas are distinctly different. When you look at them, they look back at you with mutual curiosity. It is like a human connection. The thought that these gentle, intelligent individuals were almost extinct, is distressing.

The people of Rwanda, just a little over 20 years since the largest genocide after the

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Kamilah, Nari and Seth with gorillas of the Hirwa family in the mountains of Rwanda

In Memoriam

CUTER TODD, 1997-2015



Cuter Todd was born on September 28, 1997 and died at the age of 17½ years on March 28, 2015. Cuter is a Todd family name, and she was the third Cuter, but our family's first dog. Kamilah was four, and would not relent about wanting a white dog. We finally capitulated and found a family selling Bichon Frises. We came to love Cuter so much that we went back a few weeks later and bought her brother, BonBon. In 2003, BonBon and Cuter's daughter, Applesauce, were both killed in a tragic accident. Nari and Cuter, in their grief, became inseparable. We adopted other dogs, hoping that Cuter would bond with them, but Cuter was done with dog relationships. We miss Cuter trailing us, sleeping with us, running errands and traveling with us. She was an extraordinary and irreplaceable companion and comfort. Cuter's final resting place is under the big oak tree in our front yard with her beloved BonBon, Applesauce and her favorite cat, Jack.

THE ALTLAW™

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Todds, Small and Tall, Earn Academic Honors



Kamilah Todd

Kamilah Todd Earns B.A. Degree at SMU

On May 16, Kamilah Todd, daughter of Nari and Alton Todd, graduated from Southern Methodist University, receiving a B.A., having majored in Journalism, with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies.

Kamilah is the third member of her family to claim SMU as her alma mater. Her brother Seth earned both graduate and undergraduate degrees there, and her father, Alton C. Todd, earned his J.D. at SMU School of Law in 1971.

Hayden Exits Elementary Not with a Whimper

Congratulations to Haden Todd Wetzel on his many awards at the Dirks Anderson Elementary in Fort Davis end-of-year awards ceremony in May! Haden, son of Teresa Todd and Marc Wetzel, earned the President's Outstanding Achievement Award, A-B Honor Roll, Citizenship Award, Outstanding 5th Grade Social Studies and Science Student, STAAR Advanced Score in Reading, Peer Assistant Leader, Fun Run Champion, Cross Country Winner and Mile Winner. All of the honors are local except for the President's award signed by President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Haden has now joined his brother Shadix at Fort Davis Junior High.



Hayden Todd Wetzel



Seth Park, in ancient Stone Town, Zanzibar, overlooking the Indian Ocean

Seth Park SBA President at Emory Law School

Seth Park, son of Nari and Alton Todd, was recently elected president of the Student Bar Association at Emory University. A Merit Scholar, he will receive, in May 2016, the joint degree of J.D. from Emory Law School and M.B.A. in Entrepreneurship and Real Estate Concentrations from Emory's Goizueta Business School. Seth has been involved in student government since his acceptance at Emory, having held the positions of Vice President of

Student Programming and Treasurer. As vice-president, he was responsible for hosting weekly social events, and, as treasurer, organized the ledgers, helping the SBA to allocate more funds to deserving organizations.

A Distinguished Scholar graduate of Southern Methodist University with a BBA and MSA in accounting, Seth is also a Certified Public Accountant in Texas. Summer internships included working with the tax staff at Ernst and Young in Dallas, 2011-2012, the audit staff at Ham, Langston & Brezina, LLP in Houston, 2013 and the civil litigation firm of Hartline Dacus Barger Dreyer, LLP in Houston, 2014.

Todds In The Mist

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Holocaust, possess the most inspiring spirit. Everyone we spoke to had lost at least one family member in the mass slaughter that pitted mothers against their own children and spouses against one another. Almost one million souls were killed in about three months in 1994. Rwandans are poor people who walk up and down the mountains daily, too often barefoot, to bring large containers of water home, yet they always look clean and are always busy. They carry everything from lumber to flocks of live chickens on their heads, often while carrying a baby on their backs. In this country of walkers, you never see a wagon or cart. It's either their heads or their bikes. We embarked on this journey,

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LiteLaw

"Oh, the joys of law school," posted Seth Park, 3L, on an August day at Emory University Law School.

"Watching someone crawl under their desk to avoid being the next person called on (somehow without the professor noticing). You know who you are, and you just made my morning."



Kai Todd

KAI TODD NAMED OUTSTANDING 5TH GRADER

Each year at Bales Intermediate School in Friendswood, teachers vote to select the outstanding 5th grade boy and girl from 7 classes and about 200 students to receive the Principal's Award. At the end of the 2014-15 school year, that award was presented to Kai Todd. Kai is the son of Rhonda Davis and the grandson of Alton C. Todd.

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Negligence Of BSNF Railway Leads to \$3,260,000 Jury Verdict

Last year, the \$8.4 million verdict obtained on behalf of Charles and Rosa Hinson by Alton and Jeff Todd, co-leads for the plaintiff, ranked as the 4th top personal injury verdict in the state of Texas. This year, Alton C. Todd earned another Featured Verdict by Texas *Verdict Search* on Feb. 16 for his role as plaintiff's counsel co-lead in the case of *Lane v. BNSF Railway Co.* tried in Brazoria County District Court, 239th. The estate of a driver who was killed and a passenger severely injured when hit by a BNSF Railway train recovered \$1.63 million. Leona Brown-Bedford was pronounced dead at the scene. Passenger and best friend Ty-Amber Lane, 21 at the time of the accident on Feb. 3, 2013, now has the mental capacity of a 7-year-old.

Brown-Bedford and Lane, traveling east in Sealy, were struck by a BNSF Railway train when they crossed the tracks at Crossing No. 022753S. The crossing was marked by a stop sign but unprotected by any active warning devices or gates. Claiming that the hazardous crossing was a trap because of insufficient sight distance, obstructed views, humped design and lack of warning lights, Lane's mother and Brown-Bedford's estate and family sued BSNF and Matthew T. Maxwell, operator of the train. The plaintiffs also argued that Maxwell failed to reduce his speed or signal his approach by blowing the horn. Plaintiffs' expert witnesses opined that the disrepair of the approach and crossing were

a distraction and noted a ballast pile blocking the driver's view of the oncoming train.

Lane, who claimed permanent cognitive impairment, sustained multiple skull fractures, a traumatic brain injury, fractured ribs, left forearm fracture, a pulmonary contusion and a carotid artery injury. Her life care planning expert submitted a life care plan of \$22 million. The defense neurologist argued that the life care plan was excessive and called for unnecessary treatment. Brown-Bedford's survivors sought damages for wrongful death and her estate for conscious pain and suffering and funeral and burial expenses. The jury found BNSF and Brown-Bedford each 50 percent responsible for the accident and awarded \$3.26 million for Lane's past medical bills and future lost earning capacity and Brown-Bedford's funeral and burial expenses.

BNSF was the only defendant submitted to the jury who found that the crossing was extra-hazardous and that the railway's negligence in installing an appropriate warning device was a proximate cause of the accident. After reduction for comparative responsibility, the plaintiffs' recovery was \$1.63 million. Lane's counsel said the jury was going to award Lane \$6 million for her life care plan, but they then reduced it by the amount of BNSF's responsibility, contrary to the court's instruction.

Todds In The Mist

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each with two pairs of shoes, and when we left, we looked for people whose size our shoes might fit. Four happy recipients were so very grateful, and we wished we had more to give.

The Rwandans realize that the gorillas are their biggest natural resource, and many poachers are now in the tourism business, working as guides and porters. It has been good for them to profit from the gorillas in a positive way.

From Rwanda we visited Tanzania and the Serengeti, where we saw cheetahs for the first time, a mother with four cubs, and hyenas ambushing a topi (a 300–400 lb. African antelope) and devouring it within minutes. They supposedly do not eat the hooves, but we saw nothing left.

At Ngorongoro Crater we saw a black rhino, albeit with binoculars. This is our second rhino sighting. The first was in 2005 from our ultralight in Victoria Falls. Sadly, the efforts to save the rhinos have not been as successful as the survival record of mountain gorillas.

ALtruism
Unexpect the obvious.
(Courtesy of Hayden Todd Wetzel)

CLOSING STATEMENT

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your interest and for recommending*

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