

• May 14, 2010, 1:00 PM ET

Will the Toyota Litigation Make a Star Out of Eric Snyder?



Update: On Friday, Santa Ana, Calif., federal judge James V. Selna picked the legal team to represent plaintiffs in the sudden-acceleration litigation against Toyota.

Steven Berman, of Hagens Berman in Seattle, and Elizabeth Cabraser, of Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, in San Francisco, will take the lead roles, according to Judge Selna's order.

Cabraser will take on the personal injury claims, while Berman will be in charge of the economic claims. California attorneys Frank Pitre and Marc Seltzer will serve as Berman's co-counsel. Mark Robinson, who battled Ford when its Pintos were exploding in the 1970s, will serve as Cabraser's co-counsel. Also named to various committees were Houston attorney Mark Lanier, New York attorney Jayne Conroy, Wisconsin attorney Donald H. Slavik and Louisiana attorney Richard Arsenault, to name a few. The law firm of West Virginia lawyer Benjamin Bailey, where Eric Snyder (discussed below) hangs his hat, made the cut.

In the sudden-acceleration litigation against Toyota, you can't swing a gavel without knocking into a big gun plaintiff attorney whose has national notoriety.

There's Mark Robinson who took on Ford for its fiery Pintos decades ago. **There's Richard Arsenault, who hosts must-attend legal seminars on the hot cases of the moment,** and Danny Becnel, who's had his hands in major torts in New Orleans for years. There's Ohio lawyer Stanley Chesley, who helped bankrupt Dow Corning over its faulty breast implants and Steven Berman who took on Exxon after the other major oil spill way back when.

And lest we forget Mark Lanier of Vioxx fame. We could go on and on. The luminaries met yesterday in Santa Ana, Calif. for the first hearing before Judge James Selna. [Click here](#) for the WSJ story.

But a few rising stars are emerging. Consider Eric Snyder. Snyder (pictured) is a whippersnapper compared to some of his counterparts. At a mere 33 years old, he's been alive fewer years than some have been practicing. Yet his litigation against Toyota (a case involving a fatality) has so far yielded, dare we say, some of the most substantive results of any of the suits.

Snyder and his firm, Bailey Glasser, scored the deposition with Christopher Santucci, the Toyota official who once worked for NHTSA, the auto regulator he now lobbies. Next week, Snyder will depose Christopher Tinto, Santucci's boss at Toyota and another former NHTSA employee. He's asked a judge to depose two top Toyota executives but Toyota is fighting those requests.

Snyder graduated with a degree in mining engineering from Penn State in 1999 and spent the summer of 1997 in the Upper Big Branch Mine, the same mine where an explosion claimed lives recently. He went to law school at Pitt. He started at Bailey & Glasser after graduation and made partner in five years, scoring settlements in 2005 against H&R Block for \$62.5 million and has received settlements in suits on behalf of the estate of a miner killed on the job and a victim of sexual abuse by a teacher, among other things.

Will Snyder and his team score a lead role in the litigation? We'll find out soon, maybe even today, when the Judge James Selna could issue his

order determining who takes the lead.

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