

This is a newsletter prepared by lawyers to apprise folks about the law, cases, safety, and significant events. Coopers LLP has lawyers licensed in California, Oregon, and Washington state, and accepts referrals and co-counsel opportunities to better serve the plaintiff community.

Free YouTube Studio Course: Lifecycle of a Case



This course breaks down the real process of civil litigation from the inside, showing how real-world cases evolve step by step. Great for law students, new lawyers, and anyone curious about the subject.



Scan the QR code to go to
our YouTube playlist.



COOPERS LLP
TRIAL LAWYERS

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COOPERS' COUNSEL

Stories, case studies, and practice pointers
from personal injury law experts

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COOPERS LLP
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Coopers LLP helps seriously injured people and accepts referrals and co-counsel opportunities from lawyers. We excel in strategizing. Have a matter you'd like to brainstorm? **Call or text us at 866-912-2789.**

Coopers LLP has lawyers licensed in California, Oregon, and Washington state, and can affiliate with local counsel on matters where Coopers can make the difference.

Visit us at coopers.law.

A LETTER FROM THE COOPERS



The legal profession is often measured by its outcomes: the verdicts, the settlements, and the final judgments. But at Coopers LLP, we know those results are not accidents. They are the product of deliberate systems, relentless advocacy, and a deep commitment to transparency.

This issue explores our foundation for advocacy, beginning with a historic \$142 million judgment for Air Force veteran Richard Lockhart, whose life was changed by a trucking company's negligence. We welcome Matt Ziser, our new Operations Director, who is helping us scale our practice while enabling us to sustain our high level of service to our clients.

We also promote transparency and ongoing education with our "Lifecycle of a Case" YouTube course, empowering the public and our peers. Finally, our *Coopers' Code* feature offers a look at the human side of litigation, sitting down with Mike Laurenson and Mollie Burks to discuss closing arguments and trying a case with a spouse.

Whether refining systems, educating, or fighting for verdicts, our goal is to be the most prepared, creative, and relentless advocates for those who trust us.

*Happy hunting,
M&M*

Miles B. Cooper, Maryanne B. Cooper, and everyone at Coopers LLP



Richard (left) on a family fishing trip.

CASE SPOTLIGHT

THE PRICE OF EXHAUSTION: \$142,412,198

Tragedy and a trucking company's systemic failures

Before June 13, 2023, Richard Lockhart's life was defined by activity and service. A 37-year-old Air Force veteran, Richard lived with the disciplined energy of someone who refused to sit still. If he wasn't at the gym pushing his personal bests, he was on his bike or on a walk, enjoying Oregon's outdoors with his family. He was a fixture in the community, dedicated to coaching his nephew's baseball team and teaching a new generation the value of teamwork and persistence. Whether it was a quiet morning spent fishing or a weekend project at home, Richard was a man who showed up — for his family, for his players, and for his country.

That all changed in a split second on the Fremont Bridge. Following his workout, Richard was headed to a morning appointment, sitting in stop-and-go traffic, when the world as he knew it ended in his rearview mirror.

Anatomy of a catastrophe

The impact was not an accident; it was the result of a systemic collapse of safety. Behind Richard sat a 35,000-pound Freightliner semi-truck operated by CORB, Inc. The driver, Yevgeniy Mutz, had been behind the wheel for a staggering *18 hours and 5 minutes*. Federal law strictly prohibits commercial driving beyond 11 hours to prevent precisely what happened next: a fatigued driver failing to react to stopped traffic.

Traveling at 55 mph, the truck slammed into Richard's Subaru, crushing the vehicle and pinning Richard inside

the wreckage. The violence of the collision resulted in a catastrophic spinal cord injury, leaving Richard with permanent T4-level paraplegia. In an instant, the man who coached from the dugout and biked for miles was robbed of the ability to feel or move from the chest down.

Legal hurdles: Defiance and deception

While the physics of the crash were clear, the path to justice was blocked by the defendants' calculated obstruction. The Coopers LLP trial team — Andrea Posey, Corey Jollie, and Miles Cooper — faced a defense that was as reckless in the courtroom as they were on the road:

- **Willful ignorance:** Under oath, the owner of CORB, Inc. admitted he found federal safety regulations “hard to understand” and confessed he hadn't even bothered to check his driver's logs after the crash.
- **The shell game:** As the litigation progressed, the Coopers team uncovered evidence that the defendants were attempting to move assets and shield themselves from the financial reality of the harm they caused.

Coopers' strategy: Wisdom and relentlessness

The Coopers team responded with a “leave no stone unturned” philosophy. When the defendants refused to play by the rules, the firm went on the offensive, securing a powerful *Sanctions Order*. The court ruled that because of their misconduct, the defendants were judicially established as negligent. This turned the legal tide, moving the focus from *if* they were liable to *how much* they owed for the life they destroyed.

To illustrate the true depth of Richard's loss, the team built a comprehensive evidentiary bridge:

- **Medical experts:** They brought in top-tier physiatrists and neurologists to testify about the “new normal” Richard faces: chronic spasticity, neurogenic bladder and bowel issues, and the high risk of future complications.
- **The life care plan:** They didn't just ask for a “large number.” They presented a meticulous, line-itemed plan for Richard's future, including specialized wheelchairs, ceiling-mounted lifts for his home, roll-in showers, and 24-hour care.



Richard's car, almost unrecognizable after the collision.



Richard will require a high level of care for the rest of his life.

- **Economic analysis:** A Ph.D. economist was utilized to calculate the inflation-adjusted cost of this care over Richard’s remaining decades of life, ensuring he would never be a burden to the society he once served.

The judgment: A \$142 million message

In January 2026, the court delivered a historic judgment, holding CORB, Inc. fully accountable. The *\$142,412,198.88 result* is one of the largest of its kind in Oregon history. It includes over *\$17 million* for past and future economic damages and *\$125 million* in non-economic damages to address the profound loss of Richard’s physical independence and the end of his life as an athlete, coach, and active supporter of his family.

The judgment will also underpin the next round: collectability beyond CORB, Inc.’s available insurance. CORB, Inc. had asked for its insurance broker to renew additional excess coverage, coverage the broker failed to bind. The next phase will include a broker negligence action.

For the Coopers team, this case was about more than a number. It was about proving that when a company treats safety regulations as “suggestions” and human lives as collateral damage, the legal system – driven by creative and relentless advocacy – will hold them to account. Richard will never walk a baseball diamond again, but because of this result, he will have the dignity, care, and support he earned through a lifetime of service.

Prosecuting attorneys: Andrea Posey, Corey Jollie, and Miles Cooper of Coopers LLP.



Andrea Posey, Corey Jollie, and Miles Cooper.

ROADBLOCK: STOPPING NEGLIGENT TRUCKING COMPANIES

When a 35,000-pound semi-truck is involved, there are no accidents — only systemic failures. Andrea Posey and her team have built a reputation for dismantling the defenses of negligent trucking companies.

- **Code mastery:** We don't just read the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs); we weaponize them. In the Lockhart case, our team proved the driver had been behind the wheel for a staggering *18 hours and 5 minutes* — surpassing federal limits by more than 60%.
- **Beating the shell game:** Our investigation didn't stop at the crash site. We exposed a carrier that viewed safety rules as "hard to understand" and tried to hide assets to avoid accountability.
- **Clearing the road:** By securing a landmark judgment and a sanctions order that established negligence as a matter of law, we didn't just get justice for our client — *we effectively shut down a dangerous trucking company for good.*

Successfully navigating the complexities of trucking litigation requires special expertise. Whether you are looking for a relentless co-counsel or simply want to brainstorm a strategy for your own trucking case, reach out to the Coopers team today.

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PRACTICE POINTER

SOUL CRUSHING

Responding to a catastrophic event within one's professional community

By Miles Cooper

In one's professional life one has a close network and broader orbit. The closest? One's coworkers. Every entity develops its own approach to how the individuals come together to form a team. The net result, though, is that the people within an organization cohere. Some entities follow the professional sports team analog while others describe themselves as a family. No matter how the unit comes together, deep bonds tend to develop among those who do the hard work litigation entails. That means we tend to celebrate personal wins. Even more impactful? Loss. While catastrophic events are (hopefully) rare within one's own team, most of us will experience them during our careers.



One's greater professional circle extends to experts, opposing counsel, legal community colleagues, and vendors (think one's closest court reporters and the IT person who answers one's frantic call over the weekend). While these relationships may not be as close as the individuals one works with on a daily basis, one does develop significant working relationships. A select few can become close friends, with relationships lasting decades. Others, challenging opposing counsel for example, might be more fraught but still professional. A loss within the firm or one's broader network will have impact. In our time we've seen deaths within firms, colleagues lose children, experts die suddenly, opposing counsel hospitalized... all manner of catastrophic events.

“

Read with me in my library and stand always beside me so that today I shall not, to win a point, lose my soul.

”

That includes our own experience with our then-young daughter's cancer battle (she is fine now). We survived through our firm's, partners', colleagues' and opposing counsels' universal grace. One notable exception: A local governmental agency, who opposed a continuance request while we remained in the pediatric ICU. The court and broader legal community were stunned. "Read with me in my library and stand always beside me so that today I shall not, to win a point, lose my soul." The quote from the *Lawyer's Prayer to St. Thomas More* provides insight on balancing zealous representation against professional courtesy.

Expect the unexpected

While one cannot plan for every unforeseen catastrophe, it helps to develop a broad framework. The approach splits into the human side and the operational side, with one being complex and the other being complicated. The human side is both simple and monumentally hard. Be there for those impacted, scaled in response to the depth of the relationship. A team member within the firm is run over by a big rig and killed in front of the office, leaving behind a family? This is not a random example: I worked at a firm where this happened. Firm leadership supported the family, created space to grieve for those needing it, and encouraged people who wanted to go to attend the memorial. For more attenuated relationships, say opposing

counsel, scale the response appropriately. That can include stipulating to continuances and offering to help new counsel get up to speed on the case. In situations where the relationship, while external, was more personal, sending well wishes can be both meaningful and personally cathartic. We received several cards expressing sympathy from various opposing counsel while our daughter was hospitalized, and the sentiments meant a lot.

Simultaneous to the human side one must also consider day-to-day operations. While this focus on operations may seem hard-hearted, one must remember that no matter what happens one owes clients zealous representation. The ability to do this improves with processes, checklists, and redundancy. Simple concepts but full implementation is time-consuming. Yet the time investment is broadly transformative for firm operations well beyond responding to catastrophic events. One must develop written processes and checklists for significant firm operations. Many firms rely on oral tradition. This frequently means one person becomes the knowledge repository for performing various critical tasks. That's devastating when that clutch player suddenly gets taken off the board. Redundancy complements written process. Make sure there's someone else who can handle any task within the firm. This applies internally and externally. A good example? If you use an external IT vendor, make sure it is not a one-person shop. For those who understand the need to go further on operational development we recommend Atul Gawande's *The Checklist Manifesto*.

A version of this article originally appeared in Plaintiff magazine, where Miles has written his monthly Back Story column for almost 15 years. Interested in Plaintiff and its coverage? Read more at plaintiffmagazine.com.

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COOPERS' CODE

THE EMPLOYMENT DEFENSE WORLD'S POWER COUPLE

Mike Laurenson and Mollie Burks on trial, love, and the art of the “red herring”

In a special two-part feature on *Coopers' Code*, Miles Cooper sits down with the employment defense world's ultimate “power couple”: Mike Laurenson and Mollie Burks. Partners at the national firm Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani (GRSM for short), Mike and Mollie offer a rare, behind-the-scenes look at what happens when two high-stakes trial attorneys blend their lives, their four children, and – on one notable occasion – a high-pressure courtroom.

Part 1: The inspiring story of a blended practice

In the first episode, the duo explores the human side of the law. Mollie shares her journey from a modest “working-class” upbringing in a tiny Gold Country town to becoming the co-managing partner of Gordon



Mike and Mollie in the studio.

Rees's Northern California region. Mike, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Persian Gulf War, discusses his transition from the bridge of a ship to the well of a courtroom.

Together, they discuss the crucible of re-establishing a practice after a move and the vital importance of being an accessible mentor to the next generation of lawyers. As Mollie puts it, “You have to ensure that these younger lawyers... know that it's not an inconvenience for them to text you.”

Part 2: Trying a case with your spouse

The second episode dives into the mechanics of their most unique collaboration: trying a \$200,000 employment case together in San Francisco. They reveal how they kept their marriage a secret from the jury and the judge, maintained a strict division of labor, and handled the emotional highs and lows of trial.

Listeners will also get a masterclass in trial strategy:

- **The power of openings:** Mollie explains why the opening statement is the “control freak's” favorite part of trial.
- **The creative closing:** Mike breaks down his legendary “Red Herring” graphics and why he once used a clip from *Glengarry Glen Ross* to kick off a closing argument.
- **The French Laundry win:** Mike recounts his high-profile defense of Chef Thomas Keller in a pregnancy discrimination suit, proving that a “smoking gun” email isn't always the end of the story.

Why you should listen

Whether you are interested in the high-stakes world of PAGA and wage-and-hour class actions or simply want to know how two people manage four kids and two massive books of business, this two-parter is packed with wisdom. It's a testament to the fact that with the right partner, you can have a “100% successful practice and be a 100% successful parent.”

Watch now on YouTube:



Part 1: Blending Families & Trial Law



Part 2: How Two Married Lawyers Tried a Case Together

TEAM STORY

STRATEGY, SYSTEMS, AND SOUL

Meet Matt Ziser, Operations Director

The engine behind any great law firm isn't just the trial work in the courtroom — it's the operational excellence that allows those trials to happen. This month, we are proud to introduce the newest leader of that engine: Matt Ziser, our Operations Director.

With more than 20 years of experience in senior strategy and operational leadership, Matt brings a formidable pedigree to Coopers LLP. A graduate of UC Berkeley with a JD-MBA from Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law and Kellogg School of Management, Matt's career has spanned management consulting and executive leadership. He is an expert at scaling professional service firms, implementing complex enterprise systems, and building people-centered environments.

But beyond the impressive credentials, Matt is a leader who prioritizes values and culture.

Finding a cultural connection

When asked what drew him to the firm, Matt points to a rare alignment between professional goals and personal ethics. "Apart from the clear alignment between the role and my background, I was drawn to the firm's strong values articulated via the website and early conversations," Matt shares. Having seen a vast array of business environments, he recognized something different here. "It was clear to me from the beginning that Coopers' thoughtful approach to how it goes about its business was unique and admirable, and the values coincided with my own."

Hitting the ground running

Transitioning into a leadership role at a hybrid firm can be a challenge, but Matt found the perfect "icebreaker" in his first few months. "Getting to meet the entire team early on at the annual holiday party was great," he says. But while the social connection was vital, Matt is most at home when he's solving problems. "Just getting in and getting my hands dirty early has been a highlight."



Life beyond the spreadsheet

When he isn't streamlining our internal systems, Matt is a devoted family man living in the East Bay with his wife and two children. You can often find him cooking, cheering on Cal athletic events, or chasing his passion for live music.

Though he admits his concert schedule is a bit more limited these days thanks to the kids, he recently caught a piece of music history. "I was fortunate enough to catch Bob Weir's last show with the Dead at Golden Gate Park back in August," he notes — a fittingly legendary experience for a leader who values both tradition and innovation.

We are incredibly fortunate to have Matt's pragmatic, analytical, and heart-led approach guiding our operations as we continue to grow and fight for our clients. Welcome to the team, Matt!

COMMUNITY

DEMYSTIFYING THE LAW THROUGH EDUCATION

Our “Lifecycle of a Case” course is free on YouTube

At Coopers LLP, “giving back” isn’t just about financial support; it’s about sharing the wisdom we’ve gained through decades of practice to empower our legal community. One of our core values is being *collaborative*, because we believe that the legal system works best when it is transparent and accessible – not just to lawyers, but to everyone.

To that end, we are excited to announce our newest community education initiative: the “*Lifecycle of a Case*” video course.

A masterclass in advocacy

Hosted by Shareholder Miles Cooper, this series was designed to take the mystery out of the legal process. Originally recorded for our *Coopers’ Code* podcast, we have curated these episodes into a comprehensive YouTube playlist that serves as a roadmap for anyone navigating a personal injury claim – whether you are a new lawyer, law student, client, or curious member of the public.

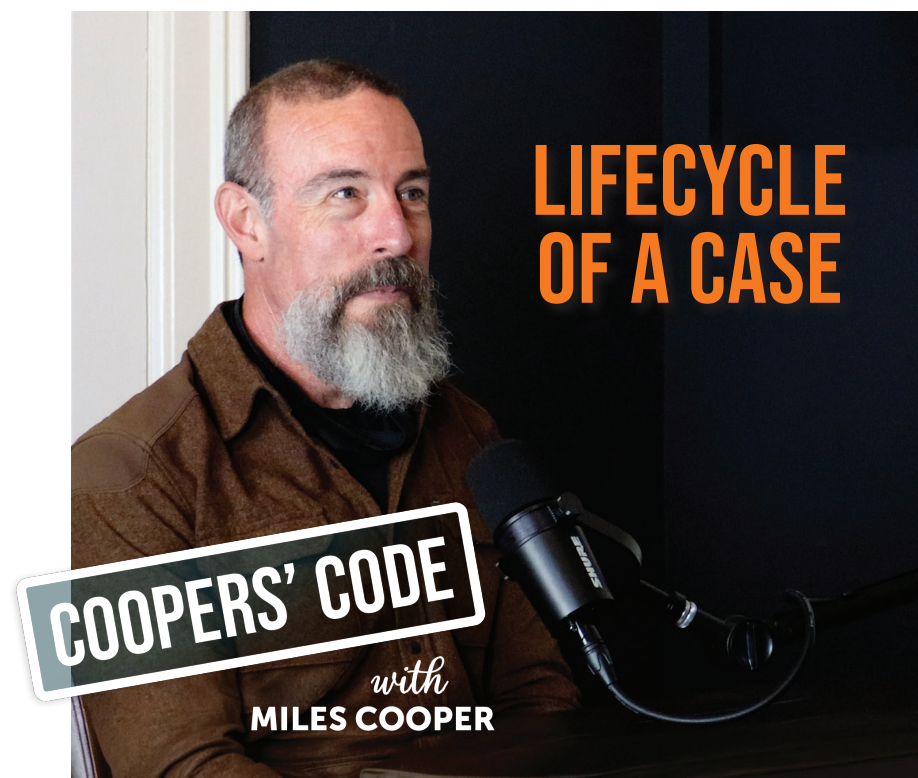
The series breaks down a complex legal journey into eight distinct, digestible phases:

- **The early stages:** From the initial “Intake” and “Investigation” (Phases 1 & 2) where we build the foundation of a claim, to the nuances of Pre-litigation and Filing Suit (Phases 3 & 4).
- **The “deep work” of discovery:** Miles explains the often-misunderstood Discovery and Deposition phase (Phase 5), where facts are unearthed and information mastery is achieved.
- **Negotiation and experts:** We explore the strategy behind Mediation (Phase 6) and the critical role of Expert Discovery (Phase 7), showing how we use high-level data to validate the harm our clients have suffered.

- **The final act:** The series culminates in Phase 8: Trial, a deep dive into the systems that help trials run smoothly – from jury selection and opening statements to using the verdict form as a tool for justice.

Why we share our process

We know that for most people, the legal system feels like a foreign land. By providing this course for free, we aim to reduce the anxiety of the unknown and provide a road map for the journey toward resolution. Education is the ultimate tool for empowerment, and we are proud to offer this resource to our peers and neighbors.



Ready to go behind the scenes? Scan the QR code to watch the full series and see how we move a case from the first phone call to a final verdict.