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TOP WOMEN LAWYERS



CHRISTINE D. SPAGNOLI

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Santa Monica

Practice type: Litigation

Specialty: Personal injury, products liability

When Spagnoli won a lawsuit against Ford Motor Co. last year for \$73 million, she came full circle. Ten years earlier, she'd have a case on the exact same issue — in fact, the exact same tire.

The Ford case involved a Ford 15-passenger van accident that killed two passengers and injured two others after the vehicle flipped four times because of a tread separation in a defective rear tire. The jury determined Ford was at fault because it never took steps

to independently alert customers about the defective tire after Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. — which manufactured it — notified the automaker about the problem.

Spagnoli said she was initially astonished when Sacramento plaintiffs' attorney Roger Dreyer, who co-tried the case, called her about the lawsuit. "I was really shocked to find out that there were tires still out there — years later — that nobody made efforts to collect," she said. Spagnoli told Dreyer she could help him win the case. "I said I have a lot of things I can help you to prove that case. I know where things are. I know what testimony we need to get from Goodyear."

Not only did Spagnoli know where to get information, she used some of the very depositions and evidence she had acquired when she sued Goodyear a decade before. That included a deposition of the head of Goodyear's light-truck tire development team, as well as a deposition of an automotive safety officer at Ford that she had taken four years earlier in another case.

"This has been a long history. The Mauro case was really the culmination of all of that," Spagnoli said, referring to the lead plaintiff. The \$73 million judgment for the plaintiffs was one of the largest auto liability verdicts of 2011.

Over the years, Spagnoli has held leadership positions in professional associations, on top of her caseload. Most recently, she served as president of the Consumer Attorneys of California in 2009.

— Emily Green