

Daily Journal

www.dailyjournal.com

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

Kinsella Holley's encore: Building on a legacy of high-stakes entertainment battles

Known for representing celebrities, estates, and families in blockbuster disputes, Kinsella Holley is cultivating a new generation of trial lawyers ready to match the firm's storied legacy.

By Shane Nelson

Special to the Daily Journal

Kinsella Holley Iser Kump Steinsapir LLP has long been synonymous with Hollywood's biggest legal battles—defending celebrities, protecting estates, and challenging studios in nine-figure disputes. Nearly 20 years after its founding, the boutique that built its reputation on outlitigating much bigger law firms is now looking inward, cultivating a new wave of talent poised to carry its star-studded legacy into the future.

"What we've seen emerging from the firm is the next generation, who are doing fantastic," longtime entertainment litigator and Managing Partner Lawrence Y. Iser said. "I'm as excited about the firm now as I was in 2006 when we first started it."

One member of that next generation is partner Nicholas C. Soltman, who joined the firm in 2015 and with Aaron Liskin frequently represents film and television writers, producers, directors, and actors in profit participation contractual disputes with studios.

"My clients are almost invariably very creative people, who had an idea for a show or made a movie come to life," Soltman said. "And this is an industry where hits are few and far between, so when you get one, your expectation quite reasonably is that you're in a position to have a percentage of the profits. ... And that's where I come in: to effectuate for them what they were already promised but haven't received from the studio."

Attorneys at Kinsella Holley especially pride themselves on their ability to go toe-to-toe with the largest law firms in the country.



From top left, Greg Korn, Shawn Holley, Suann MacIsaac; seated from left, Nick Soltman and Jonathan Steinsapir. Justin L. Stewart/Special to the Daily Journal

"All of my cases are against Gibson, O'Melveny, Jenner, Munger. If there's a big firm, that's who I'm litigating against," Soltman said. "And they will have teams that are five times - literally five times - the size of our team, and we go toe-to-toe with them often in nine-figure cases. But that's really hard to do at our size unless you have an extremely deep knowledge of the area, and you have the litigation chops to fight out-manned against the best firms in the city and in the country."

The firm has also attracted top talent from prominent national firms, including Ashlee Difuntorum, who joined from Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP, and Ray Seilie, formerly of Bird Marella LLP.

Greg Korn is another rising star at the firm. He recently defended New Republic Pictures against breach of contract claims brought by Bradley Fischer, and has also represented an impressive roster of clients, including Media Rights Capital, Legendary Pictures, Justin Bieber, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Ronn Moss, the Kardashian-Jenner family, WME, novelist James Patterson, and filmmaker Nicholas Jarecki in significant matters.

Iser compared the firm to MAS*H, the television series that ran throughout the 1970s and '80s set during the Korean War in a mobile army surgical hospital.

"These doctors were all doing the serious work of saving lives, but they did it in [this] atmosphere of having

fun, having a sense of humor, not taking yourself too seriously," he said.

"That describes our firm, and that's the way we've been for 20 years," Iser continued. "And in that atmosphere, we've allowed our people and our practices and our clients to thrive and to flourish."

Iser founded the firm in April 2006 with entertainment litigators Dale Kinsella, Michael J. Kump, and the legendary Howard L. Weitzman - who died in 2021 and is perhaps best known as Michael Jackson's go-to lawyer. While the entertainment industry has been buffeted with changes - streaming, social media, and the like - the work has remained relatively constant.

"Interestingly enough, we're doing the same stuff we did 20 years ago,"

Iser said of the firm's practice areas, which include entertainment, intellectual property, and business litigation as well as criminal defense.

Home to 20 attorneys these days, Iser noted the shop recently signed on to represent the wife and family of Major League Baseball pitcher Tyler Skaggs in a wrongful death suit filed against the Los Angeles Angels. *Carli Skaggs v. Angels Baseball L,P* 30-2021-01231706-CU-PO-NJC (O.C. Super. Ct., filed May 15, 2023).

"Tyler Skaggs was a pitcher for the Angels, who in 2019 was found dead in his hotel room in Texas of a drug overdose - the drug having been provided to him by the head of communications for the Angels," Iser said. "And that head of communications is now doing 20 years in prison."

Name partner Shawn C. Holley is heading up the Skaggs matter.

"The evidence in that case is overwhelming," Holley said. "And besides, obviously, the ultimate injustice that was preventable - which is losing your life - there is a story to be told about the various ways in which he was not treated as he should have been before paying the ultimate price."

A former Los Angeles County public defender and member of the O.J. Simpson defense team, Holley joined the firm in 2006 and has represented Kanye West, Justin Bieber, Shia LaBeouf, Snoop Dogg, Lindsay Lohan, and Paris Hilton as well as the Kardashian and Jenner families.

"My practice sort of shifted to I guess I would call it celebrities and or high-profile people in trouble," Holley said, noting that the trouble isn't necessarily criminal in nature.

"A lot of what I do now - and why I can never talk about my clients - is because they are often accused of something I'm certain they did not do," she explained. "But if the case is filed, that's going to cause reputational damage. And even though I feel confident we would win the case in the end, that is going to come at great expense to my client's reputation, image, and brand. So, the goal is often to do a lot of work to prove [or] be able to demonstrate at a mediation that there's really no there there. But we're willing to pay something to make this go away."

Holley said she takes a great deal of fulfillment from helping people through what is often one of the most difficult times of their lives.

"It's not just doing the legal work," she explained. "It's often handholding, strategizing, and my favorite thing is to be able to resolve something by showing whoever it is - be it opposing counsel, be it a mediator, be it a judge - why justice demands the thing I'm proposing."

Los Angeles-based Venable LLP partner William J. Briggs has opposed Holley a number of times, including trying a case against her involving a former NFL player.

"Shawn is an excellent advocate for her clients, always well prepared, very thoughtful," Briggs said. "And she has an ease about her in the courtroom. She's very comfortable with the judge, in particular, and with handling witnesses. She's just very comfortable in the courtroom."

Name partner Jonathan P. Steinsapir, meanwhile, represents the Michael Jackson estate, work that represents roughly half of his practice these days.

"I essentially act as their outside general counsel, but I also litigate for them," Steinsapir said. "I probably talk to them on a daily basis. ... And it's even moved into a transactional role at times."

Steinsapir, who first joined the boutique in 2007, noted he's done a great deal of work on the Michael Jackson biopic slated for release next April, and he was also involved with the sale of roughly half of Jackson's catalogue to Sony Music Group, a deal valued at \$600 million according to numerous 2024 media reports.

"There was a challenge to the executor's authority to do that [catalogue] deal, and that case was tried," Steinsapir explained. "I was there as lead counsel, and we won that case in a three-day trial. And then it was appealed, and I was lead counsel there, and we also won the appeal."

Like Iser, Steinsapir said he is excited about the future of Kinsella Holley, pointing to the firm's successful transition to the next generation of attorneys that include Kate Mangels, Chad Fitzgerald, Kat Kleindienst, and Suann MacIsaac.

"Not only have we survived that transition, but it's exciting that it's now our firm," he explained. "I would say it's more the second generation's firm now."

shane.nelson@dailyjournal.com