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## 50 years of lawyering includes Manson trial

**By Ryne Hodkowski**  
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**R**onald L.M. Goldman, the attorney who helped secure immunity for Linda Kasabian, the prosecution's key witness in the case against Charles Manson and members of his infamous "family" in the Tate-LaBianca murder trial and who made a name for himself in aviation law, celebrated his 50th year of practice on Thursday.

Goldman, a name partner at Baum, Hedlund, Aristei & Goldman PC in Los Angeles, began his career surrounded by attorneys practicing the then-modern niche of personal injury and wrongful death law. In a time before Miranda rights and public defenders, he began getting trial experience after volunteering for the federal indigent defense counsel.

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In 1969, Goldman handled his first aviation-related case, defending the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization's interests in an attempt to improve the working conditions of controllers experiencing excessive stress levels. Goldman obtained a victory on appeal in the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

While he said he doesn't consider him-



**GOLDMAN**

self a pioneer in the field of aviation law, Goldman said he was among its earliest practitioners. In 1972, he was admitted to practice in Great Britain after the crash of a British European Airways jet — the worst commercial air disaster in Britain at the time. Goldman represented the family of an American passenger killed in the crash. In 2005, he elicited an official public apology from Air Midwest regarding the commuter crash two years earlier of Air Midwest Flight 5481 in Charlotte, N.C. Such an apology, Goldman's firm said, was "unprecedented."

Goldman got involved in the Manson murder trials as a result of his friendship with Gary B. Fleishmann, Kasabian's attorney. Kasabian had already hired Fleishmann to help get her child back from Manson's ranch, Goldman said. When news of the 1969 murders broke, Fleishmann reached out to Goldman for help.

Prosecutors, who included Aaron Stovitz, Vincent Bugliosi and then-Los Angeles District Attorney Evelle J. Younger — who would later become California Attorney General — originally arranged for a deal that would include Manson family member Susan Atkins testifying in return for a life sentence.

But Goldman said he argued Atkins had been involved in the physical act of murder, whereas Kasabian was a lookout.

"I said, 'You can't in good consciousness make a deal with someone with blood on their hands,'" Goldman said. "It is politically stupid and a prosecutorial blunder."

Over several meetings, Goldman was able to convince prosecutors to use Kasabian as the key witness and to grant her full immunity for her cooperation.

"Some of the negotiations — to say they were tension-filled would be an understatement," Goldman said. "But we got the agreement done, and all of the people involved went to prison for the rest of their life, while [Kasabian] went home."

In addition to his career as an attorney, Goldman taught for 21 years at Pepperdine School of Law, originally teaching torts and later aviation accident law.

Despite practicing for 50 years, Goldman said he still gets satisfaction from helping clients and demanding justice for everyone.

"The work I do is more intense and complex than 30, 40 or 50 years ago, but the satisfaction and rewards that come are just as great," Goldman said. "I spend a great deal of time lecturing and telling people that justice is real and that we need to embrace it free from a cynical attitude."