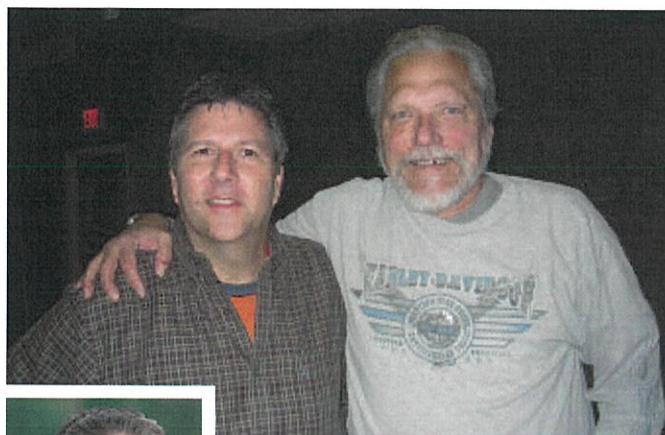




A trained classical guitarist, Schechter jams from time to time with other musician-lawyers, and sometimes with Kaukonen. "It's basic blues," he says.



Schechter with his childhood idol and current client Jorma Kaukonen of Jefferson Airplane.



Marc S. Schechter
Butterfield Schechter;
Employee Benefits;
San Diego

Chasing Rabbits

Marc Schechter grew up idolizing Jefferson Airplane; now he reps them BY JIM WALSH

Growing up in Toms River, New Jersey in the 1960s, Marc Schechter was about as far from California's psychedelic rock scene as an East Coast kid could get. But the radio provided a window to that seminal era—and to one San Francisco band in particular.

"The first thing I heard on the radio that really caught me was the lead guitar solo at the end of the song 'Somebody to Love' by the Jefferson Airplane," says Schechter. "I remember thinking how cool that sounded. I went out, bought the album, listened to it and said, 'Wow, there's a whole bunch of good songs on this album.' And from there, from all these other albums, you got into the whole universe."

Years later, Schechter became the lawyer for part of that universe, and for the author of that guitar solo, Jorma Kaukonen. Schechter, whose practice focuses on employee benefits and business, tax, entertainment and copyright law, oversees

most of the legal work for Kaukonen, Jefferson Airplane, and Hot Tuna—Kaukonen's blues jam band with bassist Jack Casady.

A music major at Rowan University and a trained classical guitarist, Schechter's musician chops have enabled him to forge a relationship that goes beyond the usual attorney-client one.

"Nowadays, if I go to one of their gigs, I'll be sitting on the side of the stage—which is someplace I never thought I'd be. I guess I would have preferred being on the stage, performing like they were, but talk about a tough industry to break into," says Schechter, who graduated from California Western School of Law in 1984. "It is absolutely talent. But more than that, it's being in the right place at the right time."

For the Airplane, the right place was Haight-Ashbury at the dawn of classic rock. Led by singer Grace Slick, the band's trippy hit "White Rabbit" and its freaky chorus of

"Go ask Alice" helped forge a new sound for a new generation. Five decades later, the heart of the band is still ticking.

"We have our quarterly phone conferences that go over everything that's going on in their world," says Schechter, whose office walls at Butterfield Schechter are covered with guitars, albums and autographed photos. "Jorma and Jack are very active. They're 76 or 77, and in phenomenal shape, and playing as well as ever. Grace doesn't perform anymore. She paints. She has exhibits in galleries all over the place, but her real specialty is painting white rabbits."

When he gets off those conference calls, Schechter occasionally pauses to ruminate on how his boyhood heroes have become friends and clients.

"When I talk to my friends about it, they're like, 'I can't believe it. We used to wait in line to buy tickets to see these guys. Couldn't wait till they went on tour. And now they're coming over to your house.' ... But you kind of find out that they put their shoes on the same way we do."

Schechter jams from time to time with other musician-lawyers, and Kaukonen has joined them. "It's been really fun," Schechter says. "It's basic blues."

In addition to the Airplane universe, Schechter, a widower and father of two, represents other musicians. "Going to the lawyer for them used to be like going to the dentist. But when your lawyer is kind of one of you," he says, "then it's a whole different dynamic, for sure." 