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# Contents

Introduction	5	Michael Mitchell	34
Past honorees	6	Max Nathan	35
<b>2008 honorees:</b>		Glenn Orgeron	37
William Aaron	7	Marshall Page	38
Nan Alessandra	8	Erin Parkinson	39
Gilbert Andry	9	Joseph Peiffer	40
Raymond Areaux	10	Robert Perez	42
Peter Barbee	11	Frederick Preis Jr.	43
Charles Branton	12	Deborah Rouen	44
Kenny Charbonnet	13	David Sherman	46
William Credo	14	Randall Smith	47
Taylor Darden	15	Renee Smith	48
Christopher Davis	16	Ray Steib	49
Bobby Delise	18	Martin Stern	50
Richard Duplantier	19	Patrick Talley	51
Leslie Ehret	21	Susan Talley	52
Richard Exnicios	22	Patrick Vance	53
Tracey Flemings-Davillier	23	David Waguespack	54
Donna Fraiche	24	Joel Waltzer	55
Duris Holmes	25	David Ware	56
John Houghtaling	26	George Wentz Jr.	57
Chauntis Jenkins	27	Scott Whittaker	58
Robert Kerrigan Jr.	28	James Williams	59
Keva Landrum-Johnson	30	Scott Willis	60
Walter Leger Jr.	31	Brett Wise	61
Lynn Luker	32	Scott Wolfe	62
Eve Masinter	33		

## 2008 LEADERSHIP in LAW



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# Introduction



**By Christian Moises**  
Associate Editor

Attorneys often compare their work to David versus Goliath.

That determination and fortitude to go up against the big guy helped a selection committee decide on the CityBusiness Leadership in Law Class of 2008, recognizing 50 leading legal professionals based on professional and community achievements.

In the program's fourth year, honorees discuss their most challenging, memorable, difficult or rewarding case, and their stories are powerful.

Many attorneys are still fighting Hurricane Katrina-related cases, while

others have increased their pro bono work. Some have broken language barriers and others have crossed international borders to serve clients.

Some are involved with helping schools recover, others remain committed to recovery organizations and still more are offering their free time to community organizations.

But the underlying theme is this year's honorees are devoted to social justice and making sure their clients are treated fairly.

This year's class includes Orleans Parish Acting District Attorney Keva Landrum-Johnson and Jefferson Parish

Assistant District Attorney William Credo.

2008 honorees Nan Alessandra, Walter Leger, Fred Preis, David Sherman, David Ware and Scott Whittaker are being recognized for a second time, while Scott Wolfe is a three-time recipient and John Houghtaling is the only honoree to make the listing every year of the program's 4-year history.

CityBusiness thanks each of them for their professional and civic efforts and the differences they are making in the region.

Congratulations to the Leadership in Law Class of 2008. •

## Goins Aaron

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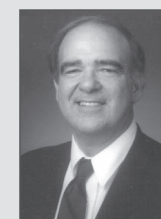
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past honorees

2007

Robert "Bob" S. Angelico  
 Mark R. Beebe  
 Lucia Blacksher  
 Kim M. Boyle  
 T. Peter Breslin  
 Dana M. Douglas  
 Sandra Mills Feingerts  
 Janice Martin Foster  
 Alan H. Goodman  
 Deborah D. Harkins  
 Peter L. Hilbert Jr.  
 William H. Hines  
 John Houghtaling  
 William H. Howard III  
 Ashlye Keaton  
 Steven I. Klein  
 Stephen Kupperman  
 Robert A. Kutcher  
 Steven J. Lane  
 Wayne J. Lee  
 Walter Leger  
 Georges M. Legrand  
 Julie Livaudais  
 David J. Lukinovich  
 Nancy J. Marshall  
 Robert A. Mathis  
 Pam Metzger  
 Carole Cukell Neff  
 Robert W. Nuzum  
 John Olinde  
 C. Lawrence Orlansky  
 Allison Penzato  
 Keith M. Pyburn Jr.  
 Harry Rosenberg  
 Dionne M. Rousseau  
 James H. Roussel  
 Kyle Schonekas  
 E. Paige Sensenbrenner  
 David Sherman  
 Lloyd Noble "Sonny" Shields  
 Stuart H. Smith  
 Peter E. Sperling  
 Marx Sterbcow  
 Jeffrey J. Thomas  
 Quentin F. Urquhart Jr.  
 Steve Usdin  
 Laurie A. White  
 Constance Charles Willems  
 Henri Wolbrette III  
 Scott G. Wolfe Jr.

2006

Marguerite Adams  
 Nan Alessandra  
 Thomas Beron  
 Carmelite Bertaut  
 Kim Boyle  
 Elwood Cahill Jr.  
 Kathryn Caraway  
 James Carroll  
 Charlie Cerise  
 Shaun Clarke  
 Philip deV. Claverie  
 Miles Clements  
 Frank J. D'Amico Jr.  
 Nancy Scott Degan  
 John Duck  
 Val Exnicios  
 George Frilot III  
 John Galloway  
 Covert Geary  
 Russ Herman  
 John Houghtaling  
 Grady Hurley  
 James Irwin  
 Steven Lane  
 Patricia LeBlanc  
 Edward LeBreton III  
 Andrew Lee  
 Wayne Lee  
 Jon Leyens Jr.  
 Kelly Longwell  
 John Manard Jr.  
 Robert Manard  
 Joseph Marino III  
 Robert McCalla  
 Corinne Morrison  
 Thomas O'Brien  
 Paul Pastorek  
 Lawrence Ponoroff  
 Fredrick Preis Jr.  
 Richard Richter  
 Howard Shapiro  
 Jack Stoller  
 Noel E. Vargas Jr.  
 Nelson Wagar III  
 Kenneth Weiss  
 David Willenzik  
 John Wilson  
 Phillip Wittmann  
 Scott Wolfe Jr.  
 Robert Worley Jr.

2005

Donald Abaunza  
 Robert Acomb Jr.  
 Judy Barrasso  
 Hilton Bell  
 Edward B. Benjamin Jr.  
 Virginia Boulet  
 Kim Boyle  
 Alan Brackett  
 C. William Bradley  
 James A. Brown  
 Paula A. Brown  
 Joseph Bruno  
 Peter J. Butler Sr.  
 McChord Carrico  
 Roy Cheatwood  
 James Coleman  
 Keith Colvin  
 E. Howell Crosby  
 Howard Daigle Jr.  
 Christopher Dicharry  
 Anthony DiLeo  
 J. Kelly Duncan  
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 Michael Ellis  
 Frank Fontenot  
 George J. Fowler III  
 James Garner  
 William Grace Jr.  
 Mat Gray III  
 Harry S. Hardin III  
 Russ M. Herman  
 Bill Hines  
 John Houghtaling  
 Richard Ieyoub  
 Donna Klein  
 Roselyn Koretzky  
 Cheryl Kornick  
 Steven J. Lane  
 J. Dwight LeBlanc Jr.  
 Wayne Lee  
 Jonathan McCall  
 Michael A. McGlone  
 Robert Mouton  
 Antonio Rodriguez  
 Dionne Rousseau  
 Leopold Sher  
 Mark Surprenant  
 Robert Vosbein  
 David Ware  
 Scott Whittaker

# William Aaron

**Position:** partner, Goins Aaron

**Age:** 57

**Family:** wife, Santa; and children Kiana, 31, Trazarra, 29, Bilanta, 19, and William III, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Duke University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

A personal lesson in creative property rights infringement sparked an interest in the law for William Aaron, who played the flute and a few other wind instruments in a college jazz group and rock band.

"I sat in as a studio musician and subsequently found my work on a record that came out, and I didn't have any protection," Aaron said.

Aaron's initial focus was contract law — "how to protect your rights, not necessarily in a music context, but just generally" — but his career interests later expanded. As partner in the New Orleans law firm of Goins Aaron, his practice includes litigation, business and regulatory law, with each of those categories having about 15 different sub-areas, he said. His clientele ranges from government agencies to Fortune 500 companies.

"The things I'm usually involved in are very high-profile," Aaron said. "(There's) usually a lot of public interest in the litigation, or a lot of money, and sometimes both."

Before starting his own firm, Aaron held several key positions in the public and private sector. He has been a partner at Phelps Dunbar, city attorney for the city of New Orleans, special prosecutor for the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office, special assistant attorney general for the state of Louisiana and assistant district counsel for the U.S. Small Business Administration.

"While I was city attorney, we probably had some of the most controversial issues to come up. We had the Mardi Gras ordinances, the Rivergate (demolition) and casinos coming to New Orleans."

These days, besides his law practice, Aaron has taken on another more judicial role in his field. As a member of the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board, he reviews the recommendations of hearing committees for how complaints of lawyer misconduct should be resolved. The final arbiter is the Louisiana Supreme Court.

One of his latest ventures was co-founding the newly chartered First NBC Bank, which opened in May 2006.

"I had represented banks previously, and I thought that there was room for a new bank that, because it was new, would have a greater interest in loans to individuals and small businesses," said Aaron, who is on the bank's board of directors.

When the stress of his high-profile, complex and controversial law cases gets to him, Aaron finds relief by riding his Harley Davidson. But for the most part, he has a laid-back temperament and works well under pressure.

"Usually the greater the chaos, the calmer I am. I'm like a battlefield-type individual. I prefer when the bombs are bursting overhead. If I'm not at my best, I'm at least at my happiest then."•

— Sonya Stinson





# Nan Alessandra

**Position:** partner and practice coordinator, Phelps Dunbar

**Age:** 53

**Family:** single

**Education:** attended Hunter College; bachelor's degree, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Several years ago, Nan Alessandra defended a supervisor in an employment law case. He was accused, she said, of things she knew he hadn't done. Although the court vindicated him, he died a year later from stress.

"It was brutal for me watching him," Alessandra said. "He had two young daughters. He told me, 'At least I got my name cleared.'"

From ballerina to attorney, Alessandra always set out to achieve her goals. While pursuing ballet in New York after high school, she attended Hunter College. Too many injuries brought her home to New Orleans, where she enrolled in the University of New Orleans as an English major. There she worked as a research assistant to her mentor, the late professor Gordon Flemming, editing transcripts of famous divorce trials from the Victorian age.

"I got so fascinated. Professor Flemming said, 'Have you ever thought about law school?'"

After passing the Law School Admission Test, Alessandra enrolled at Loyola University School of Law. The curriculum fit her love of reading and writing.

"I love the fact that I'm in a profession," she said. "It's not just a job. A lot is expected, but there are certain rewards."

Alessandra's work ethic stems back to her grandparents and parents, who, she said, taught her to be the best at what she is passionate about.

"They were so proud that I was doing the things that I love to do," she said. "I came from a family where you gravitate to what you love."

Alessandra's passion for her career mirrors the passion she has for her city. In post-Katrina New Orleans, she plans to continue to use her skills in employment law to help the local community and the region at-large.

"The legal professional is valuable," she said. "Lawyers are a vital aspect (of post-Katrina New Orleans)."

Alessandra's community efforts include a position as the third vice president of the New Orleans Bar Association's continuing legal education committee and the chairwoman of the labor and employment section. She also is involved with women's leadership with United Way, Catholic Charities and the Delta Festival Ballet. Often, she writes and speaks about management interests on employment-related topics as well as offers training to clients on corporate compliance issues, such as workplace harassment.

"I can do this as long as I'm mentally and physically able. You can age gracefully in the legal profession and have a rewarding career."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith





# Gilbert Andry

**Position:** managing member, The Andry Law Firm  
**Age:** 43  
**Family:** wife, Alicia; and children, Gilbert V, 13, Elena Maria, 11, Sophie Browne, 9, Isaac, 7  
**Education:** bachelor's degree in arts and sciences, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Gilbert Andry's career took an early leap forward just after he graduated from Tulane University Law School, when he represented a family in a boat accident in which three friends died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

As a green attorney, he went against a large generator manufacturing company. The cards were clearly stacked against him, yet he was not deterred.

"I discovered through hard work that this same type of accident (with the same company generators) had occurred nearly every three years dating back to the 1970s," Andry said. "Despite abundant knowledge from the accidents, the company had never corrected the problem or warned users regarding the dangers of the generator."

He tried the 1994 St. Bernard Parish case over a three-month period and predicted in court that the accident would

occur again, which it did in Maryland and in other locations. Winning the case was a big victory for Andry in terms of his confidence as an attorney.

"I began to represent plaintiffs in similar suits all over the country."

Competition and helping people are why Andry enjoys being an attorney.

"I love solving problems and conflicts in the competitive world of litigation," said Andry, who handles catastrophic injury cases as well as the occasional class action.

"I am David against Goliath on a daily basis. In the last case I was working on, I went against nine defense attorneys. I told the attorneys that the scenario of nine against me wasn't fair and that they needed even more defense attorneys."

All of Andry's clients mean a lot to him. He is selective in

the cases he takes and the people he represents.

"What has proven effective and fits my personality is that I immerse myself in each case — I live it, eat it, drink it and sleep it. Every case is important to me, no one case is more important than the other. I don't spend a lot of time rejoicing in a win — I move on to the next case."

As if he does not have enough on his plate with a busy career, a wife and four children, as an assistant district attorney, Andry has taught a legal enrichment and decision making class to fifth-graders for the past eight years. He also teaches trial advocacy at Tulane University Law School.

"I teach third-year law students how to be Perry Mason," he said. "I like being able to help — that is why I do what I do."•

— Maria Barrios



# Raymond Areaux

**Position:** founding partner, Carver, Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman & Areaux

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Dana; and children, Raymond Jr., 25, Rebecca, 16

**Education:** bachelor's degrees in electrical engineering and computer and information systems, Tulane University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Promoting the city's and state's technological potential is a natural fit for Raymond Areaux.

As a founding partner of Carver, Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman & Areaux, his practice is devoted primarily to legal issues surrounding computers, software, domain names, trademarks and unfair competition and franchises.

"I have thought for a long time that our city and state get a bad rap when it comes to both advertising our technology and supporting technological innovation," said Areaux, who leads the firm's intellectual property practice group.

"We are oftentimes thought of as not being as technologically advanced as other states and for that reason really suffer from an image that I think is basically inaccurate."

Areaux has gotten involved in promoting technology in the state as well as fighting for its interests as a member of the Louisiana Technology Council Board of Directors.

"I am a registered patent attorney, and I represent a lot of Louisiana-based technology companies. ... I regularly encounter a large number of creative and innovative engineers, inventors and programmers, all working hard and doing great things."

Areaux's interest in technology can be traced to his days as a student at Tulane University, where he received two undergraduate degrees: one in electrical engineering and the other in computer and information systems.

As an attorney, he has emphasized the need for a greater awareness of the legal issues coming out of the digital age, focusing on the biotech and mechanical arts, software arts, Web-based delivery arts, service marks and brands, and arbitrating computer software and transactions disputes.

One of the founders and a former president of the Crescent City Hockey League, Areaux thinks the state and city should do more to promote the interests of the artistically as well as technologically creative people who live and work in southern Louisiana.

"I know from my work with people who are involved in technology that they work very hard at what they do, but have to labor under the impression that this is not a good state for technological innovation. I know for a fact that the exact opposite is true — this is a state and city that attracts innovation and is a great place to have a start-up company."•

— Garry Boulard



# Peter Barbee

**Position:** senior staff attorney, Plaquemines Parish Public Defenders Office; founding partner, Barbee & Associates

**Age:** 45

**Family:** wife, Jill

**Education:** bachelor's degree in classical history, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School; master's degree of comparative law, Tulane University Law School

Having practiced civil and criminal law in Louisiana for nearly 20 years, Peter Barbee has had a long and adventurous legal career. Joining the Army Reserve when he was 17, Barbee excelled in college and became one of the youngest lieutenants in the Army at age 21.

While bouncing in and out of active duty military, including service as a captain in the Special Forces, Barbee earned his law degree and a master's degree in Soviet law. In 1998, he ended up in Plaquemines Parish and found his true calling as a public defense attorney.

"Even in the Special Forces, our motto was 'De Oppresso Libre,' which literally means to free the oppressed. I hate bullies and when I see dirty cops, prosecutors hiding evidence and unfair judges, that to me is the worst description of a bully," Barbee said.

Being able to earn a comfortable living has allowed Barbee to focus on his desire to help the underserved, sometimes out of his own pocket.

Barbee's tenacity for defending indigents and liberating the oppressed hasn't always made him popular. Despite his 6-foot-3, 265-pound stature, he receives occasional threats when his cases put him at odds with powerful people. His desire to help defendants who are often illiterate and uneducated, his unwillingness to back down from the fight and his "regular" dress earns him a lot of respect with his clients. Rarely wearing a coat and tie unless he's in court, Barbee often commutes to work on his Harley Davidson.

"One of the things my clients usually tell me is that I talk 'to' them and not 'at' them or 'down to' them. It really makes a difference. I like talking to my clients like they're people and I

just despise putting on these class notions."

His efforts in one case became a national story and earned him appearances on Court TV, A&E, NBC, "The Today Show" and "Good Morning America."

In *State of Louisiana v. Latham*, Barbee helped exonerate Alvin Latham, a mildly retarded man who was accused of second-degree murder after he survived the sinking of a shrimp boat in a storm off the Louisiana coast. Barbee convinced the jury Latham's confession was not true because of his mental inabilities.

"I just realized they were trying to railroad this guy. The inertia of the sheriff's office, the district attorney's office and the grand jury just set it off. It was the hardest case I've ever had in my life. He was a harmless, helpless man unable to defend himself."•

— Craig Guillot



# Charles Branton

**Position:** managing partner, Branton & Associates

**Age:** 54

**Family:** divorced; and children Kathryn, 27, Leslie, 24, Alan, 22, Ryan, 19, Mary, 17, Kevin, 14

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, Louisiana State University; master's of library science degree, LSU; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Chuck Branton has always had an affinity for the underdog.

In his office, he keeps a porcelain figurine of Don Quixote, literature's most famous underdog. Fortunately, Branton has had better luck with his cases than Quixote had with windmills.

Branton works a wide variety of cases, including criminal defense work and children abused by their parents. Branton's oldest son, Alan, is developmentally disabled and he uses his experience with the law and as a parent to help other parents with special needs children.

In law school, he attended classes at night and worked as an insurance adjuster and claims manager during the day, which gives him a unique perspective on insurance-related cases.

One of Branton's most challenging cases was an insurance case — Salley v. E.I. DuPont. Jack Salley was a retired DuPont employee with insurance coverage from the company. When his teenage daughter needed emergency mental health care, the insurance company refused to pay. According to Branton, the insurance adjuster told the doctor, "I don't care if she lives or dies. We're not paying."

The doctor treated Salley's daughter anyway, but Branton took DuPont to court. At the time, Branton worked by himself. He didn't even have a secretary. On the other hand, DuPont, being a large company, had a veritable army of lawyers at their disposal.

"It was just me against these firms," Branton said.

But Branton's case was strong enough that the judge presiding over the case advised DuPont to settle. DuPont refused and Branton won the case for his client. DuPont appealed in 1992 and Branton won again. It was the first case DuPont lost in the United States.

"It was your classic David-vs.-Goliath scenario."

Another challenging but rewarding case for Branton took place last year when Rita Dunn beat incumbent Guy Williams for a spot on the Covington City Council by two votes and Williams sued to overturn the election. Three firms represented Williams, but Branton won the case for his client.

"She'd worked very hard to win the election and she won it fair and square," he said.

Branton is a board member of Safe Harbor, the only battered women's shelter in St. Tammany Parish. When Safe Harbor lost its lease in Slidell, Branton helped them find a new facility and helped them negotiate the legal, insurance and bonding issues.

"I get to help people when they need it the most."•

— Fritz Esker



# Kenny Charbonnet

**Position:** principal, Charbonnet Law Firm

**Age:** 58

**Family:** wife, Jane; and children Dorothy, 32, Elizabeth, 30, Cecile, 28, Coates, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree in marketing, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Kenny Charbonnet has represented more than 200 clients in Katrina insurance claims and won more than 190 settlements at mediation. That's a 95 percent success rate.

His firm, where he works with his two brothers and a nephew, was hit hard by the storm. While the Metairie office was up and running just four weeks after Katrina, the Claiborne Avenue building had to undergo a complete renovation after taking on 5 feet of water and sustaining wind damage. A major challenge was reaching clients widely scattered because of the hurricane.

"The neighborhood was pretty much out of commission for 11 months," Charbonnet said. "But we're back now."

While much of his practice today involves representing consumers in insurance claims, Charbonnet has done legal work in a variety of areas, including criminal defense and divorce case. He also has taught courses for notaries and real estate agents.

"After being in practice for 35 years, I've done a hodgepodge (of cases). I started off doing just about anything. ... I (later) kind of moved away from doing criminal law and into insurance work, then insurance recovery work."

About seven years ago, Charbonnet achieved one of his proudest victories in what he called "a precedent-setting case" against the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans.

"Near the corner of Magazine and Nashville there was a water meter cover that had been missing in a commercial area. This poor fellow stepped in it and had a compound fracture of his leg and damaged the nerve to his foot."

Charbonnet and his legal team prevailed in spite of city notice requirements then in place that limited the utility's liability.

"We had to overcome some big civil immunities to help the man," he said.

Today, helping his clients deal with Katrina's aftermath

keeps Charbonnet busy.

"Lately, the hurricane cases have been interesting; so many errors in omission, people not getting their (claims) paid, questions of whether they have the right amount of insurance."

Charbonnet also has assisted clients with buying property in the post-Katrina real estate environment and dealing with "some of the headaches coming out of that."

One of Charbonnet's greatest rewards on the job has been helping people get the money they need to rebuild their homes and restart their lives, he said.

"They were under such pressure, and it was just good to see some of the people get a smile on their face."

Outside the office, the married father of four enjoys hitting the links, dining out, going to festivals and playing with his four granddaughters. •

— Sonya Stinson



# William Credo

**Position:** assistant district attorney, Jefferson Parish

**Age:** 58

**Family:** wife, Cynthia; and children, Erica Badinger, 30, William IV, 27

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Surveying the many juvenile offenders in Jefferson Parish, William Credo long ago decided more needed to be done than just processing minors through the system.

"I think a lot of us have for some time believed that we need to be more proactive," Credo said. "That the only way you can prevent a young person from making a bad decision is to get to that person early."

For that reason, Credo, who has been an assistant district attorney in Jefferson Parish since 1979, has become a participant in Project Legal Enrichment and Decision Making, which is modeled after a similar program in Los Angeles County designed to give parish elementary school students the resources to avoid getting in trouble.

"It is really a very simple concept. We teach every weekend in a fifth-grade classroom and talk about things like hate crimes — as in not judging a book by its cover — the value of staying in school and matters of self-esteem."

Credo was convinced Project LEAD was relevant when he asked the roughly 60 students he talks to regularly how many of them knew someone who was involved in an incident where a gun was involved.

"Almost 80 percent of the kids raised their hands, which means that we are touching the kids who are actually out there, living with and knowing other people who are the most impacted by crime."

Besides talking about issues such as bullying, graffiti and truancy, Project LEAD also introduces students to the world of the law.

"We take a trip to the Juvenile Center here in Jefferson Parish. They see the juvenile courts firsthand and get to talk to one of the judges. Then we have a luncheon at the Jefferson Parish Forensic Center and walk them through the labs, explaining the mental health issues and sexual-abuse situations we deal with, but also letting them know about the different types of science careers in this field that are available to them."

Although Project LEAD is only 3 years old, it is now offered in more than 10 Jefferson Parish public schools with nearly 600 students.

Credo also has served on the Louisiana Music Commission and worked in 2000 to prohibit pornographic anime videos from being sold to minors in Jefferson Parish.

"Ultimately the important thing is to get out there with the right messages, as opposed to the other kinds of messages that many kids may be hearing every day."•

— Garry Boulard

# Taylor Darden

**Position:** founding partner, Carver, Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman and Areaux

**Age:** 55

**Family:** wife, Claudia; and son, Brandon, 22

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana State University Law Center

For Taylor Darden, a career in law was a calling he had since junior high.

"I had teachers in middle school and high school that saw something in me and always encouraged me to pursue the career," Darden said. "By the time I got to college, there was no doubt in my mind of what I wanted to be when I grew up."

Darden's practice consists mainly of oil and gas litigation, but he also handles expropriation, land management, and general oil and gas issues related to the industry. He has represented a number of high-profile clients including Chevron, Dominion Exploration, Continental Land & Fur Co., and Pacific International Petroleum.

"Representing these major corporations is a big challenge in my line of work that I really enjoy. There is no routine about what I do, and there is always something new and different crossing my desk. It is my job to come up with a creative solution to the problems that come up."

Darden's most memorable case was when he manned the defense team for Louisiana Land and Exploration Co. after a natural gas well blowout in Wyoming. Litigation spanned more than a year and a half, ending with the plaintiff dropping the case but hiring Darden to represent him in an unrelated matter.

"The sole participant in the suit told me in so many words that I was good enough to be on his legal team. That was good enough for me."

Darden began his career fresh out of law school as an associate with the New Orleans-based Millings Firm. Darden spent 17 years with Millings before establishing his own firm, which now has offices in New Orleans and Pensacola, Fla.

"I felt that I had grown as much as I could with Millings, and when the opportunity arose to set out on my own, I had to take it. If I did not have the help and support from the six other guys I practice law with, I never would have made the jump."•

— Robin Shannon





# Christopher Davis

**Position:** shareholder, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell and Berkowitz

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Stephanie; and sons Christopher, 19, Andrew, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree, University of Virginia; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Travel has been a big part of Christopher Davis' life and work. He was born in Santiago, Chile, and spent parts of his childhood in Panama, Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil because his father worked for a British multinational company and was frequently transferred. His work has taken him to Latin America, Europe and China.

Travel is a large part of what makes the work appealing to Davis. "(It's) ... the international nature of the business, the opportunity to travel to foreign countries, to develop and maintain friendships with foreign attorneys," Davis said.

Davis works primarily in litigation and arbitration on maritime cases, which can include personal injury cases arising from collisions on the water, contractual disputes between owners and charters, and injury cases involving accidents on offshore drilling projects.

Davis' most challenging case involved a collision between

the Noordam, a Holland America passenger ship, and Mount Ymitos, a Greek freighter, at the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1993. The U.S. Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board conducted a joint inquiry as well as an inquiry by the Netherlands Antilles, both of which showed the passenger ship was at fault.

These rulings made representing the passenger ship more challenging when he went to trial because he had to convince the court the inquiries were flawed. However, Davis convinced the court, which ruled the Greek freighter was 90 percent at fault.

"It was rewarding to be vindicated after we believed the two boards held unfairly that the collision was Holland America's fault."

The initial rulings based on the inquiries weren't the only things that made the trial challenging. Many of the freighter's

crewmembers were Romanian, which made it necessary for Davis to travel to Romania to take crewmembers' depositions.

In 1984, Davis became a naturalized U.S. Citizen. His background makes him sympathetic to the cause of immigrants and a large part of his pro bono work is on immigration cases. He speaks fluent Spanish and has a working knowledge of French and Portuguese.

One of his most rewarding cases was a pro bono case in 1990 for a Nicaraguan immigrant. The immigrant had been persecuted under the Sandinista regime and was seeking asylum. However, the Sandinistas recently had been voted out of office. The immigrant still felt threatened, though, because the Sandinistas still wielded a lot of influence in certain regions and it was up to Davis to convey this point, which he did successfully, allowing the Nicaraguan asylum in America. •

— Fritz Ekser



Photo by **Howard Baker**, senior member of the firm, and former chief of staff to the President, Senate majority leader and ambassador to Japan.



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# Bobby Delise

**Position:** founding partner, Delise and Hall Admiralty Attorneys

**Age:** 53

**Family:** wife Christina; and children, Christian, 22, Jeannette, 14; dog Ginger

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law; master's degree in law, Tulane University Law School

When Bobby Delise of Delise and Hall Admiralty Attorneys defended the parents of a 14-year-old boy who died while learning to scuba dive at summer camp, he thought of his own 14-year-old son, Christian. It was, he said, his most challenging case.

"I try to follow the Golden Rule: 'How would you want to be treated?'" Delise said. "If he was my son, how would I want to be treated?"

Delise said he tries to handle all of his clients the way he would want to be handled in similar situations.

"That's what we try to live by."

He has focused his law career on the defense of commercial, recreational and public safety divers. He has spoken internationally about topics ranging from legal professionalism and ethics reform to maritime liability and commercial diving safety. But it's at home in New Orleans where Delise's public speaking has become personal.

Attorneys play one of the most significant roles in helping to reshape post-Katrina New Orleans, he said.

"Every major issue post-Katrina has had to go through the legal process," he said, citing the mayoral election and the recent controversy over tearing down public housing as examples.

Attorneys, he said, are a "vibrant and significant" community. They are progressive and reactive and have been "schooling in resolution."

"Attorneys by profession solve problems and solve major disputes. We know what it's like to take on the problems of others."

Delise's ideas about attorney roles in post-Katrina New Orleans haven't gone unnoticed. In 2006, he earned the Louisiana State Bar Association's President's Award for his efforts promote law professionalism as well as for contributions to the bar and the community after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Delise also served as chairman and co-chairman of the Professionalism and Quality of Life Committee for the Louisiana Bar Association. He sits on the faculty of the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society, and he has acted as a visiting skills professor at his alma mater, Loyola University.

His community involvement has taken him to various commercial diving schools, where he has lectured on diving law and safety.

"It's an opportunity to help those who need help."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

# Richard Duplantier

**Position:** partner, Galloway, Johnson, Thompkins, Burr and Smith  
**Age:** 46

**Family:** partner, Rob Clemenz

**Education:** bachelor's degree in communications and political science, Marquette University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Most attorneys can't remember exactly when they decided they wanted to go to law school but Richard Duplantier can trace his decision to 1972.

In the sixth grade, he monitored the presidential election as part of a social studies class and realized the important of the law in society.

"It was just something I felt was pre-ordained since that time," Duplantier said. "It just happened naturally and was always something that I was interested in. Part of it was the fact that I liked to argue and talk. It just grew from there."

That spirit still thrives in the 46-year-old attorney who sees fighting for fairness in the Louisiana judicial system as his mission. Duplantier specializes in all facets of professional liability including medical, accounting and legal malpractice defense, adding that juries and judicial systems in Louisiana are often tilted in favor of finding against large corporations and insurance companies.

"I'm looking and striving for fairness for all people, whether it's an individual, corporation or insurance company. They're all entitled to a fair evaluation under the law."

He enjoys professional liability work because of the ongoing education and the fact every case is different. Duplantier said that unlike "run-of-the-mill" cases, each of his offers unique challenges, new opportunities and the chance to try something new. Many of his clients include medical providers, accountants and other attorneys.

Fifteen years ago Duplantier also fell into copyrighting entertainment work and litigation, something he is especially interested in because of his enthusiasm for local music. Duplantier has represented such groups as Cowboy Mouth and Putamayo Records.

He credits his success to drive, a commitment to his point of view, self-assuredness and being ferocious in the representation of his clients. He views law as an ongoing educational experience that requires an open mind and a dedication to knowledge.

Duplantier has been with Galloway, Johnson, Thompkins, Burr and Smith for 18 years and started when there were only nine lawyers. The firm now has 85 lawyers and seven offices across the Gulf South.

"We've grown (the firm) slowly and successfully by developing a real camaraderie here within the firm that makes us unique. I'm proud to be a part of a group of lawyers that I think has grown to be a very important part of the legal community in New Orleans."•

— Craig Guillot



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# Leslie Ehret

**Position:** partner, Frilot LLC

**Age:** 46

**Family:** husband Richard; and daughter, Katy, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in marketing and journalism, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

A lawsuit that touches on the hot-button topic of immigration is just one example of the high-profile cases labor and employment lawyer Leslie Ehret has tackled.

"I'm representing Decatur Hotel Group in connection with a claim by H-2B visa beneficiaries who have filed a collective action under the Fair Labor Standards Act," said Ehret, speaking of a case guest workers from Latin America originally filed in federal court in 2006.

"They are claiming that Decatur should have paid their transport costs, visa costs and recruitment costs in addition to the salary they paid, and we dispute that. It's a very hot issue because immigration issues are very hot, but it's also a case (in which) the issue has not been decided."

In the legal lexicon, that is a case of first impression, one in which a court considers a new or undecided legal question. A ruling in favor of the plaintiffs is under appeal in the Fifth Circuit Court.

Ehret heads the labor and employment practice group at Frilot LLC, advising corporate clients on employment issues from the selection of criteria for layoffs to the distribution of bonuses. At least half her practice is devoted to this type of "preventative work," she said, as opposed to defending lawsuits.

"The great thing about labor and employment law is you get to learn about lots of different professions because in understanding cases, you really have to understand the business that you're dealing with," Ehret said.

Ehret is a founding member of the New Orleans Charter Schools Foundation, a nonprofit that sponsors the charters for the New Orleans Free Academy and McDonough City Park Academy.

She's volunteered at the schools by reading to students, painting walls and recruiting teachers. She organized a partnership between Frilot and the schools to help purchase playground equipment and building materials, and she spearheaded a book drive to collect more than 4,000 books to set up the library at the New Orleans Free Academy. In appreciation, the school named the library in her honor.

"My husband says I go over there every time I need an ego boost because the kids come over and wrap themselves around my legs and say, 'Miss Leslie! Miss Leslie! Will you read a book to me?' But it's really fun. It's as much for me as it is for them."•

— Sonya Stinson





# Richard Exnicios

**Position:** associate, Frank D'Amico

**Age:** 40

**Family:** wife, Nancy; and son, Rex, 2 1/2

**Education:** English and computer science degree, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School; certificate in sports law, Tulane University Law School

Flooded with Hurricane Katrina insurance cases, Richard Exnicios knows what it is like to feel pressure.

"I know that my clients' chances for rebuilding their lives rests on my shoulders," Exnicios said. "Even though I have gotten collectively millions of dollars for my clients, it is still not enough. I have a large list of clients who I am still fighting for 2 1/2 years later. These clients can only wait so long."

It is that same pressure and emotional attachment to his clients Exnicios finds incredibly gratifying when he succeeds.

"It is rewarding when I have a case where I have gotten someone the recovery that they desperately need. When I succeed I have helped real people — a little old lady or an injured person who can no longer work. It is much more rewarding than doing a good job just for the sake of financial gain. I actually get to help people every day."

Three particular cases have had a large effect on Exnicios.

"I have three cases in St. Bernard (Parish) involving three related families that live within nine or 10 blocks of each other," he said.

Each family lost everything and each was denied insurance payments after the storm. Exnicios and his team not only obtained monetary recovery for the families but they also have done a good bit of pro bono work for them as well.

"We have dealt with their creditors, protected their homes from foreclosure, helped them with obtaining a loan to purchase an additional trailer, and put their health insurance back on track," he said. "They call frequently with particular issues and while we can't always solve their problems we certainly try. They are just good people and it feels good to help them."

When not fighting insurance companies or wielding a hammer for Habitat for Humanity, Exnicios is an unpaid coach for Tulane University's fencing program. Exnicios is passionate about gender equality in sports.

"As a coach, competitor and referee for the sport, I try to encourage co-ed competition as frequently as possible. Men and women should be able to compete with the best athletes in their sport regardless of gender."

Exnicios often takes pro bono cases where he knows there will be no recovery in the end for him or the firm.

"If I take a Katrina case where the recovery for the client is minimal, I simply don't feel comfortable taking a fee when the client obviously has significant losses that far surpass the amount that they received."•

— Maria Barrios



# Tracey Flemings-Daviller

**Position:** associate, Phelps Dunbar

**Age:** 38

**Family:** husband, John; and children, Chelsey, 8, John Jr., 4

**Education:** bachelor's degree in sociology; Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law; studies at the Institute of Politics, Loyola University

As a member of the insurance and reinsurance practice group of Phelps Dunbar, Tracey Flemings-Daviller has the opportunity to learn about many industries. Counseling various insurance companies, she has worked on cases involving asbestos, employment, construction defect, malpractice, health hazard, professional liability and pollution-related claims.

"Even though I'm focusing on insurance, I'm learning a lot about the law in so many areas. I've been able to gather extensive and broad-based knowledge about the law in general," Flemings-Daviller said.

Flemings-Daviller, who has also worked with the firm's tort litigation group, said her career with Phelps Dunbar has allowed her the flexibility to use her legal background to give back to the community.

As a volunteer attorney for the New Orleans Pro Bono Project's Child in Need of Care program, she represents children who have been placed in foster care through the

Louisiana Office of Community Services. Acting as the attorney for the child, Flemings-Daviller ensures the child's needs and best interests are always the most prevalent basis for making choices or decisions.

"It's often about getting a child away from a dangerous or neglectful situation into a safe environment where they can receive all of the needs that he or she would be entitled to as a child."

The mother of two made a run for municipal court judge last year and while she didn't win the election, she had support from 21 elected officials and a number of organizations. Flemings-Daviller was lured to municipal court because of her history with families in crisis and because of the often difficult, yet important, social issues the court addresses, such as domestic violence and truancy. Throughout her career, Flemings-Daviller has always been motivated by the desire to make a difference and promote social justice.

Flemings-Daviller credits her success as an attorney to finding her niche and establishing a true connection with it. Her passion to learn more about the law through analytical writing and research has helped her excel at Phelps Dunbar while her passion for social justice has touched the lives of many children.

Along with her work with the New Orleans Pro Bono Project, Flemings-Daviller has served as a hearing committee member for the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board and has worked with a number of organizations including the Contemporary Arts Center, Young Leadership Council and Election Protection.

"I don't want my life to be remembered as a person that just came to work and sat behind a desk. I want to be remembered for doing as much as I could in different organizations and different realms."•

— Craig Guillot



# Donna Fraiche

**Position:** shareholder, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell and Berkowitz

**Age:** 56

**Family:** husband, John; and children, Geoffrey, 28, Ariane Michele "CoCo," 20

**Education:** attended St. Mary's Dominican College and Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Donna Fraiche, with 30 years of health care law experience, is a delegate to the Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, created to develop and oversee the blueprint for health care policy in Louisiana.

"Health care in New Orleans was broken before Katrina hit," Fraiche said. "There are great needs in research, mental health and specialty care. The new system should include a ... university hospital and a major cancer center. New Orleans is a community of neighborhoods. The best system would be neighborhood clinics where the services would come to the people so they could have consistent care."

One of Fraiche's achievements came midway through her career when she represented the American Hospital Association in a landmark case.

"I was asked to argue before the Louisiana Supreme Court in the case entitled *Smith v. Our Lady of the Lake Regional Hospital*."

The case, which was ruled in favor of the hospital (her client), provides protection from protracted litigation to people who participate in reviewing their peers in the medical field to have an open discussion about quality patient care.

Fraiche is also a shareholder in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge offices of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz.

"I had the privilege of opening the office in Baton Rouge after Katrina," said Fraiche, who works with the Louisiana Bar Foundation to find funding for legal services for the poor, in addition to leading the Women's Initiative.

"Women are leaving law offices in great numbers. They feel overwhelmed and want to do something else. We want to recognize their needs — what is their focus? They need a support system."

Fraiche said when she was starting out, there seemed to be more mentoring opportunities than there are today.

"I find that as technology advances, it's harder to get to know people. We communicate electronically now instead of face to face. The main thing is it's not about me. I work with many fine lawyers. I have a tremendous team of people who are willing to work toward goals. ... I delegate to find the best person to fill the client's needs. When I am hired, the client is getting a whole team."•

— Lisa Bacques





# Duris Holmes

**Position:** partner, Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles

**Age:** 45

**Family:** wife, Markell; and children, Alex, 18, Sallie, 16, Grier, 9, Durie Lee, 1

**Education:** attended Louisiana Tech University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

When Duris Holmes decided to get involved with Benjamin Franklin High School, it wasn't a surprise to those who know him well.

Holmes, a partner with Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, is a Franklin alumnus with two children who also attend the school.

"When I think of all of the things that this school has given to me and my family, it only made sense that I would want to give something back," Holmes said.

But Ben Franklin, struggling to recover from Hurricane Katrina damage, have needs in many ways all-consuming, requiring increasing amounts of Holmes' time and energy.

"I admit it. It has been more work than I initially thought it would be."

First serving as a volunteer, Holmes was elected to the board of directors of Franklin's parents association before

becoming board president four years ago and eventually president of the Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education, the nonprofit that runs the school.

In that role, Holmes, who specializes in corporate and intellectual property law as well as commercial transactions at Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, has become intimately familiar with Franklin's particular challenges and struggles as a New Orleans charter school.

"Ben Franklin is obviously better off having more control over its own operations and not having to rely as much on the bureaucracy of the overall school system as it previously existed. But we are still beholden to that school system for financing, and that is where a lot of our problems come from."

Despite such frustrations, Holmes is committed to Franklin's success and remains determined to not let bureau-

cratic obstacles defeat him.

Such perseverance also marks Holmes' work at Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, litigating and arbitrating a variety of complex commercial cases that include franchising disputes, antitrust and trade regulations, and securities litigation and shareholders' rights matters.

Also serving on the executive board of the Southeast Louisiana Area Council of the Boy Scouts, Holmes said the essential philosophy of the scouts governs his community activism.

"With the scouts you learn early on that you should put back whatever you get out of it. And I like to think that is what I am doing with my work at Ben Franklin, returning what was given to me."•

— Garry Boulard



# John Houghtaling

**Position:** managing partner, Gauthier, Houghtaling and Williams

**Age:** 36

**Family:** wife, Brittany

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Emory University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

John Houghtaling had a busy 2007, which is spilling into 2008 as he remains involved with Hurricane Katrina-related litigation. Houghtaling is co-lead counsel for three major lawsuits stemming from Katrina, and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office asked him to represent the state in the suits, all of which involve myriad insurance issues related to Katrina.

Among the three is *Joseph Sher v. Lafayette Insurance Co., et al.* This precedent-setting case, now pending before the Louisiana Supreme Court, involves the wind versus flood policy exclusions that many insurance companies are trying to use against policyholders. Houghtaling said the Louisiana Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal recently issued a favorable ruling for coverage, and the case will affect hundreds of thousands of Louisiana homeowners.

Along with the insurance fight, Houghtaling also has provided legal representation to hundreds of storm victims. Since the Aug. 29, 2007, deadline to file claims, Houghtaling has been counsel to more than 1,500 homeowners and property and business owners involved in Katrina-related claims, winning \$55 million in settlements for his clients since the storm.

Houghtaling is just as active in the community as he is in the courtroom and has undertaken many civic projects in the past year.

Houghtaling served as fundraising chairman for Archbishop Alfred Hughes' Community Appeal for 2007, which benefits Catholic Charities and other nonprofits.

In December, with the help of the Ferrari Club of Louisiana, Houghtaling led a shopping spree at Toys 'R' Us for Children's Hospital patients. Club members pur-

chased \$10,000 worth of toys then delivered them to the patients. Houghtaling also sponsored a toy giveaway for Destiny's Children, a nonprofit that helps more than 100 inner-city kids.

Also in 2007, as part of his work on the annual French Quarter Classic, Houghtaling spearheaded a meeting in New Orleans of exotic car collectors from around the country, providing an economic boost to the French Quarter. The group also raised \$15,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Houghtaling also has supported scholarships and funding for The Good Shepard School, a donor-supported school that provides education to at-risk, inner-city children, and Loyola University School of Law for a new career services office. •

— Robin Shannon

# Chauntis Jenkins

**Position:** partner, Porteous, Hainkel and Johnson

**Age:** 34

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Loyola University; juris doctor, Southern University Law Center

Chantis Jenkins admits some people won't exactly consider her a hero for championing insurance companies in post-Hurricane Katrina litigation. But she counts these cases among her most interesting and important work.

"In this day and time, insurance defense lawyers may not be the most popular people," Jenkins said. "But certainly the work we do is extremely important in helping to shape the insurance industry to make sure that it's fair for everyone, not only for companies but also for policyholders in the future."

In January 2007, Jenkins became first black female partner at Porteous, Hainkel and Johnson. It was an especially gratifying accomplishment for someone whose motivation to study the law stemmed from an encounter with bigotry. Jenkins intended to become a journalist when she started undergraduate school at Loyola University, but she changed her mind after covering a local story on an assignment.

"We were there trying to get a sound bite to prepare a report and I ran into a group of individuals ... who made some very strong racial remarks against me, that I should be at the back of the crowd, this was the reason why this country was in the place that it was," she said. "I remember leaving there feeling that. ... I wanted to empower myself and assist my community in whatever way I could. I felt that pursuing a degree in law would be the way to do that."

Jenkins started out doing general civil litigation, "from asbestos litigation to insurance defense and product liability." A key step in advancing her career was clerking in Orleans Parish Civil District Court for the Hon. Lloyd Medley.

"This is when you really see a huge part of what being a litigator is about. I clerked there for almost two years and then came over to my current law firm. My practice here is primarily insurance defense."

Jenkins is active in the local, state and American bar associations, which she said allows her to do professional networking and expand her firm's business opportunities. She's especially interested in the development of young lawyers and diversity in the law profession. She is assembly clerk for the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, in charge of the delegate certification for the assembly — which is the association's the policymaking body — and she will next accede to assembly speaker.

Jenkins also serves as a youth mentor at her church, Macedonia Church of God in Christ, and enjoys traveling. Wedding plans are taking up a lot of her time these days, with the date for her nuptials set for March. •

— Sonya Stinson





# Robert Kerrigan Jr.

**Position:** partner, Deutch, Kerrigan & Stiles

**Age:** 65

**Family:** wife, Kay; and sons, Tyler, 34, Robert III, 31

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Spring Hill College; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Before starting college in 1964, Robert Kerrigan spent some time in the U.S. infantry before deciding what he wanted to be when he grew up.

"There was a time when I contemplated being a doctor," Kerrigan said. "When I got into my undergrad degree, I realized it was not going to happen for me, so I went for a legal career."

After earning his juris doctor from Tulane University Law School in 1969, Kerrigan joined his father at Deutch, Kerrigan & Stiles.

"Over 30 years of experience here doesn't seem like that long."

Kerrigan leads the civil litigation department and covers a spectrum of cases including product defect, toxic exposure, general aviation, securities, toxic waste and environmental litigation, and professional liability defense.

One of his more notable cases was representing Pan American Airlines and the U.S. government in defense of the 1982 Pan Am Flight 759 accident in Kenner.

"It was a very tough case to fight; I led the trial counsel on that one. There were so many people involved, 200 lawsuits in all, and it lasted a couple years."

His most recent high-profile case was a six-week trial in Franklinton, where he represented a trucking company that had been sued for injuries from a chemical explosion in 1985.

"We were able to earn a victory for the defense. The plaintiff was asking for \$34 million, but my client did not breach any of its duties."

The challenges of the courtroom really motivates him. He describes his work as "a unique education process."

"Clients, witnesses and the court all educate you. You must listen to everything that happens while protecting your client's interest. It is a tough job but very rewarding."

In his spare time, Kerrigan gives speeches and lectures on litigation and legal education, oftentimes sponsored by the Defense Research Institute and Med Psych Corp. Kerrigan has also served time on local and national bar associations, in addition to performing pro bono work in the community.

"Students from Andrew Jackson School in New Orleans have made many visits to the firm. We tutor these kids and talk to them about getting into a career in law."

His current out-of-courtroom activity involves assisting his wife with her work at Citizens for a Greater New Orleans.

"I have provided legal counsel on various topics and it has been extremely rewarding to her and me." •

— Robin Shannon

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# Keva Landrum- Johnson

**Position:** interim district attorney, Orleans Parish

**Age:** 35

**Family:** husband, Keith Johnson

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science and African-American studies, Washington University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Having worked for the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office since she finished law school, Keva Landrum-Johnson recalls a homicide case where she bonded with the victim's family. They failed to prosecute the defendant but she realized how important a prosecutor's job could be and how they could make a difference in the community with every case.

"What happens in criminal law is a true personal story with each and every case," Landrum-Johnson said. "I am a people person and I just feel like I can personally affect what happens in people's lives. To me, that is very important."

Landrum-Johnson has seen many angles of criminal law in the district attorney's office. She worked in almost every division and was a trial assistant attorney, a special prosecutor on the Violent Offender Strike Force, and a homicide and sex crimes screener. She has also served as the deputy chief of the trials division, juvenile division and screening division.

Landrum-Johnson has taken on many high-profile cases and often takes a personal interest in seeing justice served for violent crime victims. In 2001 after three mistrials, she was one of three prosecutors to win a conviction against a former New Orleans police officer who was charged with raping three women. Three years later, Landrum-Johnson helped win a conviction against a defendant who was charged with first-degree murder in the 2002 shooting of a New Orleans police officer.

Taking on one of the most visible legal roles in the city, Landrum-Johnson knew things wouldn't be easy when she was named interim Orleans Parish district attorney in October. Not only was she stepping into an office that had been physically destroyed but one that had been criticized and denounced by many residents over backlogged cases and the notorious "701 releases," cases where suspects are released because the DA didn't file charges within 60 days. Article 701 of the Louisiana Code of Criminal Procedure states suspects cannot be held longer than that without an indictment.

Landrum-Johnson said the backlog has been eliminated and the office's conviction rate and case acceptance rate is increasing.

"The day I took the job as district attorney, one of the things that I harped on is that I would like for the public to regain trust in our office."

Viewing crime as one of the biggest challenges facing the city, she sees her mission as critical.

"There is so much to be done in New Orleans, particularly in the criminal justice system. I'm honored that people in the community have stood behind me and really supported us so we could make some positive changes."•

— Craig Guillot



# Walter Leger Jr.

**Position:** managing partner, Leger and Shaw

**Age:** 56

**Family:** children, Walt III, 29, Rhett, 27, Elizabeth, 23

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science and economics, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Walter Leger has been involved in many class actions and complex litigation cases, but one in particular stands out.

One of Leger's most challenging cases was the Louisiana Attorney General's class-action suit against the tobacco industry. The trial, which lasted three years, proved to be a challenge because of some extensive factors.

"When we filed the case, the tobacco industry had never lost before. They are one of the most powerful industries in the world, which contributes to 450,000 deaths a year, and it was a long and complex case," Leger said.

Leger is a founding and managing partner of Leger and Shaw where he practices maritime law, class actions and complex litigation. He was an associate attorney at Phelps Dunbar for three and a half years before starting his own law firm in 1979.

Leger was attracted to law in high school and wanted to impact change.

"I wanted to be involved in important changes for the good of society."

Leger still finds practicing law intriguing after more than 30 years.

"The most interesting aspect of practicing law is the major impact it has on a large number of people and on society. It creates a great deal of responsibility on the part of the attorneys."

Two years later, he's still seeing Katrina-related cases in addition to his cases involving individuals and small businesses against big corporations.

"I represent a large number of businesses and individuals for damages of their properties."

Leger is active in the Louisiana Recovery Authority where he is a member of the board of directors and leads the housing and redevelopment task force.

As a spokesman and advocate for the state, Leger has testified before three House of Representative committees to garner more recovery funds.

"It is an honor and a challenge to be part of the rebuilding," Leger said.

Leger is involved in many law and business organizations. He is a board member of the New Orleans Bar Association, the Louisiana Land Trust, the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center Foundation, the Delgado Community College Foundation, the Nunez Community College Foundation, the Tulane Cancer Research Center, the LSU Cancer Research Center and the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium. He is also chairman of the St. Bernard Chamber of Commerce and the St. Bernard Economic Development Commission. •

— Jennifer Nall



# Lynn Luker

**Position:** owner, Lynn Luker & Associates

**Age:** 54

**Family:** husband, Stephen Williamson; and children, Jack, 16, Grace, 12

**Education:** bachelor's degree in psychology, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School; master's degree in admiralty law, Tulane University; master's degree in energy and environment law, Tulane University

Education for Lynn Luker is not just a matter of being awarded a degree and then moving on. With four degrees so far, Luker is as comfortable in the classroom as she is in a courtroom.

Education also means teaching and is an integral part of Luker's career that has had her serving as a director and professor at the Trial Advocacy Program with Tulane University's Law School.

"I like very much and am stimulated by the classroom environment," said Luker, who specializes in commercial, toxic tort, labor and employment litigation, as well as maritime law, and has also served as a faculty member for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy and the National Defense Counsel Trial Academy.

"I came up through the public schools of New Orleans and

worked my way through both college and law school. And along the way I was lucky enough to have mentors who helped me achieve my goals and have really gotten me to where I am today."

That's why she's always reached out to law school students who are just starting out.

"I know from experience that a mentoring relationship can be extremely valuable for a young attorney and have just wanted to give back what was given to me."

After serving for nearly two decades as an associate and partner with Adams & Reese, Luker started her own all-woman law firm composed of seven attorneys. The challenges and opportunities of women lawyers and women-led law firms has also seen Luker serve as a member of the National Association of Women Owned Businesses while also being on the board of the

National Association of Women Owned Law Firms.

"But there are still challenges ahead. Now we are focused on helping minority law firms and women-owned law firms compete for the kind of business that the big firms get."

Luker said such business often creates long-lasting client relationships. Concern about gender issues has also inspired Luker to serve as a board member with Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta.

"I just think that no matter how busy any person is, they should always save some time to get involved not just in the community around them, but also in the things that really interest them in that community where they think their help may matter the most."•

— Garry Boulard



# Eve Masinter

**Position:** partner, Lemle & Kelleher

**Age:** 50

**Family:** single; dogs Wilhelm and Fielding

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana State University Law Center

Through a legal career spanning 26 years, what sticks out most for Eve Masinter are the people she's met and worked with.

With clients ranging from Dillard University to Goodwill Industries to the city of Westwego, she's had the opportunity to defend an array of people, and her ability to provide assistance to them is her greatest source of pride.

The daughter of criminal defense attorney Milton Masinter, who she said has always been her legal mentor, Masinter primarily defends employers in cases involving discrimination, harassment and wage claims.

While Masinter enjoys the different people she meets, she also enjoys the legal challenges her job poses. Much of her work centers on interpretations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Age Discrimination and Employment Act, acts with lots of criteria and gray areas open to interpretation.

Masinter's most challenging case tested her professionally and personally. In 2004, she defended Dillard University when an Arab-American instructor claimed discrimination because of his nationality when Dillard declined to renew his contact.

"On both sides, the people were very entrenched in what they believed."

While the legal aspects of the case challenged Masinter, what challenged her most was that she had to prepare and present her case while dealing with the death of her stepfather, Dr. David Bradley.

"I just had to focus and do what I needed to do to try my case," she said. Despite her grief, she won the case for her clients, and Dillard didn't have to pay a cent.

Presently, Masinter is defending Goodwill Industries against four claims by former employees who were fired for productivity reasons.

"It's a shame that they have to deal with these claims with everything else they've had to deal with post-Katrina as a non-profit."

Masinter is also representing the city of Westwego for its Katrina claims against its insurers to repair Katrina-damaged city-owned buildings.

Regarding pro bono work, Masinter is working with another attorney in writing articles of incorporation and bylaws for NOLA City Bark, an organization dedicated to creating a dog park in City Park.

An animal lover with two dogs, Masinter is passionate about pets.

"It's important that we have a formal dog park in the city."•

— Fritz Esker





# Michael Mitchell

**Position:** partner, Fisher and Phillips

**Age:** 59

**Family:** wife, Tina; and son, Cameron, 36

**Education:** bachelor's degree, University of West Virginia;  
juris doctor, University of West Virginia School of Law;  
master's degree in labor law, George Washington University  
Law School

The 1984 Missouri Portland Cement Co. strike was so violent attorney Michael Mitchell had to travel by helicopter into the plant. He was defending the company against the strikers and to help the employees who wanted to “cross the line.”

“In the Missouri Portland Case, the company was faced with picket line violence but was not getting the assistance from local police, or even state police,” Mitchell said. “That is what led to our reaching out to CNN and also to going into state court to seek an injunction, which we then enforced through a series of contempt of court proceedings against individual union members who violated the injunction.”

Mitchell's team also testified before the Senate Labor Committee to determine whether the federal government should pass a law that would enable that branch of government to intervene with picket line violence.

After 18 months, his side prevailed. A partner with Fisher and Phillips, he now continues his work in the management side of labor law.

Mitchell grew up in a blue-collar environment. His father worked as a foreman for a chemical plant and as a child, he often heard about strikes.

“That world of grievances and punching time clocks working for a living, that is the real world. I enjoy working with these clients.”

Mitchell majored in English at the University of West Virginia and later earned a law degree. After serving four years in the U.S. Air Force, he enrolled in the George Washington University Law School to earn a master's in labor law.

In 1979, he accepted a position with a local firm, even though he had never visited New Orleans and had no con-

tacts here. His only experience had been when he and his wife were driving through on their way to Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio where he was assigned to work as a JAG officer. On their way to Texas, they had planned to stay overnight in New Orleans.

“We noticed the sky was getting very dark, and there seemed to be an awful lot of helicopter traffic. We finally turned on the radio and heard the announcer say, ‘Hurricane Delia is coming right at you.’”

They moved to New Orleans anyway.

Since his move, he has been on the board of the Metro Crime Commission, and he is part of City Park's Botanical Foundation. He has also served on the board of the YMCA. •

— Amy Ferrara Smith

# Max Nathan

**Position:** partner, Sessions, Fishman and Nathan

**Age:** 73

**Family:** widower; daughters, Nancy, Kathy, Marcy, Courtney

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Northwestern University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Along with running a civil law practice for nearly 50 years, Max Nathan has helped modernize Louisiana law.

"I've been very much involved in the Louisiana Law Institute," said Nathan, a one-time president of the organization who was in his 20s when he was appointed a Young Lawyers representative. "The institute was set up in the 1930s, and it constantly modernizes our law. We draft law and present it to the legislature."

Nathan's first assignment was to create a new law for movable property leases.

"I guess nobody else wanted it," he said. "We did a good job, they liked it and I got to do another one."

Nathan helped write the first revision of the state law of partnership in 200 years and led the committee that rewrote the laws of succession and matrimonial regimes. Matrimonial regimes law governs the ownership and management of property in a marriage.

"You've probably heard about how the husband was head and master of the community (under the law). Well, women didn't like that. So we drafted new law that made equal management."

In 48 years of practicing law, Nathan has taken on a wide field of cases.

"I started as a tax lawyer, but my practice kept expanding and started getting into other areas that had tax aspects: corporate, commercial, even domestic relations. There were very few lawyers that would handle divorce cases 40 years ago."

Today he focuses primarily on estate planning — he and his law partner Carole Neff have written a three-volume treatise on the subject.

For the past 44 years, Nathan taught at Tulane University Law School, including presiding over the law review course. Teaching the law to others keeps him sharp.

"I consider it exercise for my mind. For 50 minutes, I can't let my mind wander, and I always come out energized and excited after teaching a class. ... Secondly, it puts you in contact with young people who are idealistic and optimistic. Third, it makes you keep up with the law. When you teach it, you have to know it."

This summer Nathan will bring another updated law before the state Legislature.

"We've just finished rewriting the Louisiana law of donations. It's the first revision in 200 years, so it makes me very proud."•

— Sonya Stinson





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**2008 EDITORIAL CALENDAR**

MARCH	
31	<b>Maritime Report &amp; Transportation</b> List: Custom House Brokers/Freight Forwarders

Health Care Annual March 31

APRIL	
7	<b>Health Care</b> List: Acute Care Hospitals
14	<b>Real Estate</b> List: Business Parks
21	<b>Insurance/Investments</b> List: Property & Casualty Insurance Agencies <b>Westbank Business Report</b>
28	<b>Small Business</b> List: SBA Lenders

Home Buyers Guide April 7

MAY	
5	<b>Dining &amp; Catering</b> List: Independent Caterers
12	<b>Banking/Financial Services</b> List: Banks/S & L Directors
19	<b>Law Firms</b> List: Law Firms
26	<b>Office Technology</b> List: Wireless Telephone Retailers

JUNE	
2	<b>Health Care</b> List: HMOs/PPOs & Point of Service Plans
9	<b>Real Estate</b> List: Largest Office Buildings
16	<b>Public Companies</b> List: Public Companies
23	<b>Insurance/Investments</b> List: Life Insurance Agencies
30	<b>Accounting</b> List: Highest Paid Public Company Executives <b>N.O. East Business Report</b>

JULY	
7	<b>Education</b> List: Four-Year Colleges
14	<b>Dining &amp; Catering</b> List: French Quarter Hotels
21	<b>Banking/Financial Services</b> List: Credit Unions <b>Tourism</b>
30	<b>Health Care</b> List: Diagnostic Imaging Centers

AUGUST	
4	<b>Real Estate</b> List: Commercial Leasing Companies <b>Construction</b>
11	<b>Law Firms/Legal Affairs</b> List: Highest Paid Executives in State Government
18	<b>Office Technology/Telecommunications</b> List: Computer Hardware Retailers
25	<b>Oil &amp; Gas</b> List: Engineering Firms

Book of Lists

SEPTEMBER	
1	<b>Banking/Financial Services</b> List: Savings & Loans
8	<b>Dining &amp; Catering</b> List: Seafood Suppliers
15	<b>Insurance/Investments</b> List: General Contractors
22	<b>Education</b> List: Private Elementary Schools
29	<b>Maritime Report</b> List: Deep-Draft Ports

Health Care Benefits Guide September 1

OCTOBER	
6	<b>Holiday Party Planning</b> List: Largest Hotels
13	<b>Real Estate</b> List: Commercial Property Managers
20	<b>Health Care</b> List: Women Owned Businesses <b>Jefferson Parish Business Report</b>
27	<b>Insurance/Investments</b> List: Title Companies

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# Glen Orgeron

**Position:** partner, Kean Miller Hawthorne D'Armond McCowan & Jarman

**Age:** 61

**Family:** wife, Nancy; and children, Chris, 27, Manda, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, Tulane University; master's degree in administration, George Washington University; master's degree in electrical engineering; Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School; master's degree of legal letters in international law, George Washington University

Glenn Orgeron's background is so professionally and geographically diverse it's hard to track.

He has five degrees, was a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps and served as deputy general counsel, assistant general counsel and general counsel in jurisdictions from California to Japan to Panama. He has worked in the Pentagon, has flown F4 Phantoms, taught at the U.S. Naval Academy and even served as an electrical engineer with the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston on the Apollo XI Lunar mission and the Apollo Lunar Rover development team.

"The (Lunar mission) had nothing to do with the law but when anyone ever asks, that has always been one of the highlights of my career," Orgeron said. "It was just neat being at the center of that."

Through his years of military service and work in electrical engineering, he saw the law as a true calling and jumped when the Marines offered him a chance to go to law school. Although much of Orgeron's career has a technical background, he always had an eye on how the law could affect and change society in positive ways.

"The things that motivate me are the opportunities to try to resolve conflicts and disputes among people. The law and its significance in our society was always something that fascinated me."

Orgeron has more than 15 years experience in admiralty and maritime law, construction matters, mold litigation and Fair Credit Reporting Act issues.

One recent matter involving an oil well allowed him to use his engineering background to help win the case.

"That's the fun stuff. With my engineering background, it's fun to cross-examine other experts. Many of them don't know or recognize that I have the engineering background to spar with them."

Orgeron is also involved in a number of charitable and community service organizations, including the New Orleans Regional Chamber of Commerce, and sits on boards at St. Andrew the Apostle School, Our Lady of Holy Cross and Delgado Community College.

As a former president of the Algiers Economic Development Foundation, Orgeron is also vice president of the Algiers Charter School Association and said education is one of the most important issues determining New Orleans' future.

"We can't resurrect ourselves as a city and attract business if we can't provide schools that are at least equivalent to many of those that the evacuated found in Houston, Dallas and Atlanta."•

— Craig Guillot





# Marshall Page

**Position:** partner and practice group leader, business & finance, Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrere & Denegre

**Age:** 44

**Family:** wife, Kim; and children, Lindsey, 10, Connor, 7

**Education:** bachelor's degree, University of Virginia; juris doctor, University of Virginia

Regarded for his nearly two decades as an attorney specializing in commercial finance transactions, acquisitions and dispositions, Marshall Page became one of the more familiar faces in the city's education circles post-Hurricane Katrina.

That's because Page was able to apply his legal acumen and willingness to push through even the most dense bureaucratic thickets in securing federal money for New Orleans' private schools, including Isidore Newman, Metairie Park Country Day, Trinity Episcopal School, St. Paul's Episcopal School and John Curtis Christian School.

"I tried as hard as I could to get the system to respond," Page said, "and I am happy to report that after awhile we were successful."

Page, a partner and practice group leader of the business and finance group at Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrere & Denegre, helped secure more than \$100 million in support from the federal Hurricane Education Recovery Act.

"There were actually several federal programs up and running that were designed to provide financial support for the different schools. But they all had their own complicated regulations that had to be followed. The bottom line of what we did was to get them to make the money more accessible."

That Page was asked to tie up so many loose ends weeks and months after Katrina seemed to many like a natural. He also headed up Jones Walker's disaster recovery client team immediately after the storm, which was designed to offer legal assistance in such areas as insurance recovery, corporate reorganization and bankruptcy, employment law and real estate and construction, among other storm-related areas of interest.

The disaster recovery team also helped clients navigate the Federal Emergency Management Agency's many layers.

"I thought both in my own profession as well as in my private time that I should do whatever I could to help the city get back to where it was, if that was possible."

Not content with throwing out a vital lifeline to the region's private schools, Page has also become involved with efforts to renovate Danel Park on St. Charles Avenue. Under Page's direction, more than \$100,000 has been raised to restore the park, a result Page said proves "there are a lot of people in this city who believe in its future."•

— Garry Boulard



# Erin Parkinson

**Position:** member and partner, McGlinchey Stafford

**Age:** 48

**Family:** husband, Bob; and sons, Blake, 22, Adam, 21

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Erin Parkinson's legal career started with somewhat of a delay while she followed her husband in the television news business.

"He started off in the lower ranks of WWL, and we had to follow his career," Parkinson said. "We would make it back to New Orleans eventually, but then I got pregnant."

After a 10-year break, Parkinson returned to school and is now a 16-year veteran at McGlinchey Stafford.

Parkinson, whose focus is insurance coverage and practice, has a love and appreciation for the clients she serves and sees an eclectic docket of cases as a defense lawyer. More often than not, she ends up on the losing end but it doesn't dissuade her.

"I have a great relationship with many lawyers but it's just the nature of the business. It's upsetting to lose but it

does not keep me down."

Parkinson just finished one of the biggest cases of her career, one with far-reaching impact in the environmental area.

In *Grefer v. Travelers Insurance Co.*, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal upheld a pollution exclusion in an insurance policy that denied coverage to the insured. It is the only reported insurance decision to date to uphold a pollution exclusion after the Louisiana Supreme Court made detailed analysis in 2000.

"(That was) probably my biggest case to date and it was definitely a big win for me. There was lots of money involved."

Parkinson serves on McGlinchey's policy committee and is a member of the state and federal bar associations. Her com-

munity service includes work with the firm's Homeless Experience Legal Protection Project. HELP, instituted by Judge Jay Zainey, provides consultation and notary services at St. Joseph's Church on Tulane Avenue.

"One month out of the year, we provide this legal assistance to the homeless in the community. It is a great way to give back to the region."

Parkinson said McGlinchey has received many accolades for its support of HELP, and several of the firm's lawyers contribute time to the project.

Along with HELP, Parkinson is active in the Defense Research Institute, which gives speeches on litigation and legal concerns. •

— Robin Shannon



# Joseph Peiffer

**Position:** partner, Corro, Fishman, Haygood, Phelps, Walmsley, and Casteix

**Age:** 33

**Family:** wife, Celeste

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Bowling Green State University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

While many lawyers figuratively go the extra mile for their clients, Joseph Peiffer took that literally when he represented clients in Baton Rouge for a trial in New Orleans.

Because their retirement savings was gone, the clients could not afford to stay in hotel rooms in New Orleans. So Peiffer and his then-girlfriend Celeste put the clients up in their homes. When Peiffer and Celeste were married, those clients attended the wedding.

Peiffer works primarily in securities litigation, where a typical case involves representing investors against stockbrokers who have defrauded them. Often, these clients are of retirement age and have been made false promises about early retirement by brokers. Because of shady investments, "The brokers make a commission and people lose their life's savings," Peiffer said.

While it is a job for Peiffer, he said it's hard not to develop a personal attachment to his clients, many of whom are his parents' age.

"The idea that someone could work their whole lives, do what they're supposed to do and at the moment they're supposed to be enjoying themselves ... to have it all taken away is maddening."

Peiffer is working on behalf of about 50 Morgan Stanley customers, most of whom started with \$400,000 to \$500,000 in savings and now have either nothing left or only a small fraction of what they started with.

Peiffer said opposing a company as large as Morgan Stanley is challenging. "It's a giant company with a ton of resources that will throw everything they have at the case."

This presents an obstacle for Peiffer's clients because they are of retirement age and have lost most, if not all of their savings.

"Time is of the essence since these people are in retirement and can't wait decades for their money."

Peiffer also works a number of pro-bono cases, often as a criminal defense attorney. In 2007, he helped his partner Jim Swanson in suing the for-profit company that ran the Lafayette Charter School for incompetence. He is also representing seven prisoners who were taken from a prison in Metairie to one in Jena that had been closed because of the less-than-ideal conditions.

"No one was really in charge and the guards just beat the hell out of these prisoners."

However, Peiffer's heart belongs to securities litigation.

"The best part about being a lawyer is when you can take someone who needs help and help them. ... It's the greatest feeling. You can essentially give someone their retirement back when they've lost their life savings."•

— Fritz Esker



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# Robert Perez

**Position:** partner, Perez, McDaniel & Faust

**Age:** 64

**Family:** wife, Lauralee; and children, Bobby, 39, Billy, 38, Brian, 37, Buffy, 35, Beth, 32, Ben, 30, Beau, 27, and Bonnie (deceased)

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Robert Perez was a tax partner at the international accounting firm KPMG for 33 years before starting his own law firm, Perez, McDaniel, & Faust where he practices estate planning.

Estate planning appealed to Perez because it gave him a chance to use his dual backgrounds — he's also a certified public accountant.

"One does not have to be an attorney to practice law or estate planning, but having a law degree is certainly helpful," Perez said. "Each estate-planning client has to have an attorney on the team to prepare wills, trusts, etc. My law background helped me to be able to communicate with the attorneys I have worked with more effectively."

Perez finds estate planning a compelling and fulfilling area of law.

"The most interesting aspect of estate planning is helping clients achieve their personal and family goals in a tax-efficient manner."

Perez said a rewarding part of estate planning is working with clients who have an interest in benefiting charities.

"I tease my clients that I can't do their work if they don't include charity in their estate plans. They know I am kidding, but 100 percent of my clients have included charity in their estate plans."

Perez enjoys practicing estate planning, but it does have its downfalls.

"Dealing with the family dynamics, especially surrounding the death of a parent, is challenging."

Perez devotes his time to many organizations, including the Society of Louisiana CPAs, the American Institute of

CPAs, the American Bar Association and the Louisiana State Bar Association. He also serves as president of the Louisiana Chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

In the early 1990s, Perez was the chairman of the National Board of Trustees for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Perez speaks for various organizations and at conferences all around the country. He speaks several times each year on behalf of the Society of Louisiana CPAs, in addition to events such as the Loyola Estate Planning Conference, the Tulane Tax Institute and the Louisiana State University Annual Estate Planning Seminar.

He still remains connected with KPMG, leading eight-hour training seminars on tax topics in various cities. •

— Jennifer Nall

# Fredrick Preis Jr.

**Position:** partner, Lemle & Kelleher

**Age:** 58

**Family:** wife, Sue; and sons, Spencer, 31, Kevin, 29, Matt, 27

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana State University Law Center

For labor and employment lawyer Fred Preis, the sweetest legal success often comes when he prevents a case from happening.

"Probably one of the more interesting (cases) was with a company where we had a person who was claiming every claim in the world, hadn't filed an official lawsuit or charge yet but was making internal complaints about race, sex and disability because of being overweight," Preis said. "We managed to find our way through it without any charge or lawsuit being filed ... and everybody was satisfied with the result."

After 34 years in practice, Preis rarely goes to court anymore.

"I've gotten away from that. Mostly I'm doing a lot of high-level mediations, arbitrations, defensive tactics, organizing and collective bargaining."

Preis, who was attracted to labor and employment law because he enjoys working with people, has a personal work history that goes back to kindergarten, when he helped in his father's Baton Rouge furniture stores. Summer, holiday and weekend jobs in his later youth included being a delivery truck driver, a human resources officer and a retail salesman.

"People used to tease me that I had about every job coming through school that you could have."

Preis and Sue, his wife of 34 years, have three sons — the eldest of whom is also a lawyer — and one grandchild. His community interests include serving on the boards of the United Way, the Red Cross and several other charitable organizations. He's also a board member of the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute and legislative affairs director of the Human Resources Management Association. In 2009, he will take over as chairman of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry.

Preis cited one particularly demanding, and unexpectedly extended, community service role for which he is glad to finally pass the torch.

"I just became — thank God — past chairman of the New Orleans Chamber. (Liberty Bank president) Alden McDonald was our chair for a year. He got halfway through the second year, and the storm hit. So I took his half year, plus my year, and then the board froze everybody in place, so I've done two and a half years."

Preis believes support for business owners and managers is an important component of rebuilding New Orleans.

"I think that plays into what we're trying to do in economic development here and the development of the work force in Louisiana," Preis said. "I've really gotten satisfaction in watching some of the reform that's happened. ... I think we're going to end up having a wonderful work force. I'm very optimistic about the area's development."•

— Sonya Stinson





# Deborah Rouen

**Position:** partner, Adams and Reese

**Age:** 53

**Family:** husband, Rip; and children, Ashley, 21, Bradley, 18, Miles, 13

**Education:** bachelor's degree in music therapy, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Although she started her career with Adams & Reese 25 years ago doing maritime and admiralty work, Deborah Rouen said her firm's handling of the Shell Norco explosion in 1988 helped her find her true calling.

Today, Rouen specializes in defending mass torts, class actions and other complex litigation matters involving product design, toxic tort, environmental matters, fraud and misrepresentation. Having represented such clients as Altria and Pfizer, she has acted as a liaison counsel for defendants and has had class action allegations dismissed in federal and state courts.

One of her most memorable cases had nothing to do with torts. Rouen enjoys giving back to the community through pro-bono work and recalls helping a child who had recently lost his mother and was being adopted by his stepfather, who she helped obtain legal custody of the child.

"I felt as though I was instrumental in helping the boy take the next step into his future. I think one of the things that drives attorneys to do pro bono work is that you can really give back so much to the community," Rouen said.

Rouen has led a number of the firm's teams and is chairwoman of its diversity committee, where she participates in client-sponsored roundtables. She is involved as a board member of the New Orleans Bar Foundation and Federal Bar Association and has participated as a member of the Court Rules Committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association. Rouen also takes a strong interest in mentoring and helping younger lawyers find their strengths.

"One of our most important roles is to bring on the next generation and really guide them in defining themselves and honestly assessing their priorities. I especially take an interest in finding their balance of combining a career and family."

The mother of three also has an interest in the arts and serves on the Jefferson Performing Arts Society's board of directors. Working briefly as a music therapist before she went to law school, Rouen recently started taking violin lessons. It's not just the ability to play but the challenge of learning a new note or a new song that gives her pleasure.

"I love being able to come home, pick up the violin at the end of the day, work hard at it and try to get better at it. It has been a good fix for me."•

— Craig Guillot

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# David Sherman

**Position:** member, Chehardy, Sherman, Ellis, Murray, Recile, Griffith, Stakelum & Hayes

**Age:** 55

**Family:** wife, Jane; and children, Philip, 27, Matthew, 24, Amelia, 21

**Education:** bachelor's degree, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law; master's degree in taxation, Boston University

In 1984 David Sherman found himself in the midst of a controversy. A group of developers proposed building a group of high-rise towers that would have retail, office and residential space. The problem was there was a neighborhood close to the site, and the homeowners were vocal in their opposition.

"I was retained to represent the developers of the Metairie Galleria," Sherman said. "It was challenging because it was going to be the first big office tower in that area."

No one knew what impact the project would have on the surrounding neighborhood.

"The neighbors were effective in stopping the Galleria for a period of time. The (Jefferson) Parish Council voted it down 6-to-1, because they wanted to follow the wishes of their constituents. This compelled the developers to sit down with the neighbors and scale the project down. Once the neighbors came to an agreement with the developers, the Council then voted for the project 6-to-1."

Sherman now stays busy as legal counsel to East Jefferson General Hospital and Fairway Medical Center on the North Shore. He assists people with estate planning and helps clients buy and sell businesses.

"I'm a transactional lawyer," said Sherman, who also is chairman of the Jefferson Parish Health Services Task Force. "We monitor overall delivery of health care in the parish, including community health care centers, mental health facilities and animal shelters."

Sherman also serves as vice chairman and legal counsel of the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation, where he served on the host committee during the National Basketball Association All-Star Game.

"Our local staff worked as a liaison between the NBA and the hotels, the Convention Center and the city officials. We also worked closely with the (New Orleans) Arena officials to help with logistics."

Sherman served as a member of Gov. Bobby Jindal's Health Care Transition Team.

"We made recommendations on a wide range of issues dealing with the delivery of health care. The governor now has to make a decision as to whether the state will reinstitute the Charity system or let the federal government's money follow the patients."

When asked how he fits everything in, Sherman said, "You've heard of a Type A personality? My friends would say I'm a Type triple-A."•

— Lisa Bacques

# Randall Smith

**Position:** partner, Smith & Fawer

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Diana; and daughter, Maggie, 3

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Amherst College; juris doctor, Yale University

Randall Smith is all about property.

Smith, who specializes in commercial and business litigation, has become involved in cases involving eminent domain, trying to get larger settlements for individual landowners about to lose their property to the government.

"We got a more than a \$7-million judgment for one landowner whose just compensation was set at \$66,000," Smith said. "That's the sort of case I feel really good about. When I feel that a person is getting taken advantage of, I am more than willing to take on the fight for them."

The state usually wins those types of cases, Smith said, because most people don't have the wherewithal to fight back.

"But to me, if you are taking someone's property without their consent, that is a thing that is worth a good fight."

He's also interested in restoring and beautifying property.

Smith believes the only way New Orleans can be truly appreciated is to rehabilitate and beautify all parts of the city. An enthusiast of French Quarter preservation and rebuilding the Ninth Ward, he is also preoccupied with returning Canal Street to its former splendor.

"This is a great street that I think we mostly take for granted. It's in the interest of the overall city to try and do everything we can to return Canal to its former glory."

Smith has been extensively involved in the Canal Street Development Corp., serving as president and a member of the board in an effort to work with private givers and city agencies to rebuild the famous thoroughfare.

The result has been the \$12.9-million Canal Street improvement project, with the planting of more than 200 palm trees and new sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, along with an irrigation system controlled automatically.

Although work was done by the city, the CSDC was instrumental in making the need for a revitalized Canal Street a public issue. At the same time, the group has been willing to commit to its goals financially.

"We have a budget of more than \$1 million and have ended up owning a lot of property on Canal, which we then lease out for the benefit of the city?"

When not devoting his spare time to the CSDC, Smith teaches at Loyola University's School of Law. "I teach every spring semester there and have been doing that since 1991."•

— Garry Boulard





# Renee Smith

**Position:** senior associate, Goins Aaron

**Age:** 39

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in communications, Loyola University; master's degree in communications, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

For Renee Smith, the legal profession is a combination of the intellectual and the emotional. The challenge of coming up with a good defense is invigorating.

"It's fun to figure out the flaws in the other side's cases," Smith said, adding that the personal relationships make it even more rewarding. "If you're around the right people, it's a lot of fun."

Smith's legal work is varied. She represents the school board and the Downtown Development District. She does insurance and basic civil defense work as well as municipality and political subdivision work.

Smith's most challenging case is an ongoing one on behalf of the school board. In November 2005, the state Legislature passed Act 35, allowing the state to take over 102 failing schools, which became the Recovery School District. At first, Smith defended the board in its effort to establish charter schools when plaintiffs filed an injunction attempting to prohibit the establishment of charter schools. The board won.

Once Act 35 passed and it was clear the state would take over the schools, Article 7, Section 14 of the Louisiana Constitution required the school board to fire its employees. Now, the fired teachers are suing for damages and Smith is defending the board.

Smith's work for the board post-Katrina has been challenging because of the complex, ever-changing nature of the cases.

"It's morphed into so many different things."

Smith prides herself on her empathy. Even when she is defending a client, she feels she can empathize with the people across the aisle, even as she disagrees with their legal position.

Smith also is on the board of directors for the New Orleans chapter of the League of Women Voters. Her work with the league has covered numerous topics. She helped conduct a study on immigration into the city post-Katrina, reporting back to the national council that overall it was having a positive effect on the city.

"If people get enough info, then they can make informed choices about who should be elected."

Smith also keeps active in a number of other activities, including the Crescent City Cyclists. And she recently graduated from the Metro Leadership Forum for a Committee for a Better New Orleans. •

— Fritz Esker



# Ray Steib

**Position:** solo practice owner

**Age:** 50

**Family:** wife, Tish; and children, Sydney, 11, Jack, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Before making the jump into the legal realm, Ray Steib had a notion of entering the priesthood.

"I had gone to a seminary prep high school, and I always wanted to follow a career path that helps people," Steib said. "When I realized that becoming a priest was not exactly right for me, I looked into a career in law."

Steib began his practice in 1983, fresh out of law school, with a goal of assisting ordinary people in their ordinary lives.

"I like to describe my work as helping little people with big problems. Most of my clients come to me with a problem that they just don't know how to handle. Knowing that I can make such a difference in these people's lives, whether it be a custody battle, a bankruptcy issue or whatever, that is what gives me the energy to continue."

Steib said his practice does not handle any high-profile cases and could not recall any notable or memorable cases, only that the majority of his career achievements have come by way of his work in the community.

In 2004, as a way of furthering professionalism among lawyers, Steib and about four other attorneys started the John Boutall American Inn of Court in Jefferson Parish.

"The Inn of Court system is a movement that originally started in London where older lawyers mentor younger lawyers just beginning their careers," he said. "Civility among attorneys in this area had been on the decline, and my partners and I felt that this would be a good way to influence a more professional atmosphere."

Steib is a member of the St. Thomas Moore Catholic Lawyers Association, and also serves on the board of the South Louisiana Legal Services Corp., a group dedicated to providing legal services to the poor. He said a growing population cannot afford good legal help, and the firm is making a difference to give those people the help they need.

"There is an old joke about legal help only being as good as what you can afford. It is a sad but true reality and something I would like to work on changing."

Steib is a member of the state and local bar associations and past president of the Jefferson Bar Association. He plans on making a run at Division K judge in Jefferson Parish. •

— Robin Shannon





# Martin Stern

**Position:** partner, Adams and Reese

**Age:** 47

**Family:** wife, Amanda Rubinstein Stern; and children, Ruben, 22, Moriah, 19

**Education:** bachelor's degree in psychology, University of Texas at Austin; juris doctor, Georgetown University Law Center

Adams and Reese's Martin Stern has made a commitment to New Orleans. Pro bono legal work, he said, "is a real investment in the community."

Thanks to his pro bono work, a grandmother's wish came true — she became a mother to her grandchild through adoption.

In addition to helping create a family, Stern volunteered to serve as an appeals counsel to the Louisiana Supreme Court on behalf of the only person in the nation to receive a death sentence for a non-homicide crime, a case now pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.

He is helping smokers in Louisiana obtain free cessation treatments by working on a class action lawsuit against the tobacco companies.

When American Society of Civil Engineers filed suit against the citizen action group Levees.org for posting a satir-

ical video on the Internet criticizing the group for its relationship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the group removed the video.

"Levees.org did not have the funds to fight this lawsuit, so we volunteered to represent them," Stern said. "The engineers backed down and the video can be seen by the public on the Levees.org Web site."

As a member of the National Board of Directors of Appleseed, Stern worked to re-establish the Louisiana center after Hurricane Katrina.

"Appleseed is a national organization that does pro bono work in a different way — it works to affect policy change."

Appleseed Louisiana has undertaken a financial access project working with banks to help them provide better access to Hispanics who have come to the city to work in the recovery.

"The Latino community in general does not use banks and they carry a great deal of cash. This makes them a target for crime," he said.

The group is also looking at another issue in the state Stern describes as "acute," especially after the storm. Many people who live in the family home have found no clear title to the property.

"Without clear title, families cannot collect Road Home money, thereby delaying their return home."

To address this issue, Appleseed Louisiana is working with the Legislature to find a resolution to the heir title problem.

Stern is an expert in legal ethics and serves as Adams and Reese's claims counsel, or the "lawyer's lawyer," where he ensures there are no conflicts of interest or ethical issues. •

— Elizabeth Branley

# Patrick Talley

**Position:** managing partner, Frilot

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Sharon; and children, Sarah Ilene, 18, Trey, 17, Peyton, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Armstrong Atlantic State University; master's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana LSU Law Center; master's degree in energy and environmental law, Tulane University Law School

For Patrick Talley, practicing law was a childhood dream that became a reality.

"I wanted to be a lawyer as far back as I can remember," Talley said.

He practiced 14 years at the Milling Law Firm in New Orleans before joining Frilot as managing partner in 1995 where he now practices environmental defense and railroad defense litigation. He has worked more than 25 years defending clients such as railroad and oil companies.

He says some of his most complicated cases are the mass tort and class-action cases that involve chemical exposure to people and property.

"In these types of cases, the scientific aspect of the case involving medical causation and the nature and extent of damage to property is particularly challenging. These cases also typically involve numerous plaintiffs and numerous defendants, and so the procedural issues of the litigation are more complex and challenging than in most other litigation matters."

Talley said being active in court is one of the most interesting aspects of his job. Environmental defense and railroad defense litigation are two areas of law that require being in court often, said Talley.

"I'm in the courtroom on a regular basis," he said.

Talley has had some notable accomplishments. He was given the Martindale Hubbell AV rating, the highest rating available to an individual lawyer who has reached the height of professional excellence. He was also appointed by then-Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco to the environmental task force of the Louisiana Recovery Authority in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina.

Talley lends his support, expertise and time to many local organizations.

He is a member of the board of trustees at the Academy of the Sacred Heart and St. George's Episcopal School. He is involved in the Holy Name of Jesus Church and received the Order of St. Louis award from the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 2003.

He serves as vice president of the New Orleans Charter Schools Foundation, which holds the charters and operates the New Orleans Free School and McDonough City Park Academy. He is president and a member of the board of directors of the Carrollton Boosters Club.

Active involvement in the community is important to Talley.

"I believe that the practice of law extends far beyond the courtroom, and it is important for us as lawyers to use our advanced education and the resources we have to give back to the community as much as possible, particularly with respect to activities that involve our children, such as schools, sports and playgrounds, and to do everything that we can do to make a better future for our community."

Talley serves as proctor of the Maritime Law Association of the United States, is a past national officer and current member of the executive committee of the National Association of Railroad Trial Counsel, and is on the grants committee of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. He has led and served on multiple committees of the Louisiana State Bar Association and has been a member of the House of Delegates since 1994. •

— Jennifer Nall





# Susan Talley

**Position:** member, Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann

**Age:** 50

**Family:** husband, James; and son, George, 19

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

It's always nice to see tangible results of your labors. Susan Talley does just that in her work with commercial real estate, where she helps clients buy, develop and finance projects, which include office buildings, shopping malls and industrial complexes. When she looks out of her office window, she sees buildings she helped erect, including the New Orleans Centre as representatives of its original owners, the Debartolo and Simon Property Group.

"The wonderful thing about being a real estate lawyer is you get to see the project built," Talley said. "You can see someone's idea come to fruition."

One of Talley's most challenging cases took place in 1990 involving the financing of the Vidalia Hydroelectric Project.

"It was an extremely complicated three-way transaction involving lots of money, complex issues and an accelerated time frame."

After the plant was constructed in New Orleans, it was floated up the Mississippi River and sunk, creating an array of logistical problems.

Something as complex as the Vidalia case normally would have taken a year, but Talley only had six months to complete it. The facility has been operational since its 1990 startup.

How did she manage?

"A lot of time, patience, creativity and voluminous documentation ... and not a lot of sleep."

Another challenging case took place in early 2005 when more than 200 Burger King franchises in eight states were sold out of bankruptcy. Talley worked on the financing and the restructuring of the leases.

Aside from the intellectual challenges and the tangible rewards of working in real estate law, Talley also enjoys the people and the firm with whom she works. The entirety of her nearly 27-year legal career has been at Stone Pigman; she even clerked at Stone Pigman and worked there part time when she was in law school.

Talley serves as the vice chancellor for real estate development for the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana where she reviews real estate contracts. She also negotiated a rent-free lease with Walgreen's for a welcome center in the Ninth Ward and is working on a pro bono basis with the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in their lease negotiations with the Riverwalk Marketplace.

Talley is on the advisory board of WWNO 89.9 FM, the local NPR affiliate and her favorite radio station.

"I couldn't live without public radio and NPR."•

— Fritz Esker



# Patrick Vance

**Position:** partner and head of litigation, Jones Walker Waechter Poitevent Carrere & Denegre

**Age:** 59

**Family:** wife, Sarah Vance; and son, Robert Patrick Vance Jr., 24

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana State University Law Center

After Hurricane Katrina, the power supply in the area was virtually wiped out, leading Entergy New Orleans to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Patrick Vance, a partner and head of litigation at Jones Walker Waechter Poitevent Carrere & Denegre, worked with the company on the case.

"Entergy had to figure out how to get the utility system back up in order to repopulate and rebuild the city," Vance said. "They had no customers, no income, but there were a lot of fixed costs and there was the cost of repair. One of the biggest parts of the repair tab had to do with water that had seeped into the gas lines, causing corrosion to a system that was built to last 100 years.

"Entergy asked for federal money to cover the repair costs so it would not be an overwhelming financial burden for the

customers, who would be paying the second-highest utility bills in the country. There was no recipe for how to do this. No utility company that was privately owned had gotten federal money since 9/11. It was a great collaborative effort."

The case gave him his biggest sense of accomplishment in his 33 years of practicing law.

Vance has been a member of the Louisiana State University Honors College since its formation in 1992. With an enrollment near 2,000, it provides honors students with an intimate learning environment and close mentoring relationships with instructors.

"It's one of the jewels of the LSU system," Vance said. "Our function is getting the university to fund initiatives to attract the best and brightest to LSU."

Vance is also a board member and secretary for the New Orleans Bar Association.

"After Katrina, the criminal justice system was in a state of disrepair. The Bar Association ... worked to get the indigent defense program going and is rounding up support for the office of the city's new district attorney to get some of the simplest office tasks done. We want to help them get it fixed."

He is on the board of Louisiana ArtWorks.

"It's a one-of-a-kind building," Vance said. "Katrina stopped the project short, but it will be a place for people interested in the arts. Artists can rent space, there will be an education center, and it will be another tourist site for people who come to the Warehouse District." •

— Lisa Bacques



# David Waguespack

**Position:** partner, Lemle & Kelleher

**Age:** 41

**Family:** wife, Nicole; and children, Will, 8, Gracie, 6

**Education:** bachelor's degree in history, Rhodes College; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Navigating the complexities of corporate bankruptcy is what David Waguespack does best, but it's not without its challenges.

"A bankruptcy filing can be very emotional for business owners because they lose control of something that they have worked hard to build," Waguespack said. "Most bankrupt companies are saddled with litigation.

"Their lenders are unhappy and are looking for repayment. These disputes can create strong-willed positions."

Waguespack said there are many "moving parts" to a bankruptcy case. "It's not just a buyer and seller like other financial transactions or plaintiffs and defendants as in other types of litigation."

When Churchill Downs moved to acquire the New Orleans Fair Grounds, Waguespack was tapped to head the deal. His first challenge was to sort out each party's interest and what they wanted to gain from the deal.

The Fair Grounds Corp. owned the racetrack and the Finish Line Co. owned the off-track betting parlors. The Louisiana Horsemen's and Benevolent Protective Association had obtained a large judgment against the Fair Grounds, and the Unsecured Creditors Committee represented the interests of those who were owed money.

"After intense negotiations, we were able to bring the constituents together so that Churchill could acquire the track and related properties."

Waguespack also worked to obtain the gaming licenses from the Louisiana Gaming Control Board and assisted in obtaining approval for a local zoning change.

Waguespack recently brokered a number of other bankruptcy deals, including representing IG Petroleum in its acquisition of oil and gas leases and platforms located off the mouth of the Mississippi River.

A significant part of Waguespack's current practice is representing financial institutions in enforcing and protecting their rights in and out of bankruptcy and defending them in lender liability cases.

For the past several years, Waguespack has taken on a different kind of challenge — molding business students at Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business. As an adjunct professor, he teaches legal, ethical and regulatory environment of business to juniors and seniors.

Waguespack remains active in the legal community as well. He is on the business bankruptcy committee of the American Bar Association and to keep up with the ever-changing amendments and interpretations of the bankruptcy laws, he gives seminars and is the editor of his firm's quarterly client newsletter, "Louisiana Lender Letter."•

— Elizabeth Branley

# Joel Waltzer

**Position:** owner, Waltzer and Associates

**Age:** 44

**Family:** wife, Toni; and children, Noah, 12, Elias, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Boston University; juris doctor, Harvard University

Whether he's representing the eastern New Orleans Vietnamese community on issues involving state and local governments or his work as a civil trial lawyer, Joel Waltzer's sense of social right and wrong is challenged every day.

"I enjoy the legal challenge and pursuing opportunities to create a better society or a greater social good," Waltzer said. "I like challenges that can make a big impact."

A more recent challenge was the Chef Menteur landfill. When Waltzer was removing trash from his flooded Lakeview home, he wondered what the city had planned for all the storm and construction debris. That was when the state and local governments proposed opening the landfill in eastern New Orleans.

Waltzer was incensed when he learned eastern New Orleans would become the destination for the city's storm waste and debris. Having witnessed the devastation to his home in Lakeview, Waltzer also did not appreciate that the landfill could weaken the levee system. He organized the community and helped lead the effort in pursuing the city and state on behalf of Citizens for a Strong New Orleans East to prevent the landfill from opening.

"You see something that just doesn't seem right and you start to figure out how legally it doesn't make sense, where legally officials aren't doing the right thing. And then legally you can get them to acknowledge a risk. They (officials) should realize what is in the best interest of society."

To recognize the difference between wrong and right and take action is how Waltzer was raised.

"I was given a sense of social justice by my parents."

His mother, Miriam Waltzer, was the first woman elected to the New Orleans Criminal District Court and his father, Bruce Waltzer, was a civil rights lawyer. Watching them prompted Waltzer to attend Boston University and Harvard Law School for the purpose of improving people's lives. He returned to New Orleans after law school and has practiced law on the West Bank for the past 19 years.

Waltzer intends to continue using litigation as a means for social change and to try to get the government to be proactive rather than reactive.

"We have monumental problems here, and if we can proactively develop policies that make sense for everyone, rather than just for a few people, we can create a city that is sustainable."•

— Abby Kral





# David Ware

**Position:** owner and managing attorney, David Ware and Associates

**Age:** 52

**Family:** partner, Brad O'Hara; and 12 nieces and nephews

**Education:** bachelor's degree in Latin American studies, Yale University; juris doctor, University of Texas School of Law in Austin

As an immigration attorney, David A. M. Ware has witnessed many complex cases, but his most challenging involved representing a woman who had been deported.

"The lady was extremely fearful, had violated the immigration law and the fact that law enforcement was trying to arrest her made it a difficult case," Ware said.

Ware started his law career in 1981 as a staff attorney at New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp. and opened his own firm — David Ware and Associates, specializing in immigration law — in 1982, which now has more than 3,000 clients nationwide.

He was attracted to law because he believes in "helping the underdog" and said practicing immigration law is challenging and fun at the same time.

"I've seen every type of client and it makes it fascinating. It is a fun branch of law and there is always something different."

In addition to his busy schedule, Ware teaches and gives lectures on immigration law. He speaks about 40 times a year at various schools, professional organizations and conferences throughout the country.

He taught immigration law at Loyola University School of Law for 10 years and at Southern University Law Center for five years. He also has served as co-chairman of Tulane University Law School's immigration law conference.

He is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on immigration law; Ware started publishing a quarterly newsletter on immigration in the mid-1980s, which now has about 10,000 subscribers.

"I thought it would be a good way to keep people informed about immigration law. I wanted it to be accessible to everyone and be written in a way the general public could understand."

Ware has done pro bono work for organizations including the Hispanic Apostolate, the NO/AIDS Task Force; AIDS service organization HIV/AIDS Alliance for Region Two; and Children's Hospital's Family Advocacy, Care and Education Services program.

"As an attorney, it is important to give back to the community. I like to help organizations that help immigrants and in helping those organizations thrive, everyone benefits."

Ware also is involved in many legal organizations.

He is a former officer of the local chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and a former officer of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs Region Three. He is also a former board member and past president of the Hispanic Apostolate. •

— Jennifer Nall



# George Wentz Jr.

**Position:** of counsel, Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer

**Age:** 49

**Family:** wife, Susan; and children, Marcie, 27, Lillian, 24, Kathy, 21, Chloe, 17, Robinson, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in sociology, University of Delaware; juris doctor, Georgetown University Law Center

Deposing a German-speaking witness regarding documents written in Spanish with the questions in English is all in a day's work for George Wentz.

Wentz was part of a team that represented the Power Co. of Mexico against engineering conglomerate Siemens AG, the German parent company of all Siemens worldwide after a power failure in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Believing they would not receive a fair trial in Mexico, Wentz successfully fought to have the case tried in the United States.

"It was practically unheard of," Wentz said. "Especially since no U.S. subsidiary of Siemens was involved in the case."

He spent months in Mexico City and frequently traveled to Germany. While he understands Spanish, Wentz said Spanish and German interpreters were used in all depositions. One deposition lasted 14 hours.

Overcoming the logistics was a challenge.

"Siemens is a massive global conglomerate and they fought tooth and nail in this case. It was a very interesting four years and it was very rewarding to have won."

In early 2005, Wentz and his family moved to New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina, they relocated to Dallas but were determined to make their way back. Wentz lived in New Orleans in the early 1980s and was committed to reclaiming the city as his home. Comparing his time in New Orleans in the early 1980s with 2005, he wondered why there hadn't been more growth in those 20 years.

"Why have other cities passed us by? What have they done that we haven't?"

After the storm, Wentz visited the business community in Miami-Dade County in Florida and learned about their business plan for the county, which has proven successful. Wentz turned to friend Arthur Pulitzer and founded the Horizon Initiative, which is modeled after the Miami Beacon Council, a public-private economic development entity. Together they recruited business, civic and university leaders to join the grassroots organization.

"We believe that a public-private partnership is crucial for our success," Wentz said. "A steady hand at the helm makes a difference in economic development."

By increasing the city's tax base, Wentz said other services will improve: public education, city services, parks and recreation and much more.

"To do this, we must bring companies to the city with high-paying jobs to develop a vibrant economy."

Wentz expects the partnership with the city to be in place by September. •

— Elizabeth Branley





# Scott Whittaker

**Position:** chairman of the business section of Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann

**Age:** 47

**Family:** wife, Wendy; and daughters, Rachel, 19, Jenna, 15

**Education:** bachelor's degree in English literature, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Representing New Orleans retail giant Schwegmann's Supermarkets in the sale of the grocery store chain was a challenge for Scott Whittaker.

The transaction stands out in Whittaker's 24 years at Stone Pigman Walther Witmann because of Schwegmann's 30 locations, complicated financing and the fact the company was in financial distress when it was sold.

"It was a difficult transaction to accomplish and it was sad to see this once-great company go out of business," Whittaker said.

In 1984, Whittaker joined Stone Pigman, where he serves as chairman of the firm's business section and practices corporate mergers and acquisitions and commercial real estate law. As a corporate mergers and acquisitions attorney, Whittaker said it is important to keep up with the different areas of law involved.

"Keeping abreast of the many areas of law involved in a corporate merger practice is a challenge."

Post-Katrina, Whittaker said commercial real estate has been exciting and he has been involved in many redevelopment projects in New Orleans. Notable projects include 200 Carondelet St., which is becoming mixed-income apartments, and 800 Canal St., which is becoming retail businesses. He has also represented the Canal Street Development Corp., the city-owned entity that owns the Chateau Sonesta Hotel, in the restructuring transaction that enabled the hotel to remain open after Katrina.

"I'm looking forward to exciting real estate projects taking shape in 2008 and being involved as a lawyer in those projects."

The native New Orleanian is dedicated to the region and could not imagine living anywhere else.

"Our roots are deep here in the New Orleans area. My children are sixth-generation New Orleanians. Me personally and Stone Pigman are committed to staying in New Orleans."

In addition to his duties at Stone Pigman, Whittaker is involved in many legal organizations, including chairman of

the American Bar Association Section of Business Law subcommittee on M&A Jurisprudence and a member of the editorial committee for the Model Stock Purchase Agreement with Commentary, which is a publication of the ABA. He also serves as chairman of the Louisiana Supreme Court committee on bar admissions.

He is actively involved in the Louisiana Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth. Whittaker, who serves on the board, said the organization is interested in helping the community through business development and corporate growth.

He is also president of the Parents Club at Dominican High School, president of the Palm Vista Civic Association and co-chairman, along with wife, Wendy, of the Helping Hands Ministry at St. Philip Neri Catholic Church.

Whittaker enjoys sea kayaking in Lake Pontchartrain, canoeing with his daughter, Jenna, and fishing. •

— Jennifer Nall

# James Williams

**Position:** partner, Gauthier, Houghtaling & Williams

**Age:** 34

**Family:** wife, Elizabeth; and children, Jordon, 4, Kendall, 21 months

**Education:** bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Washington and Lee University School of Law

One of James Williams' most satisfying cases came last fall.

Williams argued for the state attorney general's office on behalf of Louisiana citizens that flood exclusions in homeowners' policies were ambiguous, prompting a Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal decision saying such rising water damage was covered.

"I think that I am most proud of that case because the result ended up being so important to so many people around here," Williams said. "You can't help but feel good when something like that happens."

Williams is a partner at Gauthier, Houghtaling & Williams, where he has specialized in civil litigation with a particular focus on business and catastrophic personal injury litigation.

His work in winning a \$1.5-million recovery for an injured railroad worker won national publicity. In 2006 Williams won a \$1.7-million award for a child injured as a result of a defectively assembled bicycle.

When offered a chance to become involved at Good Shepherd School in downtown New Orleans, he jumped at the opportunity.

"Because both of my parents are public school educators, I have been aware of the disparity between public and private education in our city for a long time. I was very happy to do what I could to help the school because it offers a kind of program that holds out great promise for the kids of New Orleans."

That program offers a tuition-free education in a private school setting to at-risk city students whose families live below the federal poverty line.

"The idea is to create the kind of safe environment, combined with teaching excellence that you would see at any other private school in the city, with the only difference being that it is open to students who would probably never otherwise be in a school like that," said Williams, who serves on the school's board of directors.

Williams has taken special pride in seeing the school, which opened in 2001, gradually rebuild its enrollment after Katrina forced many of its students to leave the city. This spring the school will graduate its first full class.

Williams' commitment to helping the youth of New Orleans also includes his time as a Little League basketball coach and as a Sunday School teacher.

"I think that if you really want to make a difference you have to get involved no matter how much time or energy it takes."•

— Garry Boulard





# Scott Willis

**Position:** partner, Correro, Fishman, Haygood, Phelps, Walmsley, and Casteix

**Age:** 48

**Family:** wife, Jennifer; and children, Patrick, 19, Mary, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree in history, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, Paul M. Hebert Louisiana State University Law Center

Scott Willis has helped many local businesses achieve their goals during his 25 years in the legal industry.

Willis works in transaction law helping facilitate commercial transactions.

"I enjoy helping people achieve goals in growing and financing businesses," Willis said. "People are trying to build and add on as opposed to fighting."

Willis' most challenging case took place in the 1990s when Fauji Fertilizer in Pakistan wanted to buy the Arcadian Chemical Plant in Lake Charles. The sellers were in Tennessee, the company doing the financing was in New York and the contractors were in New Jersey. The multibillion-dollar project involved dismantling the plant in Lake Charles, then shipping it via six cargo ships to Pakistan, where it would be rebuilt and refurbished.

"The entire project took several years and involved frequent travel and meetings throughout the country to negotiate contracts with dismantling contractors, lenders, design and industrial engineers," Willis said, "One challenging aspect was working with our clients, many of whom spoke little English, at a time when most communication was by mail or fax, and prior to the Internet and e-mail."

It took a year to negotiate and document the transaction and the cultural differences provided an additional challenge, as Fauji Fertilizer was not accustomed to doing business according to U.S. rules and customs.

More recently, Willis worked the case involving Rouses Supermarkets purchasing the entire Southern division of A&P, including the oldest A&P in the United States, the one in the French Quarter, as well as the New Orleans area and Mississippi Gulf Coast Sav-A-Centers.

The case involved a number of different landlords, as well as employee issues and other people interested in buying the properties.

"It was rewarding since we were able to assist a growing Louisiana firm continue its acquisition strategy. Often we see out-of-state concerns acquiring Louisiana companies, and I think it was good for the Louisiana economy to have a company as good as Rouses be in the position to be the acquirer as opposed to being the target."

Willis is also on the board of the Bureau of Governmental Research, where he serves as treasurer. •

— Fritz Esker

# Brett Wise

**Position:** shareholder, Liskow and Lewis

**Age:** 43

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in ocean engineering, Naval Academy; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

The law has always fascinated Brett Wise.

"The law is demanding because the vast majority of cases are not simple or clear cut," Wise said. "No one's view of the facts is the same."

That's why complex cases can take years to prepare, but one of his earliest cases didn't afford him that luxury.

When he first began practicing law, he represented a ship owner in a case against an Alabama shipyard. There were reports repairs to an offshore derrick barge were not done properly, that there were excessive costs and unnecessary delays.

"I received tons of documents that I had to review and be ready for to go to court in two months. That was a challenge."

His Naval experience led him to his specialty — admiralty.

"I was in the Navy for seven years before going to law school. I clerked for a law firm in my first year and was put into the admiralty section."

Wise believes exposure to international law as a naval officer has proven beneficial and he enjoys going aboard ships and visiting with the crewmembers.

The law and his naval career collided in January 2006 when he was called for a yearlong deployment to Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Attorney Wise became Cmdr. Wise in March 2006.

"I am proud to be in the United States military. It gives me the opportunity to serve my country in my own way."

Wise was assigned as senior mentor and officer in charge of the Navy Embedded Training Team at Forward Operating Base Tombstone. He and his team were responsible for training and mentoring the Afghan police and the Afghan National Army. Their goal was to build an effective organization and then transfer a new \$68-million facility to local control. Wise and his team accomplished their goal earlier than planned and he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, recognizing his "exceptional professional, personal initiative and loyal devotion to duty while upholding the highest traditions of the United States."

He returned in August to resume his maritime law practice, where he handles disputes involving cargo claims, offshore drilling personal injury, vessel collisions as well as oil-field tort claims.

Wise is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association and the American Bar Association. •

— Elizabeth Branley





# Scott Wolfe Jr.

**Position:** founding partner, Wolfe Law Group

**Age:** 27

**Family:** fiancée, Emily Bull

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science and history, Southern Methodist University; juris doctor, Loyola University School of Law

Opening a law firm right after Hurricane Katrina was a challenge, but Scott Wolfe Jr.'s determination proved successful.

Wolfe started Wolfe Law Group in October 2005 and began handling a lot of Katrina-related insurance litigation cases, but now he mostly practices construction law.

"We are positioning ourselves where we are known as a construction law firm," Wolfe said.

The construction industry appealed to Wolfe because of the many facets surrounding the industry as well as being a personal interest of his. Wolfe said every day is different, which makes his job exciting, especially in dealing with the construction industry.

"The construction industry is prone to disputes because every construction project involves a lot of people," he said.

With Katrina two and a half years behind us, his prac-

tice still handles Katrina-related cases.

"We still have cases where homeowners paid for construction work and (contractors) did not do the work properly."

Wolfe knew early on that going to law school would be beneficial.

"I've always been a business person and I knew I wanted to own my own business. I knew a law degree would be an asset for any company."

Wolfe has been splitting time between New Orleans and Seattle since opening a full-time office in Seattle in July. But his roots are here.

"I plan on staying here. I'm from here, my family is here and this is where my clients are."

Last year, Wolfe started some charitable initiatives, which he hopes to continue. In 2007, Wolfe started pur-

chasing coffee for his law firm from Montana-based coffee company Specialty Roast, which donates \$2 from every pack of coffee to a charity of the buyer's choice.

Wolfe's charity is the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and he estimates they donate about \$1,500 a year to them just by drinking coffee.

"We drink all of our coffee for the Louisiana SPCA," joked Wolfe, who is also involved with the March of Dimes and looks forward to granting someone's wish for the Make a Wish Foundation in December.

Wolfe also founded and operates The Web Lab, a Web site design and programming company, and InCharge Technology, which develops computer programs. He also founded ExpressLien.com, a service for contractors to file construction liens. •

— Jennifer Nall



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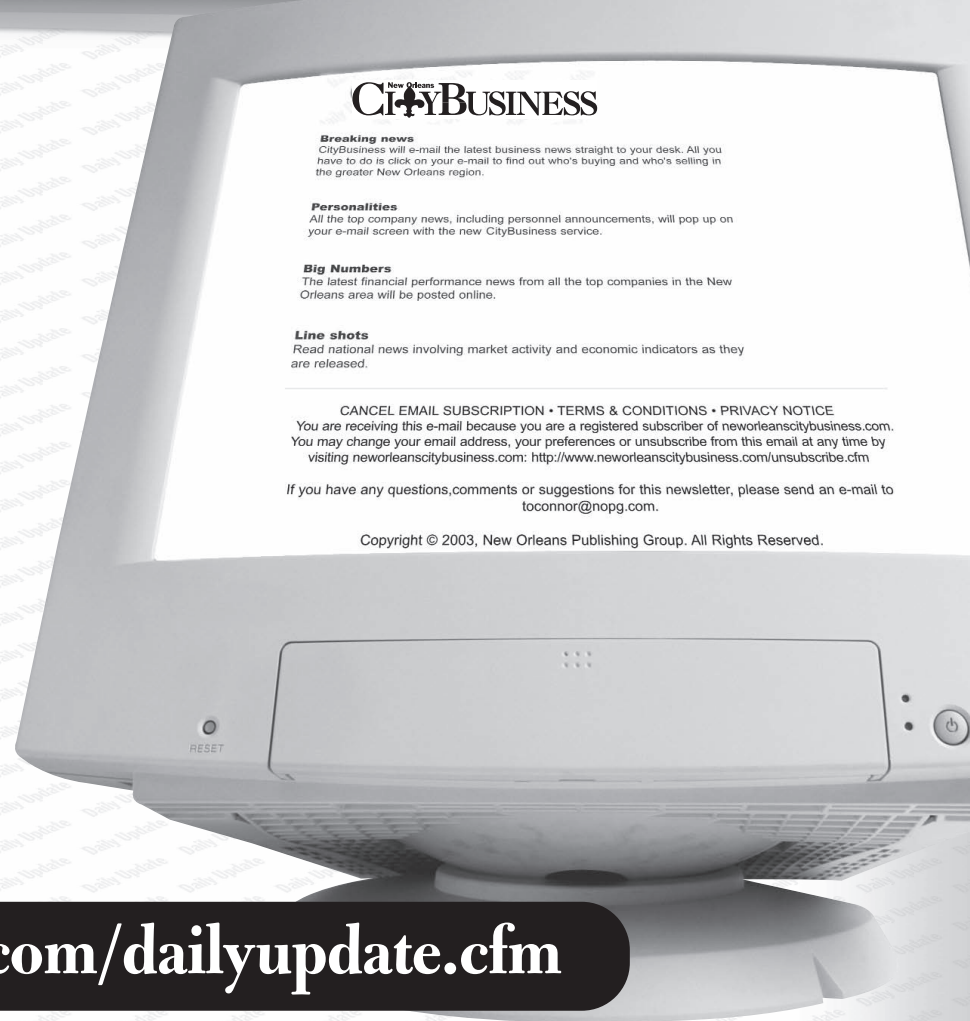
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