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in LAW

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as one of the
TOP 50 Leaders in Law
 by CityBusiness Leadership in Law Class of 2010



Jan one of our members adds another distinguished award to her many accomplishments and to the Firm's numerous other professional awards:

- American College of Bankruptcy - 1997-2010
- Best Lawyers in America - 1993-2010
- Best Lawyers' New Orleans Bankruptcy & Creditor Rights Lawyer of the Year - 2010
- Listed in the top Ten Super Lawyers in Louisiana - 2007-2010
- Chambers USA - 2009
- Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers - 2010

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CITYBUSINESS 2010 LEADERSHIP in LAW

INTRODUCTION

The New Orleans CityBusiness Leadership in Law Class of 2010 recognizes the area's 50 leading legal professionals based on their professional and community achievements.

In the program's sixth year, honorees discuss their most challenging, memorable or rewarding case, while others tell the story of how they ended up in the legal profession.

From admiralty law and real estate transactions to pro bono projects, the 2010 honorees cover a variety of specialties. Many have argued cases that have paved the way for future rulings or fought for standards that have had a profound impact of the general practice of law.

One has been paid in lasagna, while another had to break up a fight in the courtroom that ended in bloodshed. Some have broken language barriers and others have crossed international borders to serve clients.

All but four of this year's honorees graduated from Louisiana law schools, with 18 earning their juris doctor from Tulane University Law School, 15 from Loyola University College of Law, 12 from Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center and one from Southern University Law Center.

Those are encouraging figures, showing our legal community is committed to staying in the area and helping the region grow.

Two attorneys have been inducted into the CityBusiness Leadership in Law Hall of Fame for their consistent commitment and willingness to go the extra mile. Kim Boyle and Bill Hines join seven existing members inducted in 2009.

Even though they are no longer eligible to be selected as honorees, these attorneys will continue to drive our region forward and serve as outstanding representatives of the community while ensuring justice is served.

In addition to the 2010 Hall of Fame inductees, four honorees are being recognized for a second time: Christopher Couch, Richard Exnicios, Christopher Ralston and Monica Sanchez.

The Leadership in Law Class of 2010 gives proof that attorneys are committed to fighting for what's right and devoted to social justice. They zealously work for the interests of the individuals, businesses and organizations that make our region unique.

CityBusiness thanks each of them for their professional and civic efforts and the difference they make.

Congratulations to our Leadership in Law Class of 2010. •

News Editor Christian Moises can be reached at 293-9249 or by e-mail at christian.moises@nofbg.com.



Christian Moises
News Editor

Hall of Fame

The following honorees have been inducted into the Leadership in Law Hall of Fame.

2010

Kim Boyle
William Hines

2009

John Houghtaling
Steve Lane
Walter Leger Jr.
Wayne Lee
David Sherman
James Williams
Scott Wolfe Jr.

PAST HONOREES



2009

Hirschel Abbott
Lawrence Abbott
Jesse Adams
Paul Andersson
Jonathan Andry
Mark Carver
Robin Cheatham
Christopher Couch
James Daigle
Timothy Daniels
J. Kelly Duncan
Ernest Edwards
Gene Fendler
Robert Fisher
Richard Foster
Gus Fritchie
Monica Ann Frois
Lawrence Hand
Pauline Hardin
A.J. Herbert
William Hines
Ralph Hubbard
Robert Johnston
Howard Kaplan
Brian Katz
Bob Kerrigan
Roselyn Koretzky
Gerald Meunier
Christopher Mora
William Patrick
Sharon Perlis
Kenneth Pickering
Loulan Pitre
Christopher Ralston
William Reinhardt
Jerome Reso
Charles Rice
Tara Richard
Monica Sanchez
Scott Schneider
Danny Shaw
David Sherman
Randy Snyder
Mark Spansel
James Swanson
Frank Tessier
Tania Tetlow
Derek Walker
Hal Welch
James Williams

2008

William Aaron
Nan Alessandra
Gilbert Andry
Raymond Areaux
Peter Barbee
Charles Branton
Kenny Charbonnet
William Credo
Taylor Darden
Christopher Davis
Bobby Delise
Richard Duplantier
Leslie Ehret
Richard Exnicios
Tracey Flemings-Davillier
Donna Fraiche
Duris Holmes
John Houghtaling
Chauntis Jenkins
Robert Kerrigan Jr.
Keva Landrum-Johnson
Walter Leger Jr.
Lynn Luker
Eve Masinter
Michael Mitchell
Max Nathan
Glenn Orgeron
Marshall Page
Erin Parkinson
Joseph Peiffer
Robert Perez
Fredrick Preis Jr.
Deborah Rouen
David Sherman
Randall Smith
Renee Smith
Ray Steib
Martin Stern
Patrick Talley
Susan Talley
Patrick Vance
David Waguespack
Joel Waltzer
David Ware
George Wentz Jr.
Scott Whittaker
James Williams
Scott Willis
Brett Wise
Scott Wolfe Jr.

2007

Robert "Bob" Angelico
Mark Beebe
Lucia Blacksher
Kim Boyle
Peter Breslin
Dana Douglas
Sandra Feingerts
Janice Martin Foster
Alan Goodman
Deborah Harkins
Peter Hilbert Jr.
William Hines
John Houghtaling
William Howard III
Ashlye Keaton
Steven Klein
Stephen Kupperman
Robert Kutcher
Steven Lane
Wayne Lee
Walter Leger
Georges Legrand
Julie Livaudais
David Lukinovich
Nancy Marshall
Robert Mathis
Pam Metzger
Carole Cukell Neff
Robert Nuzum
John Olinde
Lawrence Orlansky
Allison Penzato
Keith Pyburn Jr.
Harry Rosenberg
Dionne Rousseau
James Roussel
Kyle Schonekas
Paige Sensenbrenner
David Sherman
Lloyd Shields
Stuart Smith
Peter Sperling
Marx Sterbcow
Jeffrey Thomas
Quentin Urquhart Jr.
Steve Usdin
Laurie White
Constance Willems
Henri Wolbrette III
Scott 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 D'Amico Jr.
Nancy Scott Degan
John Duck
Val Exnicios
George Fritel 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 Stolier
Noel 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 Benjamin Jr.
Virginia Boulet
Kim Boyle
Alan Brackett
William Bradley
James Brown
Paula Brown
Joseph Bruno
Peter Butler Sr.
McChord Carrico
Roy Cheatwood
James Coleman
Keith Colvin
Howell Crosby
Howard Daigle Jr.
Christopher Dicharry
Anthony DiLeo
Kelly Duncan
Ernest Edwards Jr.
Michael Ellis
Frank Fontenot
George Fowler III
James Garner
William Grace Jr.
Mat Gray III
Harry Hardin III
Russ Herman
Bill Hines
John Houghtaling
Richard Ieyoub
Donna Klein
Roselyn Koretzky
Cheryl Kornick
Steven Lane
Dwight LeBlanc Jr.
Wayne Lee
Jonathan McCall
Michael McGlone
Robert Mouton
Antonio Rodriguez
Dionne Rousseau
Leopold Sher
Mark Surprenant
Robert Vosbein
David Ware
Scott Whittaker



Neil Abramson

Position: Phelps Dunbar counsel

Age: 42

Family: wife, Kim; son, Parrish, 7

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

Neil Abramson considers the litigation process exciting, from taking depositions and making oral arguments to trying cases.

Take the cases of the exploding FEMA trailers, where Abramson has represented the manufacturer of a gas detector installed in the trailers.

"It's been very interesting to try to figure out what happened and why it happened ... so that something like that doesn't happen again," said Abramson, who specializes in tort litigation at Phelps Dunbar.

In 2008, he took on the title of lawmaker when he was elected state representative for the 98th District. It didn't take long for him to make his mark: the Alliance for Good Government chose him as its 2009 Legislator of the Year.

Abramson, a Democrat, said the main motivation to run for office was his disappointment in the pace of New Orleans' recovery.

"Every day I'd run into another person who was frustrated about the streets or the insurance rates or jobs or the schools," he said. "More and more people were getting so frustrated that they were leaving. People I know who had to leave because of the hurricane were deciding that they weren't coming back. I wanted to try to do something to try to get those people back here and to prevent (other) people from leaving."

Abramson is especially proud of sponsoring the bill that created the Grants for Grads program, which provides Louisiana college graduates and advance degree recipients a state income tax rebate for the first five years if they stay in state. The money is applied toward a down payment on their first home.

Abramson is on the board of New Orleans Outreach, a nonprofit that places volunteers in public schools as tutors, teacher assistants and after-school program leaders. He is a past board member of the Contemporary Arts Center and Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans and a former volunteer basketball coach at the B.W. Cooper Housing Development.

In his law practice, Abramson often sees himself as his clients' business partner as well as legal advocate, always seeking the best solution for a given problem. He said his role as a state representative is that of a problem solver, too, just on a larger scale.

"Instead of having a single client, I have 40,000 clients in my district who are my constituents, several hundred thousand as a representative from the city of New Orleans and several million as member of the state Legislature as a whole," Abramson said. "I can help effect change on a much bigger scale as a state representative. ... By passing a law, you can affect a lot more people."•

— Sonya Stinson

Paul Batiza

Position: Batiza, Godofsky, Schroeder & Coles senior trial attorney

Age: 61

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in philosophy, Middlebury College; juris doctor and master's degree in tax law, Tulane University Law School

Since 1983, Paul Batiza has defended medical malpractice claims and provided legal advice to Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co. policyholders.

Handling claims throughout the state, Batiza serves as the senior trial attorney for Batiza, Godofsky, Schroeder & Coles. He originally started with manufacturing cases and developed a niche in malpractice with a special interest in trials. Although he doesn't spend much time in the courtroom, Batiza said he's always thinking about how to present it to a jury.

"I think the most inspiring part for me is the jury trial," Batiza said. "It's about the challenge of taking the established legal principles and translating them into compelling ordinary concepts for ordinary people."

Batiza said that because so many of his cases are similar, many of his jury trials just sort of "string together." With each medical malpractice suit, he encounters similar situations and scenarios where similar solutions and tactics apply.

After years of presenting cases, Batiza believes he has developed a special rapport with juries. In one instance, he defended a physician who was being sued as a care provider and the designer of a medical device.

"It had medical malpractice and product liability in the same case. It had all the ingredients that I had spent so many years practicing," Batiza said. "It was certainly one of the most memorable cases I had."

The son of Rodolfo Batiza, a well-known legal scholar and law professor at Tulane University Law School for more than 30 years, Batiza was born with the law in his blood and knew what he wanted to do at an early age. He said there are many different routes an attorney can take to success and many different personality types can be successful.

Batiza, who attributes his success to his passion, said reaching career goals depends on a combination of factors.

"Some people make it on pure intelligence and brilliance. Others make it on personality. Some people do it out of a strong passion for the case, cause or client," Batiza said.

Batiza is a member of the medical-legal interprofessional committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association and a past board member of Isidore Newman School. He also helped form the bar review course at Loyola University College of Law and was the first instructor to teach torts and ethics to recent graduates who were preparing for the exam. •

— Craig Guillot





Christopher Beary

Position: Orrill, Cordell and Beary managing partner

Age: 42

Family: wife, Page; children, Claiborne, 11, Caroline, 10, Claire, 8, Marie Catherine, 6

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

In an essay describing why he wanted to attend Tulane University Law School, Chris Beary remembers arguing that he would make an ideal candidate because of his lack of interest in litigation, a point that reflected his interest at the time and one he figured would set him apart from other applicants.

His plan, after all, had been to use law school to further his interest in a tax-related career, an affinity he developed as an undergraduate accounting student and through his college job as an office administrator with his father's copy machine service and sales business.

Thinking back on his early career plans, Beary laughs. Today, the registered CPA and managing partner at Orrill, Cordell and Beary devotes most of his professional time to litigation in a practice that focuses on all areas of business law, including commercial litigation and transactions, bankruptcy, health care, legal and accounting malpractice, successions and estate planning.

"Once I got experience with litigation, I found out that I really liked it and enjoyed using my business knowledge," he said.

Beary has also amassed a significant roster of business interests outside of his legal work. Over the years, they have ranged from residential and commercial real estate to restaurants and video poker. Presently, he is managing partner of radio station WGSO 990 AM.

"I keep busy," he said.

Since Hurricane Katrina, Beary counts his role in establishing the low-income housing initiative Jericho Road as one of his biggest extracurricular achievements. The nonprofit homebuilding organization, which targets the Central City neighborhood, is based on an idea promoted after the storm by Dean David Duplantier, the rector at Beary's church, Christ Church Cathedral.

They figured that by "putting some serious dollars in a concentrated way into the neighborhood, we could bring back that neighborhood" while also preserving the heritage of the area, Beary said.

"Most importantly, our mission is to invest in individuals and families so that they can invest in themselves."

Jericho Road, through partnerships with various other agencies, has built about 20 homes in Central City and plans to build another 14 this year, targeted at prospective owners who earn between 60 percent and 80 percent of the adjusted median income, Beary said. The group also was a co-developer for The Muses mixed-income apartment complex, which broke ground last summer.

"There is a true renaissance going on in Central City right now," he said. •

— Emlie Bahr

Walter Becker

Position: Chaffe McCall partner

Age: 52

Family: wife, Laurie; children, Lindsey, 22, Hailey, 14

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

For an attorney known for his prosecution of complicated cases under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, it's no surprise that Walter Becker, during his free time, serves as chairman of a New Orleans Crime Coalition subcommittee responsible for auditing the Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff's Office.

"There has historically been a question as to the origins and use of the sheriff's budget," said Becker, who is a partner at Chaffe McCall.

Because Sheriff Marlin Gusman "has given us transparency with his budget," the task of getting more money for that office may now be easier.

"That's our ultimate goal," Becker said. "We want to push to get the resources he needs to do his job in the criminal justice system."

Becker's career has included service as an assistant district attorney in New Orleans from 1983-87 and assistant U.S. attorney in New Orleans from 1987-2001. He also successfully headed up the RICO Act prosecution of Peter Marcello, who was convicted of operating a wide-ranging drug ring.

"That was huge because it did not involve just Marcello, but hundreds of people in a drug distribution operation who ended up being convicted," Becker said.

Becker also successfully prosecuted Lee Parker, convicted in 1985 of shooting New Orleans police officer Alva Simmons.

"That was probably one of my most emotional cases because the officer was left paralyzed by the shooting," Becker said.

Surveying a career that has included more than 100 criminal jury trials, Becker said his devotion to law came from growing up in New Orleans.

"I was affected myself by crime and I knew others who were, too," he said. "So early on I grasped how our justice system can right wrongs, and that's something I still believe in."

Becker's private practices involves mostly white-collar criminal defense in which he has represented corporations and individuals.

He has also been able to combine his interests in criminal and maritime law. In the past year alone, he took on four cases relating to vessels that were dumping oil in violation of the Act to Prevent Pollution for Ships and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

In his free time, Becker serves as a member of the Sugar Bowl Committee, which promotes amateur sporting events, and is an elder and vice chairman of membership at St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church. •

— Garry Boulard





Marcus Brown

Position: Entergy Corp. vice president and deputy general counsel

Age: 48

Family: wife, Nannette Jolivet-Brown; children, Christopher, 17, Rachel, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in English, Southern University; master's degree in business administration, Tulane University; juris doctor, Southern University Law Center

Marcus Brown, Entergy Corp. vice president and deputy general counsel, supervises more than 40 lawyers, paralegals and other staff members in the utility's five-state service territory.

Brown was responsible for Entergy's systemwide insurance claims after hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike and honed his negotiating skills during post-storm disputes. Under his leadership, the company's legal team recovered more than \$500 million in insurance proceeds for property damage and other losses. Negotiations with insurers took the team to four European countries, Canada and Bermuda.

"After a three-day negotiation session in 2006 in a small castle in Scotland, we reached an agreement with our insurer that led to our getting the funds needed to help Entergy New Orleans emerge from bankruptcy," he said.

ENO filed for bankruptcy after city residents fled following Katrina.

"The challenges of managing the elements of a claim of that magnitude were extraordinary, and the dollar amounts were staggering. I take pride in knowing we played a small part in helping this city get back on its feet."

From his Loyola Avenue office, Brown represents Entergy, with 2.7 million customers, on all non-regulatory litigation matters, including commercial-contract disputes and property and casualty claims. He hires and manages outside law firms handling litigation for the company, and he's involved in domestic and international mediations and negotiations.

As for the community, Brown believes each lawyer has an obligation to make sure legal services are available to people in need and not just those who have the resources to pay for them.

Throughout his career, which includes seven years with the Stone Pigman law firm, he has provided free assistance in cases ranging from second-degree murder to divorce and child custody. This year, he was asked to join the Pro Bono Project's board of directors.

Brown was the first African-American graduate from Southern University Law Center to practice at a major New Orleans law firm when he was hired by Stone Pigman in the late 1980s.

Since 2003, he's been chairman of the Diversity Council in Entergy's legal department, which received national recognition for its diversity practices from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association in 2008.

Brown met his wife, environmental attorney Nannette Jolivet-Brown, while studying for the bar exam.

"Whatever degree of success I've experienced is largely due to my wife's influence," he said. "She's fiercely loyal to family, grounded in faith and among the best environmental litigators I've seen. Putting up with me is no easy task. I know I'm a lucky man."•

— Susan Buchanan

Stephen Bruno

Position: Law Office of Joseph M. Bruno attorney

Age: 52

Family: sons, Stephen Jr., 24, Roy 23, Palmer 17, Christian 13

Education: bachelor's degree in management, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Love is rarely associated with the legal profession, yet it is on the list with just causes and the conviction to work for others' best interest as Stephen Bruno's professional tenets.

Bruno said hearing stories about people losing their way of life because of someone else's negligence helped shape his approach.

"Now you have not only a case but a cause," Bruno said.

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Bruno had to fight for an acquaintance's fate. Four law enforcement agents, two from the New Orleans Police Department, handcuffed retired teacher Robert Davis, who was then beaten and accused of resisting arrest, battery of a police officer and public drunkenness. The incident, which a television producer captured on videotape, was broadcast internationally.

"I was just horrified and wanted to do whatever the firm could do to help," Bruno said. The city settled with Davis for an undisclosed amount in August.

Bruno's beliefs were shaped while paying his way through college, law school and then learning competing aspects of law. As a law student, he worked for several insurance defense firms whose goal was protecting businesses and limiting claims anyway possible.

After graduating, he joined his family's law firm and started to work for those who did not have access to the legal system and were unaware of their legal rights.

"That highly motivated me to work hard for those clients to make sure their rights were protected," said Bruno, who likens his approach to the title character in the movie "Jerry Maguire," who is not just interested in the immediate payoff but his clients' long-term goals.

"These get-your-cash-now lawyers on TV are evil," he said.

Bruno loves the legal profession, saying love is essential to attain greatness. His devotion has also led to his outlook that law is not a business for Bruno.

"When you look at it as a vocation and not just a profession, it gives you an opportunity to serve others," he said.

His ability to assist others was tested during his tenure as custodian of notarial records for Orleans Parish. He oversaw all city property records dating back to the 1800s, a fair task until Katrina.

Bruno immediately returned from Dallas after the storm, his only thought about letting people down. He was able to spare all but one fifth of the documents from water damage.

Bruno and his brothers followed their father into law, and he hopes it happens again — two of his sons are in college and have worked at the firm. •

— L. Kasimu Harris





Leon Cannizzaro

Position: Orleans Parish district attorney

Age: 55

Family: wife, Norma; children, Christopher, 24, Leon III, 26, Laura, 28, Christina, 29

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

New Orleans District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro takes a hands-on approach in running the office he was elected to in late 2008.

Just last year, he successfully prosecuted the second-degree murder case against Mark Ott in the 2007 death of salon owner Robin Malta, a case built almost entirely on circumstantial evidence, as an example to his team of attorneys.

"It was important for me to show my assistant district attorneys that I do not expect them to do anything that I will not do myself," Cannizzaro said.

While he presided over more than 1,800 jury trials as a judge, Cannizzaro said he had not prosecuted a case in more than 23 years.

"While some cases may receive more media attention than others, they are all very important, not only to the individuals involved in each respective case but also to the community as well," Cannizzaro said.

Restoring faith in the criminal justice system among law-abiding citizens and criminals is one of Cannizzaro's top goals.

"No matter how hard the (New Orleans Police Department) and the district attorney work, the criminal justice system cannot be successful without the cooperation and trust of the community," Cannizzaro said. "Almost equally as important was restoring the criminal element's faith in our criminal justice system. To do so, you must restore the criminal's faith in the certainty of punishment."

Cannizzaro believes he has made headway in restoring the community's faith in the criminal justice system, partly because of strengthening the Victim/Witness Assistance Unit. He points to statistics showing the unit is assisting more than 2,000 people compared with 250 when he took office.

Improving the local criminal justice system is one of the reasons Cannizzaro said he ran for DA after a 30-year career that began with a five-year stint as an assistant prosecutor.

He considers his toughest challenge to be streamlining the office to operate more effectively on less money in the face of budget shortfalls.

To deal with the money crunch, Cannizzaro said he hopes to implement a system of "vertical prosecution," assigning a single attorney to a case from its inception through the trial, reducing duplication and allowing for swifter resolutions.

He also plans to implement a system to transfer nonviolent misdemeanors to Municipal Court, which he says comprise more than 30 percent of the Criminal Court docket.

"Transferring these cases to Municipal Court will allow the judges in Criminal District Court to focus their time and attention on the violent criminals who represent the biggest threat to public safety."•

— Diana Chandler

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David Carrigee

Position: Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer partner

Age: 62

Family: wife, Sandy; daughter, Mindy, 35

Education: bachelor's degree in business and marketing, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Maritime law is one of David Carrigee's practice specialties, but neither law school nor the law office provided his earliest field training.

"When I was going to law school, I worked for an insurance company, USF&G, and I handled their maritime claims," said Carrigee, a partner at Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer. "When I got out of school, I had that experience."

That job, more than 30 years ago, helped Carrigee become well versed in collisions, cargo interests, seaworthiness claims and other complex concepts he says can overwhelm the novice maritime attorney. He spends a great deal of time working with insurance-related issues on behalf of maritime clients since, as he notes, almost every collision and calamity is covered by insurance.

"When you are in maritime law, you deal with all the aspects that you deal with in land-based law. But it's a different set of rules, whether it's personal injury to individuals on a ship, a collision between ships, the movement of cargo, financing of ships or building of ships," Carrigee said.

Another common trait among maritime attorneys is doing plaintiff and defense work.

"One time you may be (representing) the ship suing for damages. Another time you may be representing the ship defending (against a damages claim)," Carrigee said.

Carrigee's caseload also includes class action, energy and general insurance defense litigation. He recently represented an insurance company suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to recoup money paid out in Hurricane Katrina-related claims.

In the late 1990s, Carrigee was co-counsel for the defendant in the Dow Corning breast implant case, in which several class-action lawsuits and more than 20,000 individual lawsuits were filed against Dow on behalf of women claiming injury from silicone implants. The case led to a moratorium on the use of breast implants and, in 1998, a federal bankruptcy judge agreed to the company's plan for a \$3.2 billion settlement with about 170,000 plaintiffs.

Carrigee's pro bono work includes his involvement with Solace, a service network of legal professionals, and the Homeless Experience Legal Protection Program, which provides free legal counseling to homeless shelter residents. About two dozen local law firms participate in the program, and Carrigee spearheaded Baldwin Haspel's group.

"Judge Jay Zainey started the program to provide the homeless with some type of legal representation with just general things, like getting their licenses copied and notarized, so that when they lost them on the streets they could go back and get another license without a lot of effort," Carrigee said. "Without a license or some kind of identification, they usually can't get into the homeless shelters."

When he's not arguing a case in court or dispensing legal advice, Carrigee said he enjoys spending time with friends and family. •

— Sonya Stinson

Richard Chopin

Position: Chopin Wagar Richard & Kutcher senior partner

Age: 60

Family: wife, Denise; children, Keating, Justin and Emily; grandson, George

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

As a senior partner with Chopin Wagar Richard & Kutcher, Richard Chopin has tried more than 125 jury trials and even more nonjury trials, having represented such clients as Cox Communications, Schlumberger, Diamond Offshore Drilling Co. and the Wood Group. His areas of practice have run the gamut from maritime and oil field litigation to family law and product liability.

"I just love doing it," Chopin said. "I love the partners and colleagues I work with. I love working with my opponents and my clients. It's just an enticing thing, and I love every aspect of it."

Chopin was born with the law in his blood and said he wanted to be a trial lawyer for as long as he can remember. There are more than a dozen lawyers in his family, including his wife, two children, two brothers, two sisters-in-law and a brother-in-law.

After earning his law degree, he began his career on the litigation staff at Exxon, where he remained for eight years before going into private practice. Chopin said his courtroom style involves adopting an "everyman" persona that allows him to translate the most complex cases to judges and layman jurors. He credits his success to a lifetime of hard work and an unwavering sense of integrity.

"It takes hard work, more hard work and preparation, which is also hard work," Chopin said. "It helps to have a reputation of integrity and honesty, and I believe I enjoy a reputation in the courts as a good, hard-working and honest lawyer who is always very ethical."

Chopin also volunteers with Solace, a volunteer program that has helped more than 500 families and individuals throughout the state since 2002. Solace helps those in the legal community dealing with matters such as an extended illness, a death in the family or natural disasters.

When Chopin isn't working, he enjoys teaching, which has included classes for the National Institute of Trial Advocacy and Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center, bar associations and other organizations.

He is also on the adjunct faculty and trial advocacy faculty at Loyola University College of Law.

"I find the young people, whether they're lawyers or students, to be refreshing. It's always nice to see the enthusiasm and the freshness," said Chopin. •

— Craig Guillot





Celeste Coco-Ewing

Position: Barrasso Usdin member

Age: 41

Family: husband, Tom; daughters, Annabel, 6, Martha, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in political economy, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Celeste Coco-Ewing's father always suspected his daughter would be a great lawyer and told her so on a regular basis when she was in college.

"He just thought I would make a good advocate," said Coco-Ewing, who at the time was not convinced a legal career was right for her.

So even when she graduated college in a down economy and saw many of her friends opting for law school or another graduate program as a means of avoiding a tough job market, Coco-Ewing found another way.

She followed her love of politics to Washington, D.C., and into a job as a legislative assistant to then-Sen. John Breaux. For four years, Coco-Ewing handled a variety of matters on behalf of the senator, working behind the scenes to help craft and convey his policy positions on issues ranging from taxes to agriculture and commerce.

Coco-Ewing said she found it exciting to be such an integral part of the legislative process, but ultimately her congressional work experience provided the evidence she needed that law school would be a good fit.

"I decided I wanted to actually be out there practicing," she said.

So she returned to New Orleans to attend Tulane Law School.

After graduation, Coco-Ewing landed a clerkship with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and later took a job with Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann. In 2003, she joined Barrasso Usdin and now handles complex litigation matters.

Outside of work, Coco-Ewing dedicates a significant amount of her free time to education-related nonprofits. For the past two years, she has been a member of the board of KidSmart, an organization that promotes art in schools as a means of teaching certain fundamentals and helps teachers learn how to incorporate art in the classroom.

"There have been studies that, not surprisingly, show there are kids who respond very well to the down-at-the-desk environment. And then there are kids who need to learn through different channels, and art is a very powerful tool for that," Coco-Ewing said.

She is also involved with the local Appleseed chapter, which works to affect education-related change on the policy level, and with her husband, urologist Dr. Tom Ewing, sponsors a Teach for America teacher.

"I went to a public school and have always felt that education is really the building block from which everything arises. And I felt it was important that kids in New Orleans have the right to get a good education. ... Also, having a good educational system is important for the growth of the city."•

— *Emilie Bahr*

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The attorney responsible for this advertisement is Jason Waguespack, who can be reached at 701 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA, (504) 525-6802.



Stephen Conroy

Position: Conroy Law Firm founder and senior partner

Age: 57

Family: wife, Christie; children, Brooke, 22, Emma, 11, Lily, 9

Education: bachelor's degree in economics, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

With a Metairie office providing a sweeping view of Lake Pontchartrain, it's not surprising that Stephen Conroy is taken with the brackish body of water.

But Conroy, founder and senior partner of the Conroy Law Firm, has turned that passion into a service of nearly two decades as the general counsel to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation.

"I work closely with the (foundation) on achieving their mission, which is clean water in the basin and protecting the basin," Conroy said. "It's really not about the fish. The clean water brings the fish in. (The foundation's) primary objective is clean water suitable for swimming."

The foundation, founded in 1989, has worked to reduce the pollution that caused the lake to be off-limits to swimming in the 1970s. Now that lake is safe for swimming, Conroy said the foundation has expanded its mission to save and preserve the coast and habitat of the entire basin.

Conroy is accustomed to helping causes he believes in, including supporting a variety of Tulane University athletic endeavors.

But his most intensely felt service has come with the Ashley Soule Conroy Foundation, which was established in honor of his daughter, Ashley, who died from an accidental fall while visiting India in 2006. The nonprofit offers a permanent endowment and awards travel-abroad scholarships for qualified students.

"Ashley was vitally interested in the world around her," said Conroy, who serves as the group's executive director. "What we have tried to do with this foundation is to not only remember her, but assist young people with similar interests."

Conroy specializes in civil and business litigation as well as products liability, corporate and construction law.

"We've had a standing policy here of pursuing claims from the small man as well as the big company," Conroy said.

Conroy recently represented a group of camp owners who for years rented on Brazile Island in eastern New Orleans. When Remington Oil and Gas Co. sold its land, the residents said the company had originally promised them the right of first refusal.

Although Katrina eventually wiped out the homes, Conroy was able to get a permanent injunction, which, he said, prevents anyone from selling the properties until they get to court.

Conroy said he particularly enjoyed the Brazile Island case, noting that even though one of the residents was actor John Goodman, the rest were just everyday people.

"I really like it when I can go to bat for clients like that," he said. •

— Garry Boulard

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James Conway III

Position: Lemle and Kelleher partner

Age: 65

Family: wife, Kammer; children, Kimberley, 41, Elizabeth, 37, Jason, 33

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

James Conway III's expertise in real estate, lending and business law has served his clients well during the post-Hurricane Katrina period and the nation's economic recession.

"I'm a transactional attorney, not a litigator, and my work focuses on commercial, industrial, real estate and business acquisitions and financing," said Conway, a partner at Lemle and Kelleher. "I represent buyers, sellers and borrowers in some cases, and banks and other institutional lenders in other cases."

Negotiations in a typical transaction can be tough, Conway said, but when issues are resolved, both sides usually feel satisfied — with handshakes all around.

But there was a case early in his career that didn't end so well.

Conway represented a Lafourche Parish-based company seeking a large commercial loan from a local bank.

"As those negotiations progressed, my client felt the bank's attorney was being difficult and demanding, trying to cause the bank not to make the loan," he said.

Differences were resolved, but when the last closing document was signed, Conway's client walked to the other side of the conference table, yelled at the bank's attorney and landed a solid punch on his face. Conway and a partner pulled the client away.

"In my years of attending closings of transactions, this was the only one that resulted in some blood being shed," Conway said.

In recent years, lawyers and their clients have had to adjust to stressful financial times, Conway said. In 2003, he was selected as a fellow in the American College of Mortgage Attorneys, and found the group's 2009 meeting especially helpful because of presentations on the sub-prime credit meltdown, loan foreclosures, borrower distress and illiquid commercial real estate.

"The 2009 meeting was an invaluable addition to my legal knowledge, and I've used what I learned to help clients survive in one of the worst, economic recessions ever," he said.

In his pro-bono work, Conway has handled legal matters for New Orleanians who lost their homes as a result of levee breaches after Katrina, along with securing power of attorney for residents who fled to other states.

Outside of the office, Conway is an avid golfer who had only seen *The Masters* on television until 2009.

"Last year as a birthday gift, my son invited me on an all-expenses-paid trip to watch the *Masters* in Augusta," Conway said. "It was a very special thrill."•

— Susan Buchanan

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Two-Time Honoree

Christopher Couch

Position: Couch, Stillman, Blitt and Conville managing member

Age: 34

Family: wife, Linda; children, Zoe, 8, Haley 6

Education: bachelor's degree in general studies, University of New Orleans; certificate, George Washington School of Political Management; juris doctor, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center

On a clear dry-erase board in his office, Christopher Couch writes everything important. It looks like the room in Rowan Oak, the Oxford, Miss., home where William Faulkner outlined one of his novels.

"It's my thought generation, and it helps me stay focused," he said.

On the top of the board is the 2010 strategic plan for his Metairie law firm, Couch, Stillman, Blitt and Conville, and the foundations important for it to continue thriving. On the bottom are sketches from his two daughters. The firm has a children-are-allowed policy.

"I think it's important for a kid to understand where their parents are working," Couch said.

His job is more like that of a CEO than a lawyer. About 60 percent of his day is spent counseling other staff attorneys, 20 percent goes to client services and the other 20 percent is dedicated to human resources, accounting, public outreach and diversification.

The firm primarily practices legal collection and creditors' rights, and has several moving parts: banks, in-house accountants, attorneys, a management team, paralegals and a performance manager who works with clients to ensure the firm is meeting their expectations.

"My job is directing all these components," he said.

Couch rarely goes to court unless he's standing in for one of the other lawyers.

"It's just because my time gets taken up in the management piece."

He said the litigation aspect of law and skills he learned early in his career prepared him for his current job.

"I enjoyed the litigation, but I like what I do now a hell of a lot better."

The firm is becoming a force in only its second year and has offices in Mississippi and Alabama. Moreover, Bank of America recognized CSBC as one of its top clients. The firm's client portfolio is comprised primarily of national lenders, but reaching a diversity goal in 2009 led to more local lenders joining its roster.

Walking around the office, which is decorated with framed newspaper clippings from local sports teams and pictures of New Orleans, more feats are posted. There is a wall of thank you notes from charitable organizations — philanthropy is important to the firm.

Last August, Couch started a Boy Scouts of America Explorer program in which he meets twice a month with area high school students for an early introduction to the legal profession. He also has returned to his alma mater, Brother Martin High School, for speaking engagements.

"Economic giving is important, and none of us probably do as much as we should," Couch said. "But I think giving time and finding opportunities to make a difference in someone's life is vital because there is a shortage of mentors."•

— L. Kasimu Harris

Meredith Cunningham

Position: Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Freeman & Sarver member

Age: 35

Family: husband, Mark; children, Alistair, 7, Virginia, 4, Pierce, 1

Education: bachelor's degree in economics, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, University of Texas School of Law

Getting a Securities and Exchange Commission ruling reversed can be difficult, based on a high legal standard requiring proof that the federal government agency that oversees investment has abused its discretion.

Yet Meredith Cunningham and a team of Barrasso Usdin attorneys were successful this year in getting reversed a 2009 SEC decision requiring their client make full restitution in the amount of \$400,000, plus interest.

The SEC made its decision in affirming a ruling from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority stating that Cunningham's client, a broker, advised two investors to put money in a startup company without having the grounds to do so. The U.S. Court of Appeals D.C. Circuit ruled that the SEC's decision was "nonsense" and "whimsical," and overturned the restitution order. The court said the SEC failed to show cause, ruling that there was no connection between Cunningham's client's actions and the losses suffered by the investors he advised.

"There are few, if any, cases dealing with the issue of restitution as presented in this particular case, so I hope the decision will play a significant role in future disciplinary actions," Cunningham said.

On the top of her list of immediate professional goals is to continue building Barrasso Usdin, formed in 2003. She points to the birth of her third child, Pierce, as her biggest accomplishment within the past year.

"I consider the firm my family away from home," Cunningham said.

Cunningham enjoys New Orleans through her support of the Ecole Bilingue de la Nouvelle-Orleans, promoting the city's and region's bilingual and cultural heritage.

"New Orleans' culture and history are two things that drew me to the city 10 years ago, and having the opportunity to connect past, present and future through a school, the lives of children and the community is an endeavor I've enjoyed."

Cunningham performs additional outreach through the Pro Bono Project, which provides legal services to the disadvantaged.

"Continuing work with that organization is not only a great service but immediately impacts the community on a micro-level."•

— Diana Chandler





René Curry Jr.

Position: Curry & Friend partner

Age: 70

Family: wife, Sissy; children, Guy, 48, Debbie, 47, Becky, 42

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

René Curry Jr. simply thought he was showing some New Orleans hospitality when he took an out-of-state colleague to lunch at Brennan's Restaurant in 1975.

At the time, Curry was representing one of Occidental Chemical Corp.'s insurers in a case involving a chemical leak. As he and Occidental's general counsel, who was from California, were enjoying lunch, the general counsel said to Curry, "I like the way you do things. How would you like to represent us as well?"

It's been a very happy marriage since 1975, Curry said. The partnership began even before Curry started his own firm in 1978, known today as Curry & Friend.

Twenty-six days after opening his practice, he hired his first associate to help handle a massive number of depositions related to the Continental Grain elevator explosion in Westwego in December 1977. Curry represented the insurer of a Japanese company that manufactured conveyer belts at the facility.

"There was a horrendous explosion, and it damaged a lot of property. Injured any number of people. The grain dust and stuff was all over the city," said Curry, who specializes in malpractice defense, toxic tort and gas litigation. "It was kind of a monumental (case) at the time. It involved numerous depositions, and it was kind of like a mini-career."

Curry, 70, said he prides himself on sticking to old-fashioned values. For example, one of his biggest pet peeves is when phone calls are not returned.

"The fact of the matter is that call might not be important to them, but it would not have been initiated if the person making it didn't think it was important," he said. "That's where I think professionalism is important. That has taken a hit in the legal profession since I started practicing law."

Curry said he refuses to keep a running tally of his courtroom victories.

"I subscribe to the theory that if you have to keep a track record on your results, then you're not concentrating on doing your job in every case," he said. "Every case is as important to the client as it is to the next. I don't keep a win-loss record. Sometimes, a settlement is a major accomplishment."

Curry has also devoted much of his career to giving back to his profession, serving on numerous boards and grading bar exams for 40 years.

"I just thought I was fortunate enough to attend law school and consider it a privilege to practice law, not a right," Curry said. "I think as a result of having that privilege, you should give back and serve ... well by doing what you can for the legal community."•

— Ryan Chatelain

Martha Curtis

Position: Sher Garner Cahill Richter Klein & Hilbert member

Age: 44

Family: husband, Mark; daughters, Katherine, 9, Eleanor, 4

Education: bachelor's degree in English and history, Vanderbilt University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Martha Curtis is an accomplished litigator who would prefer to keep her clients out of court.

"I'm one of those people who think every case should have an amicable resolution," said Curtis, adding that it's usually best to resolve legal issues before they get to court.

"I hate the loss of resources, when people spend too much time litigating — it's kind of strange being a litigator and saying this — or when people just get too involved fighting over something just to fight," Curtis said.

An insurance litigator since the start of her career, Curtis said her current focus on commercial litigation began to take shape after Hurricane Katrina. That's when her firm started representing several commercial clients looking to settle insurance claims for their losses.

Two of her most memorable cases involved not business clients of the firm but its family members.

In the first, Curtis filed a lawsuit against an insurance company on behalf of her mother, who had been in her home in Waveland, Miss., when the storm hit.

"It was kind of a crossroads for a lot of firms at that point: Are you going to represent insurance companies or are you going to represent people suing insurance companies?" Curtis said. "We felt that we had to do stuff for our families, so I filed suit on behalf of my mother in Waveland in October of 2005."

In the other case, Curtis and firm partner Jim Garner sued an insurance company on behalf of the father of partner Lee Sher. The Sher case would go all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court and the U.S. District Court of Appeal as the lead case in a class-action suit to decide whether insurance companies were obligated to cover flood damages. Curtis' legal team lost that case but was able to get Sher's individual settlement increased from the initial \$2,000 offer to about \$250,000.

"We lost on the big legal issue, but we ended up getting him a lot more money in his pocket to rebuild," Curtis said.

Curtis is a past advisory board member of Catholic Charities New Orleans and past vice chairwoman of Jefferson Dollars for Scholars' scholarship committee. She currently serves on the Tulane Law Review's board of advisory editors.

As an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University, Curtis initially aspired to be a journalist. She wrote for the campus newspaper, *The Hustler* and even worked part-time at New Orleans City-Business while studying law at Tulane University.

"I love to write, and I would love to have gone into journalism, but I've really loved the law, too," she said. •

— Sonya Stinson





Leonard Davis

Position: Herman, Herman, Katz & Cotlar partner

Age: 50

Family: children, Eleanor, 18, Edward, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in business, University of Texas; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Leonard Davis has spent his entire legal career at Herman, Herman, Katz & Cotlar, where he handles large complex class actions, such as the thousands of cases he's handling for plaintiffs whose homes are contaminated with Chinese drywall.

Earlier class-action lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies under Davis' guidance involved the drugs Propulsid and Vioxx.

After Hurricane Katrina, Davis and his partners salvaged client files and temporarily moved their office to Houston, setting up a satellite location where they would work for four months.

"We didn't miss a beat," said Davis, who continued to oversee several large complex class-action cases. "Katrina taught me if I have a laptop and a cell phone, I can work anywhere."

For class-action cases, Davis works with hundreds of lawyers to organize all the evidence.

"It's important to have good relationships with opposing counsel," Davis said. "You want good, qualified lawyers on both sides."

His commercial class-action cases have included litigation against tobacco companies as well as litigation forcing the city of San Diego to reimburse homeowners for overpaid sewer and water bills.

Davis even represented the New Orleans Saints in 1985 during and after the franchise's transfer of ownership.

He also handles cases involving railroad crossings, and he has led the way in creating a library of documents, depositions and pleadings that has become a resource for lawyers nationwide involved in crossing cases.

One of his clients from a railroad crossing case stands out.

"He was an ambulance technician sitting in the passenger seat of the ambulance going to save someone having a heart attack when a Union Pacific train came from behind the tree line (at a) poorly protected crossing and hit him," Davis said.

The client suffered a devastating head and spinal injury, from which he's still recovering today. Davis and his team of experts went to the crash site to piece together the accident and recover evidence, proving the Union Pacific railroad crossing wasn't properly marked.

"It was really touching for me to represent that family and to watch his progress," Davis said.

Outside of the office, Davis serves on the boards of the New Orleans Music Legends, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Anti-Defamation League.

He's also an adjunct professor at Tulane University Law School, where he teaches an advanced civil procedure complex litigation course. •

— Anne Berry

Two-Time Honoree

Richard Exnicios

Position: Richard M. Exnicios LLC

Age: 42

Family: wife, Nancy; son, Rex, 4

Education: bachelor's degree in English and computer science, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

People who went to the Deutches Haus for Oktoberfest this year likely saw Richard Exnicios dressed as a six-foot-tall chicken.

"Well, somebody's gotta be a chicken," he said, adding that he's also stood in for Santa Claus for a day.

Playing a chicken or Santa wasn't too big a stretch for a man who once was the pirate Jean Lafitte for a Mississippi River tour boat company, one in a series of odd jobs ranging from selling fish at a pet store to offshore construction that covered Exnicios' tuition at Tulane University.

It's that familiarity with the struggles of going after what one wants to achieve in life that contributed to Exnicios' attraction to the types of clients who have comprised the bulk of his professional career.

"I discovered I liked sports, but I wasn't good enough to be an athlete," he said. "I liked music, but I wasn't good enough to be a musician."

Exnicios said he figured being a lawyer would allow him to be involved, even if in a peripheral way, with people in industries that intrigued him while allowing him to feel like he was making a positive contribution to the world.

Since he graduated from law school, Exnicios has spent most of his time assisting clients from business startups and unknown musicians to neighborhood and environmental groups that often lack the means to hire a big-name firm. Admittedly, it's not always been the most lucrative approach.

"I've gotten paid with lasagna," Exnicios said. "I've gotten paid with Jazz Fest tickets. I've gotten paid with my grass getting cut. Kind of the old Atticus Finch kind of practice."

Even before he graduated from law school, Exnicios had amassed some impressive credentials. He worked on a legal team for the Olympic games in Atlanta. Through his involvement with the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, he was part of the team that helped thwart plans for the controversial Shintech chemical plant in St. James Parish, a victory that made national news.

Out of law school, Exnicios worked for more than two years as a prosecutor under former New Orleans District Attorney Harry Connick before going into private practice.

"That was a very fun practice," he said of that time. "Not very lucrative, but we helped a lot of people."

After his home and office were flooded in Hurricane Katrina, Exnicios joined the Law Offices of Frank J. D'Amico Jr. and left in February to start his own practice. Since the storm, he has represented hundreds of flooded individuals against their insurance companies and recently delivered a check to his last Katrina-related client. •

— *Emilie Bahr*





Delos Flint Jr.

Position: Fowler Rodrigues Valdes-Fauli partner and founding member

Age: 54

Family: wife, Libby; children, Dale, 22, Connor, 20, Brian, 17, Caitlin, 15

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

Delos “Dee” Flint Jr. decided to take up admiralty law when a senior attorney told him he could end up seeing the world through his practice.

But he had also worked in the maritime industry before pursuing that course in his legal career.

“I helped build oceangoing tugs one summer between my freshman and sophomore years in college, which helped to give me more of a firsthand understanding of that world,” Flint said.

As a commercial and civil litigation attorney specializing in maritime and energy law, Flint likes nothing quite as much as immersing himself in the nuances of a complicated case.

“I see it as an intellectual challenge,” said the Cuban-born Flint, a founding member and partner at Fowler Rodrigues Valdes-Fauli. “To me, the more involved a case is, the more I have to research and understand — and the more I like it.”

One of his most intricate and long-lasting cases involved defending T.L. James and Co., which Texaco sued after one of its pipelines ruptured and some 6,500 barrels of crude oil spilled into Lake Barre off the coast of Terrebonne Parish.

Texaco filed a claim for more than \$25 million, claiming that T.L. James damaged the pipeline and caused it to rupture when one of the company’s dredge barges was dropped on the pipe.

After more than three years of litigation, which produced upwards of 60,000 pages of exhibits, T.L. James was exonerated in federal court.

“It’s true that you sometimes have to stick with these cases for a very long time,” Flint said. “But that time and effort is always worthwhile when you have a good case that you believe in.”

With maritime experience in injury defense, collisions, lien disputes and pollution, Flint also lectures at industry functions — in particular the Southeast Admiralty Law Institute — and has had his work published in the University of San Francisco Maritime Law Journal and the International Lawyer, among others.

He brings that same sense of energy to volunteering with the Boys’ Club of New Orleans and the Lafreniere Soccer Club.

“I think it’s important for young people to get involved in athletics, so I like to help out when I can,” Flint said. “Athletics promotes competition (and) the importance of working with others on a team, both of which are things that matter very much in the workplace.”•

— Garry Boulard

Philip Franco

Position: Adams and Reese partner

Age: 57

Family: single; children, Jason, 29, Kristin, 27

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

Commercial trial lawyer Phil Franco takes on high-profile, big-stakes cases, often with particularly contentious opponents.

In 2008, he was the lead attorney in a federal trial for a supermarket chain that yielded the largest post-Hurricane Katrina jury verdict ever — \$23 million — against insurer United Fire and Casualty. The jury ruled in favor of Robert's Fresh Market, which operated four stores in New Orleans and one in Metairie, for building damage, business interruption, vandalism, theft and looting.

In that verdict, \$5 million was awarded for the insurer's bad faith based on its failure to pay.

In May, Franco earned another big jury verdict, vindicating international food-distributor Bruce Foods Corp. in New Iberia from a \$24 million claim alleging fraud in an asset-purchase agreement with Williams' Cajun Injector products.

Williams, which sold injectable marinades for meat and seafood, claimed it had been fraudulently coerced into selling the injector products to Bruce Foods in 2003.

Franco, who's been with Adams and Reese for 34 years, represents mostly Louisiana-based companies in construction, real estate, labor and insurance matters. He says it's rewarding to help local businesses that need his expertise.

Franco has also represented Entergy Corp. in all land expropriations needed to provide utilities in Louisiana. He serves as adviser and litigation counsel for Siemens Industry Inc.'s building contracts and has handled employment litigation at the New Orleans Morial Convention Center, along with an expropriation for the facility's third phase of expansion.

Franco has also litigated construction disputes on behalf of the Jefferson Parish Clerk of Court and Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, and has served as an adviser in zoning disputes for the city of Harahan.

In his many years of pro-bono work, Franco has drafted wills and handled other family law matters.

"The appreciation from local people who thought they'd get no legal service is particularly gratifying," Franco said.

He has tried cases before state courts in Virginia and Indiana, federal courts in Florida and Georgia, and the National Labor Relations Board. His arbitration work has taken him to Paris for vessel construction disputes before the International Chamber of Commerce. •

— Susan Buchanan





Francine Giugno

Position: Bernard, Cassisia, Elliot & Davis associate attorney
Age: 41
Family: single
Education: bachelor's degree in English and philosophy, John Carroll University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

With a practice that covers insurance defense litigation, insurance coverage and product liability, Francine Giugno thrives on variety.

"It's something different every day. There's a lot of interesting legal issues," Giugno said.

She has had the opportunity to work on groundbreaking cases, as well as test her own skills and abilities as a lawyer.

A case Giugno looks back on with pride is *Landry v. Avondale Industries Inc.*, which she tried in front of the Louisiana Supreme Court and argued for a new standard by applying the comparative fault statute to a wrongful death case.

In the past, if multiple companies were sued and one of those companies was bankrupt, then the other companies would have to split any damage payments. Giugno argued that bankrupt companies should still have to share the responsibility in any damage payments, and the court agreed with her.

"It made the playing field more fair to corporations," she said.

Another case that gives Giugno a great deal of satisfaction is *Chalmette Retail Center v. Lafayette Insurance Co.*, which was the first case in Louisiana regarding extra expenses, or the expense an insurance company covers if a business has to relocate because of damage to its central location.

What made it memorable for Giugno was that it was her first jury trial. In this case, she successfully appealed a jury verdict of \$3.7 million awarded against her client, the Lafayette Insurance Co. Because of her efforts, the damage amount was reduced 90 percent.

In her spare time, Giugno is secretary of the Louisiana League of Women Voters and second vice president of the New Orleans League of Women Voters, where she has helped organize mayoral forums and helps register new voters in the city.

"It's important to our process that people get out and vote," Giugno said. "I think that's what democracy stands for, everyone having a right to vote."

While Giugno has always been passionate about participating in the democratic process, it was not until after Hurricane Katrina that she decided to get involved.

"I realized how important it was to elect the right people to bring the city back ... to get the citizens involved with their government and have an awareness of the issues involved," she said. •

— *Fritz Esker*

Lambert Hassinger Jr.

Position: Galloway, Johnson, Tompkins, Burr & Smith, New Orleans office director

Age: 44

Family: wife, Alicia; children, Melissa, 26, Blake, 13, Sarah, 10

Education: bachelor's degree in philosophy and master's degree in religious studies, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola College of Law; fellow, Loyola Institute of Politics

Chinese drywall is one of many terms that have become part of the common vernacular in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina.

Residents say the drywall, widely used in homes in more than 30 states since 2001, causes health problems including allergic reactions, sinus infections and asthma attacks. More than 3,000 individuals nationwide have filed lawsuits seeking damages.

It's the kind of case that captures the attention of Lambert Hassinger Jr., who specializes in construction litigation, mass tort and class action, insurance defense and coverage, and amusement, recreation and leisure industry defense.

He's representing a local seller of Chinese drywall in one of the 3,000 cases from several states consolidated under federal Judge Eldon Fallon in the Eastern District Court of Louisiana. Bellwether trials began in January.

In such cases where plaintiffs abound, Hassinger is on the side of the defendant.

"What drives me is having a true partnership with my clients and understanding how my client defines success," Hassinger said. "While my opponents know I am honest (and) professional . . . they also know they have an advocate who is well prepared to try the case to verdict."

Hassinger points out his cases demand a focused, precise and aggressive advocacy and are significant in terms of damages sought by plaintiffs.

He represents self-insured companies, insurance carriers and those insured, including governments.

"We are proud to represent the state of Louisiana in several class-action cases filed as a result of Hurricane Katrina," he said, with plaintiffs seeking damages as a result of levee failures.

As director of Galloway, Johnson, Tompkins, Burr & Smith's New Orleans office, he develops relationships with new clients and provides ongoing education and guidance to associates of the firm. With 100 litigators spread through nine offices in six states, the firm's expansion has been supported by clients' insistence upon local counsel.

Hassinger's community outreach has focused on helping neighborhoods recover from Katrina-related damage, particularly as president of the Lake Terrace Property Owners Association.

He has devoted countless hours to addressing issues related to rebuilding New Orleans, particularly issues related to the New Orleans Lakefront, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and permanent pump stations along the city's three outfall canals.

To make sure the lakefront is redeveloped in an effective and responsible way, Hassinger has testified before various legislative committees and government agencies such as the Louisiana Flood Protection Authority, made presentations at corps meetings and neighborhood forums, and drafted position statements. •

— Diana Chandler



Jan Hayden

Position: Heller, Draper, Hayden, Patrick & Horn member
Age: 55
Family: husband, Jerry Montalbano; son, Andrew, 13
Education: bachelor's degree in political science, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center

Jan Hayden says she might not be an attorney today if it weren't for a 1981 meeting with Edward Heller, founder of Heller, Draper, Hayden, Patrick & Horn.

Heller called Hayden, who was still new at the firm, into his office and told Hayden he wanted her to work on bankruptcy cases.

"It was just a blessing," Hayden said. "It was such a great chance to learn a field of law. I think if I hadn't gone into that field and done what I did, I don't think I would have stayed in law because I wasn't driven to be a lawyer. Just doing this kind of practice has been perfect for who I am."

In fact, Hayden, 55, said she still didn't know what her career path should be after receiving her bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University. After praying for guidance, she enrolled in LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center looking for a greater academic challenge than what her undergraduate curriculum offered.

Hayden has represented trustees, debtors and creditors in a range of industries — retail, gaming, oil and gas, health care and even the 1984 World's Fair. She said she most enjoys representing debtors while trying to clean up messy situations.

"Trying to take a company that's failing — that's going out of business, their employees are going to lose their jobs, the owners are going to lose their value, the creditors are going to lose their money — and try to do the best you can to help that group."

While it is inevitable some of her clients will lose their businesses, she said she finds it particularly rewarding when she can keep a company afloat.

And when she can't save them?

"It's important to give them a decent burial," she said. "You don't save them all. And so the question is, you have a bad situation that's getting worse. ... That makes it even more challenging, to preserve assets when you're having to liquidate, trying to preserve causes of action. That sometimes can be harder."

One of her clients that survived bankruptcy is engineering and design company Babcock and Wilcox.

"We preserved the company, preserved the value. The creditors got treated fairly, the equity holder got treated fairly, and what could have been a disaster turned into everybody getting the best they could."

More recently, Hayden helped The Saint Louis Hotel in the French Quarter through its financial struggles, allowing most of its employees to keep their jobs.

"It's much more rewarding to save jobs," she said. "The better the return that people get, the happier you are."

Last year, the Louisiana State Bar Association honored Hayden with its Pro Bono Publico Award for mentoring young pro bono attorneys and her 100 hours of pro bono work in 2008. •

— Ryan Chatelain

Stephen Herman

Position: Herman Herman Katz & Cotlar partner

Age: 41

Family: wife, Karen; children, Alexandra, 10, Harris, 6

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

Along with some major legal victories, Stephen Herman's accomplishments also include winning a college playwriting competition and penning two novels.

One of his self-published narratives is a murder mystery inspired by a Greek tragedy, the other a takeoff on a Sherlock Holmes adventure, Herman said. These days, Herman, who has also authored a law book, doesn't have much time for fiction writing, but his literary leanings still influence his work in the courtroom and the classroom.

"I hope that I've still retained an eye for thinking out of the box," said Herman, a partner with Herman Herman Katz & Cotlar. "In my daily practice as a lawyer or a teacher, I'm always trying to think of ways in which the case can be re-framed, either for a presentation to the judge or the jury or a presentation to the students in the class. I think that takes a bit of creative inspiration."

Herman calls his litigation practice eclectic because he handles a variety of cases, representing plaintiffs and defendants. One of the legal victories he's most proud of was a lawsuit against a group of tobacco companies that, in lieu of direct monetary rewards for the plaintiffs, provided for a court-supervised program to help Louisiana smokers kick the habit.

"We're on the second line of appeals, and we're pretty sure there's going to be a program. It's just a question of when and how much," he said.

In another case, Herman represented a group of Texaco workers who successfully sued the company for benefits.

A lot of people were being hired as temps or independent contractors so the company would not have to pay for their benefits, Herman said.

"But in practice, they were basically treated exactly like full employees. They worked side by side with employees and they put in the same daily hours. ... The only difference was they got their paycheck through a temporary employment agency and did not get benefits like health care or retirement benefits."

After 10 years of litigation, Herman's legal team prevailed in a February 2009 ruling in federal court.

"This was one of a minority of cases where the court said that benefits had to be extended to temporary or leasing agency employees."

Besides his law practice, Herman teaches complex litigation at Tulane University Law School and advanced torts at Loyola University College of Law. He says teaching has made him a better attorney.

"I think it really makes you think about the law from a much deeper perspective," Herman said. "You really have to learn both sides of the law, from the plaintiff's point of view and the court's and the public's."•

— Sonya Stinson





Stephen Huber

Position: Gauthier, Houghtaling & Williams associate
Age: 38
Family: wife, Shannon; children, Harris, 5, Russell, 2.
Education: bachelor's degree in history, Southern Methodist University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Stephen Huber was 13 when a Tulane University coed was brutally murdered. Huber followed the tragic story but didn't know that one day he would be the prosecuting attorney trying the case.

By that time, the victim's parents had made 14 trips to Louisiana, but every time the trial was delayed or a new lawyer was assigned to the case.

"I was determined to be the last prosecutor they ever talked to," Huber said.

The killer, faced with newly uncovered DNA evidence, pled guilty just before the trial was to start.

"He's at Angola and should be for the rest of his life," Huber said. "He was a predator."

But what if the courtroom opponent is someone more sympathetic, such as a dying philanthropist? After working with the Orleans Parish District Attorney and the U.S. Attorney for Louisiana's Eastern District, Huber moved into private practice and took on the case of a business deal gone bad.

The philanthropist sued his business partner, who was Huber's client, for back payments. Huber defended that case, then countersued for damages on behalf of his client's lost business.

The trial took place in Florida, where the plaintiff was known for his community service.

"It was hard to pick a jury," Huber said. "But this was post-Enron, and people understood that businesses could be made up of nice people but do ruthless things."

After sorting through 100,000 documents, Huber found that the dying philanthropist had gone into the original business deal with every intention of driving out his partner.

E-mail evidence showed the plaintiff's growing interest in taking over the partner's share of the business, Huber said. A former employee came forward and corroborated the story, which sealed the case.

"The jury was rooted in common sense," Huber said.

Outside the courtroom, Huber devotes time to raising money for Teach for America, a program that places high-achieving college graduates as teachers in inner-city schools.

After putting away hundreds of violent offenders during his decade as an assistant district attorney, Huber said those young people would have chosen a different path if they had stayed in school or even seen school as a viable option. He realizes that although he got to prosecute people who commit crimes, he wasn't going to cure the crime problem.

"Dedicating my resources to Teach for America fits with my life experience," he said.

Huber and his wife, Shannon, have sponsored a Teach for America teacher and hold annual fundraisers to sponsor other teachers. •

— Anne Berry

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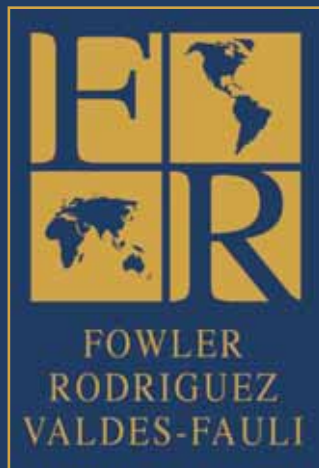

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Greg Johnson

Position: Liskow & Lewis shareholder

Age: 38

Family: wife, Christine; triplets Allyson, Christian and Bailey, 5

Education: bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, University of Texas; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Greg Johnson likely could have easily landed a lucrative position right out of college with his degree in chemical engineering from the University of Texas.

Instead, he regularly puts his engineering background to work in his career as an environmental lawyer, dedicating a large portion of his time to helping area chemical plants and refineries comply with complicated environmental regulations.

“While I was still at Texas, I would come home during the summers and intern for an engineering firm here in town (Waldemar S. Nelson and Co.) for which I eventually went to work,” Johnson said.

It was the firm’s work related to a lawsuit stemming from an explosion at the Shell refinery in Norco in the late 1980s that helped pique his interest in his eventual legal course.

“It was just interesting to me the way that the technical issues interfaced with the legal ones,” Johnson said. “As a freshman in college, I decided I wanted to be an environmental lawyer.”

Today, in his work for Liskow & Lewis, Johnson assists many of the clients for whom he previously worked on the engineering side.

“I don’t do a whole lot of calculations any more, but I work on some of the same permits for which I prepared the applications,” he said.

And he finds his engineering background creates a level of comfort among many of his clients that might otherwise be lacking.

“I sort of speak the language,” he said. “A lot of my clients are engineers, too, so they have a lot more comfort in my ability to understand the real issues and the technical problems and that sort of thing.”

And with a new federal administration in place — one that has promised to tighten emissions standards and for the first time regulate carbon dioxide — Johnson doesn’t expect demand for his services to dampen soon.

In January, he went to Washington, D.C., to meet with top officials at the Environmental Protection Agency about proposed emissions regulations that could adversely affect some of his clients.

Among his proudest extracurricular accomplishments, Johnson counts his founding in the late 1990s of the mock trial program at his alma mater, Jesuit High School.

“They won state last year and were seventh in the nation,” he said.

Johnson is no longer directly involved with the program, having stepped aside in 2004 around the time of the birth of his triplets.

“Really, most of my life in the past five years has centered around my family and work.”•

— Emilie Bahr

Henry King

Position: King, Krebs & Jurgens managing member and co-founder

Age: 58

Family: wife, Cary; children, Marguerite, 25, Lucy, 24, Spencer, 22

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

Henry King would be the first to acknowledge that, as he puts it, "Katrina created a whole lot of legal issues."

Many of those issues in the four and a half years since the storm have seen his firm involved in things such as title issues with homes.

"One of the most important things that owners have to settle when they are rehabilitating a house damaged by the storm is proving title to that house," King said. "And in many cases, these houses have passed from generation to generation without what we call succession here in Louisiana."

As a result, King, Krebs & Jurgens launched a pro bono program to assist people in dealing with legal issues that came out of the storm, such as proving title to a house. But perhaps King's most extensive post-Katrina work has centered on the claims and counterclaims dealing with State Farm Insurance Co.

"We represent State Farm," King said. "They have worked hard and have been able to resolve without litigation probably 90 percent of the cases."

But unfortunately, King said, the number left over has been very large, estimating that the firm probably had more than 500 individual cases.

The big issue in the vast majority of State Farm cases has been whether the damage was caused by wind or flood. With the insurance company arguing that it should not have to pay for damage that was not covered in a typical homeowner's policy, King said he was aware he was representing an unpopular point of view among the general public.

"But in order for the state to really come back, all businesses needed to be treated fairly, even insurance companies," King said. "If you make them pay out money that was not due under the policy, you create a terrible situation."

How terrible?

"It was possible that insurance companies might just decide to leave the state altogether," King said. "And if that happened, new businesses would not locate here and it would be very difficult to rebuild the state."

King, who co-founded King, Krebs & Jurgens in 1985, has been instrumental in mandating that all attorneys at his firm give back to the community with at least 20 hours of pro bono work per year, work that has seen firm members involved in charter schools, homeless advocacy programs and post-conviction work.

"It never really seems like you give enough back to your community," King said, "but I think it's important that we all at least try."•

— Garry Boulard





Ted Le Clercq

Position: Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles partner

Age: 46

Family: wife, Courtney; children, Douglas, Price, Susan

Education: bachelor's degree in philosophy, Washington and Lee University; juris doctor, University of Tennessee College of Law

Streetcar riders and joggers who enjoy St. Charles Avenue's newly leafy neutral ground can thank Ted Le Clercq, an employment and professional liability defense attorney at Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles.

As the founder of the St. Charles Avenue Tree Planting Project, Le Clercq has raised more than \$100,000 to plant 120 live oaks post-Katrina. He collaborated with the city's Parks and Parkways Department, residents, business owners and youth volunteers in the corridor's largest arbor planting since the 1880s. Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles donated administrative services to the project.

Le Clercq said he's looking forward to the spring, "when I hope to plant more live oaks above Jackson Avenue all the way to Claiborne."

He is also on the board of the Preservation Resource Center, promoting the revitalization of historic New Orleans neighborhoods.

"We're a city on the rise since Katrina, no longer stagnant and also no longer content," Le Clercq said. "Politicians have often failed us."

A spirit of participation and volunteerism has emerged among galvanized residents, he said, predicting that public-private partnerships will be the key to citywide success.

As for his practice, Le Clercq said "sometimes a lawyer, like a volunteer, needs a thick skin and the confidence of his convictions."

He pointed to a case in which he defended the Vieux Carre Property Owners and Residents Association over freedom of speech. Haunted History Tours owner Sidney Smith sought more than \$2 million for defamation after his tour guides were referred to as "a bunch of thugs" in a broadly circulated e-mail in 2003.

"I was never more convinced of the correct legal result than in that case. Of course, I lost it four separate times, twice before the same (Orleans) Civil District Court judge. But that was before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal and the Louisiana Supreme Court saw the light."

The court determined that the e-mail wasn't defamatory, saying the word "thug," when used alone, doesn't connote criminal conduct.

Le Clercq also handles sex, race and age discrimination cases and is licensed to practice in Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee. Earlier in his career, he served as judicial law clerk to Falcon Hawkins, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for South Carolina. •

— Susan Buchanan

Andrew Lee

Position: Jones Walker partner

Age: 43

Family: wife, Susan; children, Taylor, 14, Sydney, 10, Ellie, 4

Education: bachelor's degree in English and classics, Tulane University; juris doctor, Washington and Lee School of Law

As a young man, Andy Lee clerked for U.S. Judge John Brown, who was among several judges of his era who helped ensure civil and voting rights in the South. Lee said Brown, who served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth District, taught him the value of professionalism and the importance of respecting his clients and opposing attorneys in the competitive field of litigation.

Those lessons had a lasting impact on what became Lee's guiding philosophy as an attorney.

"Respect your clients and opposing lawyers as human beings, even though it's a competitive field," Lee said. "And you'll get more for your client that way."

Lee specializes in commercial litigation, doing both plaintiff and defense work on a variety of commercial litigation cases, where he represents hedge fund managers and investors in disputes over the management of money or the assets of companies.

"I enjoy the opportunity to learn about my clients' businesses," Lee said. "Every dispute brings a different set of facts."

There are two cases that stand out in his career. The first occurred in the late 1990s, when the family of the first Louisiana Powerball winner retained Lee's services.

The winner had agreed to share the winnings with his family. However, the winner's wife, who would soon become his ex-wife, decided she did not like the arrangement and demanded half of the money for herself. Lee represented the winner's family and reached a settlement a day before the case was supposed to go to trial.

"It presented some interesting problems with what money does to people," Lee said.

The second case was a pro bono lawsuit Lee took on behalf of Orleans Parish school board members who wanted to prevent the firing of then-Superintendent Anthony Amato. Lee successfully helped Amato keep his job.

Lee does a great deal of charity work as an attorney and handles appointed criminal defense cases pro bono. He recently retired from the board of Habitat for Humanity, for which he did legal work.

"Habitat is always involved in improving the community," Lee said. "It's the best model that I know of that empowers families to establish and lift themselves out of poverty or near-poverty conditions."

Lee is also on the Musician's Village Foundation board and has been instrumental in helping secure land for the foundation's Ellis Marsalis Center for Music that will be built in the Upper 9th Ward. •

— Fritz Esker





Ivan Lemelle

Position: U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana judge

Age: 59

Family: wife, Patricia Waddell; children, Christopher, 36, Marc, 32, Tricia, 28

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting and economics, Xavier University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Public school desegregation has remained under the microscope since *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed the longstanding “separate but equal” doctrine in matters of public access.

More than 55 years later, the court is still trying to achieve racial desegregation of Tangipahoa Parish Public Schools, with the tough questions coming before Judge Ivan Lemelle, U.S. judge for Louisiana’s Eastern District, in the 45-year-old case *Moore v. Tangipahoa Parish School Board*.

In addition to such civil matters, Lemelle also has heard criminal cases involving the death penalty.

“You realize you’re dealing with peoples’ lives. That’s difficult. It requires a lot of thought and perception of the law and the facts in trying to make everything fair,” he said. “But one like (*Moore v. Tangipahoa*) where you’re dealing with education of young minds, it’s always going to be one you take care when forming opinions.”

Still, the same consideration of justice applies in all cases, he said, in seeking to do justice.

“It’s a very ... significant task that you’ve been assigned to do,” he said. “Sometimes judges have discretion to rule on a case.”

In cases with no direct precedent, Lemelle aims for fairness.

“I believe that in certain situations the law does not always lead to a fair result. I think that’s where I can achieve a fair result ... that to me is important in doing justice,” he said.

Lemelle considers his contributions to those following in his footsteps among his most important work. He’s quick to counsel and mentor students in terms of career goals and lifestyle choices, impressing especially upon young lawyers the difficulty of choices they’ll likely face in the legal profession.

He uses the example of U.S. District Court Judge J. Skelly Wright’s 1956 decision to desegregate Orleans Parish public schools, which made Ruby Bridges a household name.

At Wright’s command, federal marshals in November 1960 integrated schools by escorting 6-year-old Bridges to William Frantz Public School amidst the protests of white objectors.

Bridges became the subject of a Norman Rockwell painting, documentaries and films. Wright, who was the target of death threats, was promoted to an appellate court in Washington, D.C., in 1962.

“(Wright) could have easily gone with the old-line tradition of segregation, but he chose to follow the Constitution, in spite of his own personal background and friendships,” Lemelle said.

Much of Lemelle’s community outreach focuses on education, lecturing to and mentoring area secondary, vocational technical and law students.

“It puts me in touch with young minds. That challenges me,” he said. “I came from a family of teachers. Both my parents were educators. I really respect that profession. It’s something I take advantage of to give back.”

— Diana Chandler

Jim Letten

Position: Eastern District of Louisiana U.S. attorney

Age: 56

Family: wife, Joan; children, Erika, 20, James, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in communications, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

Recent criminal scandals involving a plethora of political leaders in the New Orleans area have put U.S. Attorney Jim Letten in front of television cameras where he breaks down federal investigations leading to arrests, indictments and guilty pleas.

There was a time, however, where Letten could have been the one holding the microphone as a media representative.

"I thought very seriously about going into journalism," Letten said. "The whole process always seemed compelling to me."

After graduating from De La Salle High School in 1971, Letten enrolled in communications courses at the University of New Orleans with a determination to stick with it. But a communications law class caused him to rethink his future possibilities.

"I developed an emerging interest and eventually a passion for public service and law enforcement through work in that class," Letten said. "After graduation, I enrolled at Tulane for law school and the rest is history."

Letten has been a prosecutor nearly his entire career, having served as an assistant district attorney under Orleans Parish District Attorney Harry Connick to becoming a member and chief of an FBI criminal strike force and eventually ascending to U.S. attorney.

"There was a time where I worked as a member of a small civil firm, but I didn't enjoy it," Letten said. "I missed prosecution. I missed being a public servant. I've always enjoyed being the personal administrator for those who do the job ethically."

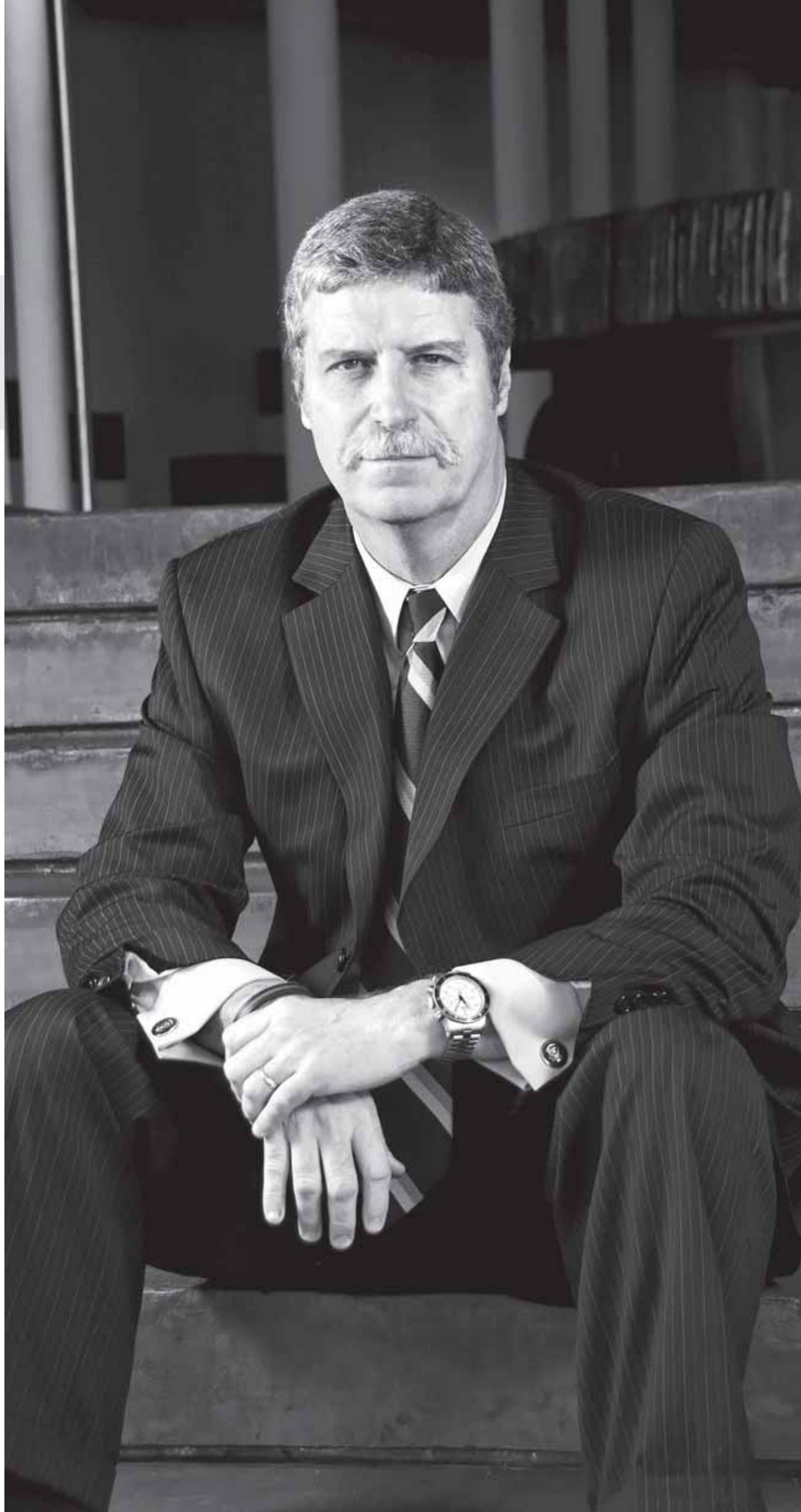
Although he has handled several recent high profile cases involving government officials, Letten said his most memorable and challenging case was his work as lead prosecutor in 2000 on the extortion and racketeering trail of former Gov. Edwin Edwards.

"We were taking on various members of different New York mob families along with a very powerful and well-liked former governor," Letten said. "We secured 25 convictions, including Edwards, on five of seven counts of extortion."

When he is not in the courtroom or working a federal investigation, Letten is active in the community. He has partnered with local officials to steer federal money to law enforcement agencies and nonprofit watchdog groups. He and his son also are regular volunteers at the National World War II Museum.

"We have a regular Saturday date at the museum where we are working to restore PT 305, a boat that was manufactured in New Orleans," Letten said. "There is an immense satisfaction in the idea that we are working to restore a piece of New Orleans and American history. It is some of the most redeeming work I've ever done."•

— Robin Shannon





Marjorie McKeithen

Position: Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrère & Denègre of counsel

Age: 44

Family: husband, Scott Schlesinger; stepdaughters, Mary Elise 19, Catherine, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in petroleum land management, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center

Many people don't find their calling to the law until later in life, but Marjorie McKeithen said she knew hers since an early age.

When she dressed up as a lawyer for career day in the sixth grade, no one knew how serious she was. But today, that passion for the law is stronger than ever.

Of counsel for Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrère & Denègre, McKeithen works with the firm's energy industry and government relations team. She represents Louisiana Geothermal and helped the company earn the maximum \$5 million stimulus credit from the U.S. Department of Energy, the only such credit issued east of the Mississippi River.

McKeithen also is working on a number of projects including the Sustainable Energy Financing Districts and traditional oil and gas storage projects throughout the state.

"I just love trying to solve problems," McKeithen said. "There's a big need for it given the number of gas storage and alternative energy companies. I believe we're going to need both traditional and alternative sources of energy for the foreseeable future."

McKeithen also serves as a leader in the firm's green law and sustainability practice. Before joining Jones Walker, she served as secretary for the Louisiana Mineral Board and assistant secretary for the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Office of Mineral Resources, where she oversaw the administering of mineral leases on state-owned lands.

During that time, she worked to market the state's mineral resources and used her legal knowledge to allow underground carbon dioxide storage in Louisiana for the first time.

"I grew up with the belief that public service is something we should all do. I solve problems for the state and now I'm doing it for businesses," McKeithen said.

Her family's legacy of public service started with her grandfather, the late Gov. John McKeithen, and was carried on by her father, the late Secretary of State Fox McKeithen.

Despite her history of accomplishments in the law, one of her most memorable events was when she was working in litigation and received a quilt from a client. It was embroidered and personally addressed to McKeithen with appreciative and congratulatory phrases.

"That just showed me the human side of it, and it was very rewarding that I could solve that problem for them."

McKeithen is a member of the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission, previously served on the Louisiana Board of Commerce and Industry, and was a member of Gov. Bobby Jindal's Transition Advisory Committee in 2007.

When she's not working, she enjoys running, cycling and playing tennis. Having grown up on a farm in a small town, she said athletics have always been a part of her life and still takes pride in helping lead her high school basketball team to the local championships as point guard. •

— Craig Guillot

Malcolm Meyer

Position: Adam and Reese partner

Age: 63

Family: wife, Jeanne; children, Malcolm, 34; Ann, 31; two granddaughters

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

Malcolm Meyer has lived his whole life in New Orleans except for the four years he spent in the Philippines with the U.S. Navy.

The one-time judge advocate general chose the Navy because his father had served in that branch during World War II.

"I got interested in history primarily because of my father, because he never talked about the war," Meyer said. "I wanted to find out what he'd been through."

Meyer's love of history would eventually influence his work in law school and beyond. While he was in law school, he researched a real estate case where a landowner had abandoned railroad tracks on his property and wanted to sell the iron for scrap.

The Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that the landowner had a right to the abandoned property, based on Meyer's research for the case.

"The rule is based on the (1804) Napoleonic Code," Meyer said. "Our law is similar to that of France on those types of real estate issues. That, to me, was exciting."

Later in his career, Meyer returned to the Louisiana Supreme Court, representing Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co., which was being sued by a plaintiff who said the company had stopped making payments out of an abuse of its rights.

Meyer turned again to the French principles of law for guidance.

"I looked at contract law principles, the obligation of property and owners to their neighbors," Meyer said. "Those rules are 2,000 years old."

Meyer won the case for the life insurance company, arguing that the plaintiff was limited in what he could demand outside the contract, while the company was exercising its contractual right to limit its payout.

Those principles also ground the ethics lectures he moderates as an adjunct professor of real estate law at Tulane University Law School.

Meyer also applied history to a more recent achievement: working with the U.S. Justice Department, the Louisiana Supreme Court and the Louisiana Legislature to pass a bill restoring property titles to homeowners post-Katrina.

"I saw how difficult it was for people to get back into their homes," Meyer said, referring to The Road Home process. "On paper, people who'd lost their homes didn't appear to own them."

Act 81 of 2009, which passed with Meyer's help, allows homeowners to restore their property rights by filing an affidavit themselves rather than having to appeal a court ruling. The streamlined process also saves the homeowner about \$1,300 per title. •

— Anne Berry





Lori Mince

Position: Fishman Haygood Phelps Walmsley Willis & Swanson partner

Age: 38

Family: children, Bowen, 10, Millie, 8

Education: bachelor's degree in economics and political economy, Tulane University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

One of the many heart-wrenching stories in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is that of the patients who died at the former Memorial Medical Center.

Lori Mince, a partner at Fishman Haygood, became involved in the case when a CNN producer contacted her about getting access to information regarding 77 subpoenas that state Attorney General Charles Foti had issued to many of the doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who were working in the hospital during the storm.

The case has presented a variety of unexpected challenges for Mince, who said a new trial is pending.

"In a typical public records case, it's me against the government," she said. "But here, Foti didn't object to the release of his file. Instead, the release was opposed by the group of health care professionals at Memorial, including Dr. (Anna) Pou."

The trial court ordered that the file be released, Mince said, but on appeal, the attorney general's office changed its position and opposed the release. The Supreme Court then reversed and remanded for a new trial, which has yet to occur.

"The case involves me on one side, and more than 30 lawyers — all opposing release — on the other. That has been somewhat daunting at times, but I think in the end the file will be released," she said. "Better late than never, I suppose."

Mince, a media law attorney, handles litigation for The Times-Picayune, as well as for CNN, The New York Times and The Associated Press. She also teaches media law to undergraduates at Tulane University and conducts seminars at Loyola University College of Law.

"Media law is an extremely rewarding area of practice," Mince said. "The media serves a vital role in our democratic form of government, and its efforts routinely result in bringing information to the public that the public otherwise would never know."

Mince enjoys traveling with her two children and says being their mother is the most fun thing she has ever done.

She also does pro bono work as situations arise. On one case, she worked with the American Civil Liberties Union to represent an inmate being held in solitary confinement at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

"In another case, my partner and I represented the board of Lafayette Academy in a dispute with the company hired to operate the charter school. The company had done a terrible job but claimed we could not fire them," Mince said.

Mince and her partner prevailed, and the company had to pay the school \$350,000 in damages. •

— Lisa Bacques

Jeffrey Mitchell

Position: The Cochran Firm Metairie owner and managing partner

Age: 46

Family: wife, Monica Sanchez; children, Emily, 16, Andrew 15, Catherine, 13, Henry, 12

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, LSU Paul M. Hebert School of Law

Surveying the growing Hispanic population of greater New Orleans, Jeffrey Mitchell is concerned that immigrants from Latin America are falling outside of the legal system.

"The Constitution protects all people, not (just) all citizens," said Mitchell, owner and chairman of the medical malpractice section for The Cochran Firm's Metairie office, where he serves as a member of the firm's national executive committee.

"That means that if you are in this country from someplace else but are not legal, no one has a right to take advantage of you," Mitchell said.

To that end, Mitchell and his wife, Monica Sanchez, who is also an attorney and native of Panama, have been devoted to reaching out to local Hispanic residents, letting them know about their rights and, in many cases, offering free legal advice.

"I think we should be thankful that so many of these people have moved here in the wake of Katrina to help us rebuild our city," Mitchell said. "This is a group that in the next few years is going to make up the largest minority population in the United States, which is all the more reason for us to make sure they have the full protection of the courts in their legal affairs."

Mitchell and Sanchez often spend their weekends going to local Hispanic festivals and other cultural events, setting up a booth and talking to attendees about their legal rights. They have also gone to work on the issue of getting more certified interpreters into local courts.

"A lot can get lost in the courtroom if you don't have a certified interpreter trained in specific languages," he said. "So we are trying to make this a more visible issue in the hope that the courts will respond."

Mitchell is additionally working with his wife on a campaign called "Know Your Rights," which is geared toward the Hispanic community but applies to any non-American resident.

"It is a matter of realizing that just because someone is a citizen of another country, that does not mean they have no rights here. Our courts and legal system are open to anyone who has suffered an injustice. We are just trying to make more people aware of that."

Practicing in the areas of product liability, maritime law, premises liability and automobile accidents, Mitchell is one of only a dozen lawyers in Louisiana who are board certified in medical malpractice cases by the American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys. •

— Garry Boulard





Kim Moore

Position: Irwin Fritch member

Age: 49

Family: husband, Kenny Bordelon; daughter, Bond 13

Education: bachelor's degree in social work, Loyola University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Kim Moore started law school days after meeting Mother Teresa in 1983 when she was studying world religion and culture in Calcutta, India.

"I called up the convent and told them I was Kim Moore from Huntsville, Ala.," Moore said.

Moore didn't expect to meet Mother Teresa and was shocked to see her leading Mass. She remembers a nun grabbing her hand and walking her toward Mother Teresa. Moore started shaking.

She recalls Mother Theresa saying people didn't have to do great work, but it's in the little things and in many small ways that people make a big difference.

"That was a message I needed to take back, share and live by," said Moore, who became a social worker before deciding to attend law school. But after graduating in 1987, she toiled with the decision of choosing a career that would allow her to do the most good. Jack Nelson, a professor at Loyola University College of Law, reassured her that law was an excellent way to make a difference, regardless of what type she practiced.

She and a group of other lawyers left one of the city's oldest firms almost 10 years ago to start "doing law their own way."

Irwin Fritch, where Moore is a member, has carved out a niche defending pharmaceutical and medical device law. The firm assists companies in preventing mass tort litigation and deals with the best experts in their fields who can address the issues, she said.

"It's nice when you have leading companies come here for us to represent them internationally," she said.

Moore said she periodically takes self-inventories to make sure she's on track.

"It's an honor to be in this profession," she said. "The practice of law involves more doing a good job for a client. It also involves service and commitment to the community, to make it a better place."

Moore has served as an adjunct professor at Louisiana State University Paul M. Herbert Law Center and Loyola University College of Law. Her volunteer time focuses on the House of Ruth, a United Way organization that works with homeless people. Moore is helping with fundraising and has worked with the group since 1999.

Outside of work, Moore spends time with her family and friends and enjoys exercising. She was never much of a sports fan until she met her husband, Kenny Bordelon, who played with the New Orleans Saints from 1976-84.

"When he played, they were the 'Aints," she said.

Bordelon is now a prosecutor in Jefferson Parish. •

— L. Kasimu Harris

Bryce Murray

Position: Bryce G. Murray, Attorney owner

Age: 32

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in government and law, Lafayette College; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Bryce Murray views being an attorney as more than just representing clients in court and giving them advice on the finer points of law. He believes his job is also about listening to his clients and providing emotional support.

"You're not just their attorney, but you're also their counselor — someone to listen to them," Murray said. "There's a lot of salvation in being able to pick up the phone and talk to someone."

Murray's work mostly involves employment and small business. His caseload is split almost evenly between plaintiff work in employer discrimination cases and defense work for small businesses.

Murray said one of his most interesting and rewarding cases is a discrimination case that is still pending. A company's lone African-American employee had a noose placed on his golf cart by one of his supervisors. Before the employee could complain to any higher-ups at the company about the noose, he was fired.

The case calls on Murray's legal skills in pursuing a fair settlement for his client and his counseling skills in consoling a client who has been discriminated against.

In his work with small businesses, he prides himself on charging a flat fee for all nonlitigation matters, which helps businesses budget for the legal bills beforehand.

Based in Metairie, Murray is passionate about Jefferson Parish, where he is involved charity work. He sits on the board of directors for the Jefferson Chamber Foundation Academy, a charter school that will open in August with 80 students and a goal of increasing to 150 students within three years.

The school will target overage and under-accredited eighth- and ninth-graders who will work toward their high school diploma while learning job skills. Classes will be in session year-round, but students will only be in school for half a day.

Murray considers that important because so many students in those situations are already working or are single parents and need time to meet those commitments while pursuing a degree.

"Hopefully, it will catch 100 to 200 students who would otherwise be dropouts," Murray said. •

— Fritz Esker



New Orleans
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 in
LAW

CELEBRATION

More than 400 people attended the 2010 Leadership in Law cocktail reception March 16 at the New Orleans Museum of Art. Medallions were presented to the 50 honorees upon arriving and Publisher Mark Singletary recognized each honoree later in the evening. Two past honorees were also inducted into the Leadership in Law Hall of Fame. These photos and more can be seen on the CityBusiness photo gallery at www.neworleanscitybusiness.com.

Photos by Frank Aymami



The Leadership in Law Class of 2010 and Hall of Fame inductees gather on the stairs in the New Orleans Museum of Art main hall.



Honorees Rachel Wisdom, left and Marjorie McKeithen.



CityBusiness Publisher Mark Singletary, left, with honorees Leon Cannizarro and Jim Letten.



More than 400 people attended the Leadership in Law 2010 event at the New Orleans Museum of Art.



Honorees Lori Mince, left, and Celeste Coco-Ewing.



From left: Mercedes representatives Jamie Moll, Carl Keith, Christopher Stuben and Leo Flotron.



From left: CityBusiness Associate Publisher Lisa Blossman, Hall of Fame inductees Bill Hines and Kim Boyle, and CityBusiness Publisher Mark Singletary.



Molly Kimball with husband and honoree Brad Schlotterer.



Honoree Jim Letten and wife, JoAnn.



Leadership in Law Hall of Fame member Steve Lane, left, and honoree Leonard Davis.



Kristin Franco with father and honoree Phil Franco.



Honoree Meredith Cunningham and Craig Isenberg.



Christine Johnson with husband and honoree Greg Johnson.



From left: Susan Brunner, CityBusiness Associate Publisher Lisa Blossman, honoree Rykert Toledano and wife, Lacey, and Rick Brunner.



Honoree Chris Couch and wife, Linda.



Honoree Kim Moore and husband Kenny Bordelon.



Brian Jackson, left, and honoree Richard Simmons.



Diane Nowik and honoree Charles Taylor.



Honorees Andy Lee, left, and Ted Le Clercq.

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Edward Poitevent

Position: Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz shareholder

Age: 60

Family: wife, Julie; children Sarah Porter, 33, Betsy Rinehart, 32, Scott Poitevent, 29, Mary Poitevent, 25

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

The Kinder Morgan Louisiana Pipeline is important as the first natural gas pipeline of its kind built in the state in the past 50 years and is a major economic boost for Cameron Parish.

It runs from the liquefied natural gas terminal south of Lake Charles eastward for nearly 150 miles and was built with the legal expertise of a team of attorneys including Edward Poitevent.

A shareholder in the firm of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, Poitevent finds satisfaction in handling such right-of-way issues that affect the public well-being.

He and two teams of attorneys in the firm handled the right-of-way issues for the pipeline and the 500-mile interstate Mid-continent Express Pipeline, ventures of Kinder Morgan and Kinder Morgan Express, respectively.

The pipelines are in the public's interest and benefited from the right of eminent domain, Poitevent said, but securing the rights-of-way to build them involved "plenty of disputes."

The pipelines involved two years of litigation, mostly involving disputes with landowners.

"In all cases, we were successful in allowing the company to build the pipelines they needed," Poitevent said. "It's a major set of pipelines that are now crossing Louisiana and delivering natural gas to the markets that need it."

Poitevent specializes in all phases of domestic and international energy law, mineral law and natural resource law, a career he sees as fast-paced and offering opportunities to benefit the public good.

His community outreach focuses on the public good as well. Most dear to him is his work to help build St. Andrews Village, a faith-based community in Abita Springs allowing a certain amount of independence for the developmentally disabled.

Poitevent became involved when a group of St. Tammany parents, concerned with the long-term welfare of their disabled children, approached him to purchase land his family owns there. He sold the group 100 acres and became an advocate for the project to build the community.

The community will allow adults with developmental disabilities to live with their caretakers as well as those without disabilities, working in such fields as horticulture and wood-working, inside and outside the community.

The private enterprise has the support of Southeast Louisiana University and is endorsed by area political and community leaders. •

— Diana Chandler





Two-Time Honoree

Christopher Ralston

Position: Phelps Dunbar partner

Age: 41

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in international relations, College of William and Mary; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

As a commercial litigator for Phelps Dunbar, Chris Ralston has had his hand in many large business disputes on the local and national levels. His area of expertise is cases that involve injunctions to protect intellectual property, trade secrets and noncompete clauses.

"It's all about upholding the rights of businesses to operate freely and protect their assets," Ralston said. "It can be challenging at times because some of these disputes are rather esoteric and theoretical. You have to determine who has the rights to things that are not always tangible."

Although he would not provide specific clients, Ralston said many of his cases involve dicey disputes over similar names.

"We have even delved into disputes that involve the use of business names in Internet domain addresses," Ralston said.

His firm is working on a case that involves a company with a complaint regarding a Web site using its name in an unflattering manner.

"We have to determine what is fair use and what constitutes infringement. It is often fairly tricky."

Ralston said he thrives on opportunities where he is forced to "jump into the fray of a case quickly with very little notice."

He said there are numerous instances where a case requires immediate action to get things done effectively and efficiently.

"That is what has always intrigued me about legal work," Ralston said. "Lawyers have the unique position of having to think on their feet to get things done and make things happen."

When he's not in the courtroom or buried in legal paperwork, Ralston participates in a range of pro bono work but spends much of his free time serving on the local board of the American Diabetes Association.

"It is a disease that affects our community so much," Ralston said. "I am fortunate that no one in my immediate family is affected. But when you look at local figures and statistics, it is hard to live in this region and not know someone who is affected by it."

Ralston is active in local fundraising and has been able to get his entire firm involved in walk-a-thons and other activities to contribute money to the effort.

"That includes all of the senior partners on down to the legal clerks," Ralston said. "I'm very proud that my firm has gotten behind the cause because it has such a direct connection to our community."•

— Robin Shannon

Two-Time Honoree

Monica Sanchez

Position: The Sanchez Firm managing partner

Age: 36

Family: husband, Jeff Mitchell; stepchildren, Emily, 16, Andrew, 15, Catherine, 13, Henry, 12

Education: bachelor's degrees in economics and political science, Ohio University; juris doctor; Loyola University College of Law; master's degree in international and comparative law, Tulane University Law School

As managing partner of The Sanchez Firm, Monica Sanchez uses her Latin heritage and mastery of the Spanish language to serve the needs of New Orleans' growing Hispanic population.

Most people already have trouble navigating the legal system to start, and when they don't even speak the language, it can be even more difficult. With more than a decade of experience in law, Sanchez started her own firm two years ago and handles everything from medical malpractice and products liability to personal injury.

"People call me for everything, from having an auto accident to wanting to get married. I can help the community across the board and because I have my own practice, I am able to do that," Sanchez said.

Born and raised in Panama, Sanchez said she knew since she was a child that she wanted to be an attorney. Although she originally intended to move back to her native country after law school, she saw her legal services could be put to best use in New Orleans.

Sanchez said she has had a number of memorable cases over the years, including one where she helped a troubled teen not only resolve his legal problems but get back on the right track. When she received a phone call one day and learned that the teen was going to graduate high school and attend college, she knew she had made a positive impact.

"Things like that are what keep me going. It seems like almost every day, something small like that happens," she said.

Because most clients only go to attorneys when they are in desperate times, Sanchez credits her success to honesty, integrity and a sense of compassion and empathy on what her clients are going through. She said a lot of attorneys see being an attorney as a business.

"I don't see it as that," she said. "To me, it's about helping people. You have to put yourself in their shoes and understand that when you go to an attorney, you are pretty much desperate."

Sanchez serves as vice president of the Louisiana Hispanic Lawyers Association and serves on the Language Access Subcommittee, a joint subcommittee of the Louisiana State Bar Association's Right to Counsel and Access to Justice committees.

The Hispanic National Bar Association also recently recognized her as one of only five Top Lawyers Under 40.

When she is not working, Sanchez enjoys playing golf and traveling to "any place that is warm and tropical."•

— Craig Guillot





Bradley Schlotterer

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

Age: 40

Family: wife, Molly Kimball

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

Brad Schlotterer is as likely to be found in his office as he is on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico.

"You look out and see nothing, and you're on a structure with four posts in the ground," said Schlotterer, who represents oil and gas companies as a partner at Kean Miller. "Sometimes you can feel the wave action."

Schlotterer also drafts and litigates disputes regarding offshore contracts, which are vital to oil and gas companies vying for exploration rights, as well as the infrastructure to carry their product back to shore.

Given the energy market's changing landscape, Schlotterer now secures facilities for alternate fuel companies in Louisiana.

"Because of the natural resources and transportation advantages we have over other parts of the country, we're working with companies using this new technology to put their 'green' refineries here in Louisiana," Schlotterer said.

Fighting for a fair playing field for all businesses, Schlotterer recently was the lead counsel for a California company bidding on a taxicab management contract at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

The proposal was kicked out on a technical deficiency, and the contract went to a local company.

"We're not political animals, but once we'd done all the investigation, we felt pretty strong that our client had the right position," Schlotterer said.

Minutes before a federal court finished hearing Schlotterer's case, the New Orleans Aviation Board agreed to withdraw the award of the disputed contract.

That case made local headlines, as did another case that Schlotterer took on early in his career.

Reggae musician Ziggy Marley, who was performing in New Orleans, claimed police harassed his band and a band member's leg had been broken. Schlotterer negotiated an agreement with the city and then-Mayor Ernest Morial.

Schlotterer sits on Kean Miller's recruiting committee, looking for fresh talent and coordinating the firm's hiring.

"We're primarily a litigation firm, so we look for people who can handle themselves in depositions and in the courtroom, and who can present a positive image to clients, judges and witnesses," Schlotterer said.

Schlotterer is also on the Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center's board of trustees and volunteers with fellow Kean Miller lawyers for Louisiana Rebuilds, a program to help improve blighted properties.

Inspired by his wife, Molly Kimball, a local nutritionist and writer, Schlotterer also volunteers for the annual MS Bike Tour to benefit multiple sclerosis research. •

— Anne Berry

Seth Schmeeckle

Position: Lugenbuhl, Wheaton, Peck, Rankin, & Hubbard attorney and shareholder

Age: 34

Family: wife, Kellie; children, Seth Andrew Jr., 4, Sarah Anne, 2

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

Imagine 4,000 separate lawsuits with 200 lawyers who are brought together into one consolidated case.

That's how Lugenbuhl Wheaton lawyer Seth Schmeeckle worked on the Hurricane Katrina levee breaches consolidated litigation, which he considered "an amazing experience."

His job was to assist as liaison counsel for the insurance companies that were defendants in the thousands of cases brought against them after the 2005 flood.

"There was an onslaught of suits filed against those who supposedly caused the flooding as well as insurers who were alleged to be improperly denying claims for flood damage," Schmeeckle said. "My main purpose was to coordinate the defense efforts to speak with one voice where possible. Two hundred lawyers had to agree on the presentation of a single brief. I can't compare any other case to it."

Before he took on that case, though, Schmeeckle had another Katrina-related hurdle to clear. When it became obvious that his firm could not return to New Orleans for a while, he began searching for office space in Baton Rouge.

When a location was found, Schmeeckle was there to coordinate building the office from scratch.

"I had to get telephones, Internet, a switchboard, voice-mail, computers, printers, and desks," he said. "Eventually, most of our staff came back. Many were from St. Bernard and were happy to have a job."

Schmeeckle credits his current boss, Ralph Hubbard III, for being a great mentor.

"He has shown me how to be a lawyer, a professional and a friend all at once," Schmeeckle said. "I also have to acknowledge my father. He was a farm boy from Nebraska who selected his college by determining which scholarship offer was from a school furthest south."

While he was a student at Louisiana State University, Schmeeckle played bass in a cover band called Blue Verse, which performed at the area's bar scene.

"During my last two years of law school, the band did a reunion tour," he said. "I met my wife during one of those shows since she was in med school and knew some of the guys in the band."

Schmeeckle's wife, Kellie, is now a physician. And with two young children, life is hectic, he said.

"I don't know if we're organized," he said. "We just do it together."•

— Lisa Bacques





Marta-Ann Schnabel

Position: O'Bryon & Schnabel shareholder

Age: 52

Family: husband, Kevin O'Bryon; children, Jeff, 22, Sara, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in history, Memorial University of Newfoundland; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

In her 29 years of private practice, Marta-Ann Schnabel said some of her most rewarding moments include organizing, managing and supporting organizations that provide legal services to those in need. She takes on individual cases through the Crescent City-based Pro Bono Project and is a member of the group's board of directors.

Schnabel, a shareholder at O'Bryon & Schnabel, helped start the Louisiana Civil Justice Center after Hurricane Katrina. She serves as president of the group, which operates a phone center to help people find legal representation.

She has also assisted Southeast Louisiana Legal Services with obtaining funding and support after that group merged with New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp. in 2003.

"I think a distinction is to be drawn between those things that I do as a civic responsibility, owed by all citizens, and those I do as a lawyer," she said regarding her community service.

Schnabel said admission to the practice of law is a great privilege, and with that privilege comes responsibilities.

"Lawyers operate as gatekeepers for the administration of justice, and the importance of our role is never brought home more than through pro bono work."

Schnabel maintains a packed schedule representing corporations and professionals in commercial and tort litigation but said she doesn't care about making a big splash. She doesn't tell war stories or lawyers' tales about past experiences.

"More often than not, I'm on the defense side rather than the plaintiff side," she said, adding that the best resolution for her clients often comes from her almost-imperceptible performance.

Most of the litigation clients she sees are "like surgical patients, best served if the damage is excised and only a small scar results."

Her successes are numerous, including her 2006-07 tenure as the first woman president of the Louisiana State Bar Association.

A case Schnabel recalls fondly was from her first year of practice in 1981, when she was working on litigation claiming improper engineering and construction at a regional airport. She said lawyers assisting the lead lawyer in a trial are "second chair," but because the airport case was big and she was such a novice, her role was a small "12th chair."

In the airport case, she dug for hours through boxes of delivery receipts to learn whether enough asphalt had been delivered to the site.

"Those little sheets of paper spent so much time in asphalt trucks and they smelled heavily, so the senior partners became aware of me mostly because I reeked of tar," she said. •

— Susan Buchanan

William Schwartz

Position: Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer partner

Age: 56

Family: wife, Elaine; sons, Brian 25, Jeff 28

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

Giving is a spiritual thing for William Schwartz. He said he gives back to his profession because it has been good to him and because his career has afforded him a great deal of freedom and monetary independence to give to the less fortunate.

His faith is Judaism, and he's guided by tzedakah, which means charity, justice and performance of a duty.

"I'm doing something not only for people, but I'm giving back to myself and I'm making my life more full," Schwartz said.

But he offers more than financial assistance. Schwartz is one of the founding members of Tour de Lis, a cycling event that benefits the Cancer Association of Greater New Orleans. The event is in its fourth year.

"It's an organization I'm very active in. It's not just lend your name or lend some money," he said. "We're on the ground doing stuff."

The first year, they rode 150 miles around Lake Pontchartrain.

"It was almost laughable. It was a cold day, and it sleeted in April," he said.

The ability to finish is one reason Schwartz has thrived as a lawyer.

Schwartz said that when he graduated from college with a degree in history, he didn't have a life plan.

"I went to law school because I didn't have anything else to do."

For 31 years, he has been with the same law firm, Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer, and secretary, Kim Savoy, whom he calls amazing.

Schwartz mostly does defense work for offshore service and drilling companies, covering casualty, injury and damage control. His said his method is trying to determine the facts and applying the law to get the best results possible for the client while being ethical.

"Just like I do for things in the community, I take my work a little too personally and I try to get a result for a client a little too much sometimes, so it's good and it's bad."

Schwartz calls himself a "Zen golfer" and said he knows how to relax.

"I could probably tell you what bird flew overhead or what wildlife I saw as much as what golf score I shot. It puts me in a different world."•

— L. Kasimu Harris





Richard Simmons

Position: Hailey McNamara senior managing partner

Age: 64

Family: wife, Melissa; son, Richard, 28

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, Louisiana State University; juris doctor, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center; master's degree in environmental law, George Washington University

The story of Dr. Anna Pou is one of the more memorable legal cases to arise from Hurricane Katrina. She was accused of second-degree murder for the deaths of four patients under her care at Memorial Medical Center during Katrina.

Richard Simmons' career has included working as a federal public defender, a judge advocate general officer in the Army, from which he retired in 1998 as a lieutenant colonel, and as chief of the criminal division of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Despite all of those experiences, he considers the Pou case his most memorable.

"I lived it every day for two or three years," Simmons said.

Simmons said he instantly took a liking to his client and firmly believed in her story. But he was also aware of the larger issues at stake and said the consequences could be catastrophic if Pou endured a murder trial for staying behind during Katrina and doing her best under the circumstances. It could lead doctors to make a different decision in the event of another serious hurricane.

The case never made it past a grand jury, which declined to indict Pou on the four counts of second-degree murder. However, Simmons said he believed in Pou's cause enough that he did not stop there. Pou approached him about drafting legislation to help doctors who may face similar circumstances in the future.

He agreed.

"She was determined that no doctor would have to go through what she went through," Simmons said.

Simmons drafted the legislation, which had three main components. First was the application of something similar to the "Good Samaritan" statute. For example, if someone helps during an accident, gross negligence has to be proved for a doctor to be sued or prosecuted.

If gross negligence is suspected, then neutral experts appointed by the governor must work with the coroner to determine whether there was foul play.

Lastly, should the military take over in a triage scenario, deciding who is evacuated and who gets left behind as happened during Katrina, then doctors cannot be held any more responsible than military officers because their decisions are then affecting the doctors.

The legislation was passed in June 2008, signed by Gov. Bobby Jindal the next month and went into effect that August.

"It was something that needed to be done," Simmons said. •

— Fritz Esker

Robert Steeg

Position: The Steeg Law Firm partner

Age: 57

Family: wife, Pamela; children, Aaron 18, Merrill, 16

Education: bachelor's and master's degrees in communications, University of Pennsylvania; juris doctor, Boston College Law School

Robert Steeg isn't an architect, but he has had a hand in shaping the landscape of the New Orleans area.

As a real estate attorney, Steeg has worked on major projects such as Woldenberg Park, Place St. Charles and One Canal Place in New Orleans and Lakeside Shopping Center and the Galleria in Metairie.

"That's actually part of what makes real estate law — boring as it may otherwise sound — gratifying because you're assisting people in creating something," Steeg said. "And at the end of the day, you see a project, you see that it's come to fruition and you know you had a hand in it. And it represents something positive that helps the city, helps the community and is enduring."

Steeg tackles the countless issues that arise when planning and building developments, including zoning and leases that sometimes run the better part of a century.

"It involves putting a lot of pieces together, and it involves understanding how business transactions work in the real world and then trying to bring technical expertise to bear on problems that are going to take place in the real world," he said.

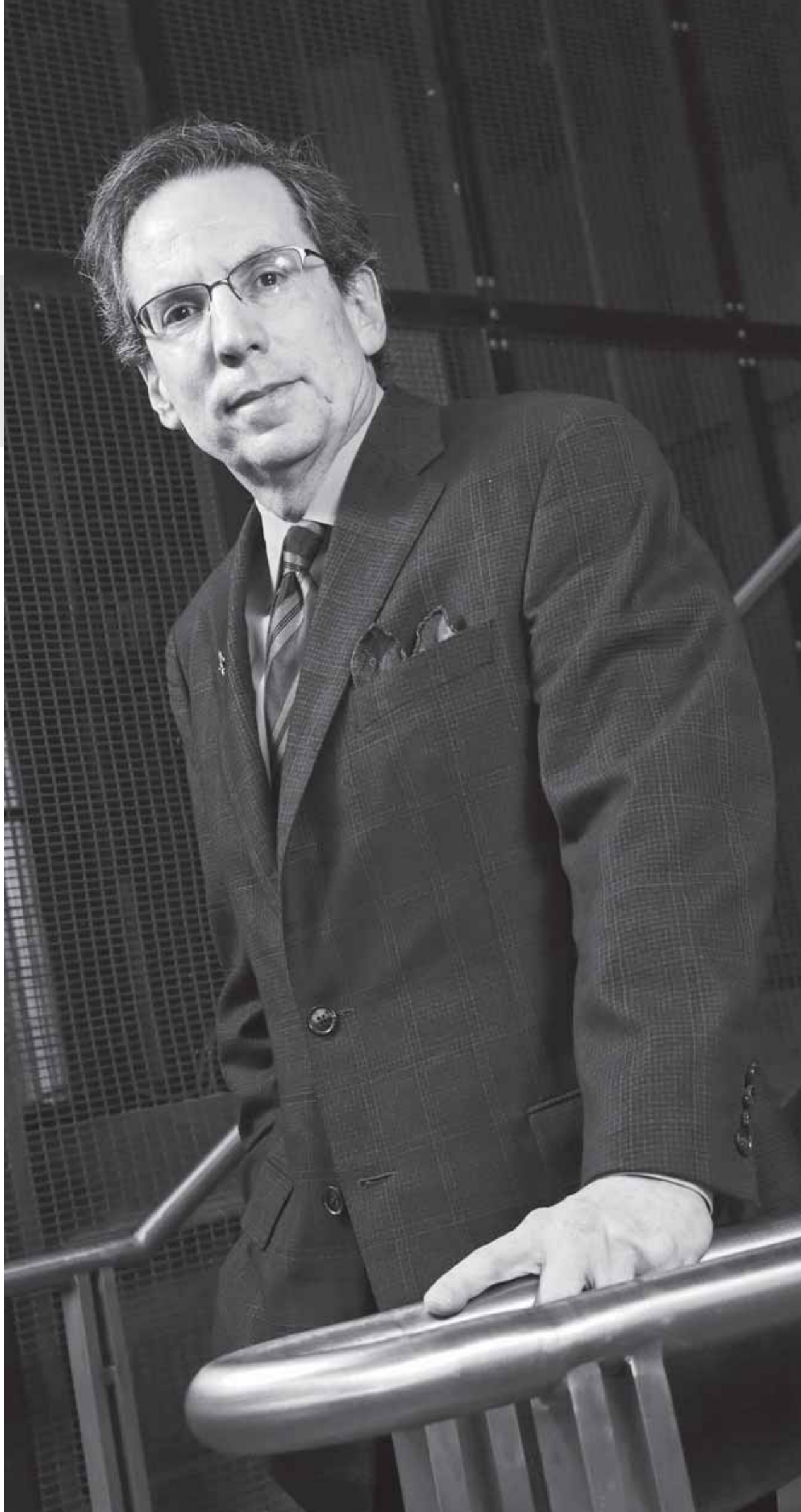
Steeg said one of the projects he is most proud of is the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel on Canal Street. The development required the cooperation of two existing hotels, a condominium building and several different landlords.

"It's the only project that I know of that goes horizontally across the upper floors of these buildings that line Canal Street," Steeg said. "Traditionally, what's kept the upper floors of Canal Street from being developed ... is that the buildings are so narrow, and none of them on their own can sustain the stairwells and fire stairs that are needed to occupy upper floors. So the Astor runs across four or five buildings and unifies them horizontally on their upper floors. It turned out to be really, really complicated."

Steeg also helped in 1989 to turn the former D.H. Holmes department store building into the Chateau Sonesta hotel, now the Chateau Bourbon. The project required a private-public partnership, a rare practice at the time in which the city created a public benefits corporation that leased the property to a developer.

"That was just a very complicated lease that goes for 99 years," Steeg said. "The real interesting part of it was it involved several leases that had to be put together. ... It was one of the first private-public partnerships that was used. And public benefit corporations have been used on a quite a number of things after that."•

— Ryan Chatelain



Charles Taylor

Position: Chehardy, Sherman, Ellis, Murray senior litigation attorney

Age: 60

Family: wife, Rita; children, Matt, 31, Katie, 27

Education: bachelor's degree in history, Virginia Wesleyan College; juris doctor, Western New England College School of Law

As a medical malpractice lawyer for the past 25 years, Charles Taylor has worked as a litigator for both sides of malpractice disputes. But there are very stark differences between a plaintiff's lawyer and a defense lawyer when it comes to medical cases, he said.

"When you represent a plaintiff, they are typically the ones that are injured and seeking some sort of retribution," Taylor said. "Even when you win the case for them, you cannot make them uninjured."

It's completely different when it comes to the defense side, he said.

"In this case you are working for a physician who is well-trained and certainly not intending to perform malpractice. When you win for a physician, there is a vindication you can see on his or her face."

Taylor's medical background dates back to a two-year stint in the U.S. Navy when he worked as a hospital corpsman during the end of the Vietnam War. He was working part time as an emergency room physician's assistant when he realized his true calling was a career in law.

"One night my proctor and I were sewing up a patient and we began to discuss the great need for lawyers with a medical background," Taylor said. "I applied for law school not too long after that and I was on my way."

Working as a malpractice lawyer, Taylor said he has seen his fair share of memorable and challenging cases. One in particular stands out: Clarence and Gayle Brown v. the State of Louisiana.

It involved a young girl who, as an infant, underwent a breast biopsy at Charity Hospital. The doctor removed all of the breast tissue from just one of her breasts. As she grew older, one breast developed, while the other didn't.

"It is not a case that I won," he said. "I argued that the malpractice law, as it applied to children, can't protect injuries for more than three years. The damage didn't show until the girl reached puberty. There would have been no other way of knowing."

Outside of the courtroom, Taylor said he is active in the Boy Scouts of America, specifically Troop 70 out of St. Francis Xavier School.

"I've been a Boy Scout since I was 8 years old," Taylor said. "I truly believe it is the single best organization that a young boy can be a part of."

Taylor is also a grand knight of the Knights of Columbus and has also served as president of the St. Francis Xavier School Board. •

— Robin Shannon

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Rykert Toledano

Position: Toledano & Herrin senior partner

Age: 62

Family: wife, Lacey; sons, Reagan and Rykert III; step-daughters, Lindsay and Jaclyn; grandson, Vince, 2

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

As an active civic leader on the North Shore for more than 35 years, Rykert Toledano has a reputation in Covington as a tenacious litigator.

In one instance, he once won a case against a businessman who later hired Toledano as his personal attorney.

"He said I was the first person to ever beat him and he wanted me as his attorney from there on out. He and I became good friends and remained so until the day he died," said Toledano, senior partner at Toledano & Herrin. The firm focuses on construction, personal injury, domestic and business law.

Whereas many attorneys find and hone niches, Toledano finds a great passion in practicing many areas of the law.

"I like the fact that there is a tremendous amount of variety in it. Every day there is a new challenge and I get to learn something different," Toledano said. "I truly like helping people and creating solutions for their problems."

Toledano has tried a number of cases over the years and has represented clients such as the St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce, Crescent City Construction Inc., Bank of Hammond and Mississippi Valley Silica Co.

One of his most memorable and notable cases is what is referred to as the oxlot case in Covington. Spread out during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the case involved the encroachment of private businesses on downtown oxlots, spaces once used for livestock that had since been turned into public spaces and parks.

Their fate had become a hotly contested issue, and Toledano filed suit on behalf of the city of Covington to tear down the structures and return the property to the public.

"We litigated that case for a few years and finally prevailed. Everyone acknowledges that it has been a great thing for Covington and those squares have been accelerators of commerce," he said.

Before joining Anderson, Toledano & Courtney (the successor to his current firm), he served as a Covington city attorney and city judge for 17 years. He also has served as an officer or president for a number of North Shore associations including the Covington and St. Tammany Bar associations, Greater Covington Chamber of Commerce and the St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation.

Toledano is also one of the founding members of the Three Rivers Art Festival in Covington. •

— Craig Guillot

Marie Williams

Position: solo practitioner

Age: 38

Family: husband, Peter; children, Maria, 8, Mario, 3

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

Marie Williams found much of the inspiration for what would become her eventual career in events that occurred well before her birth, events detailed in vivid and extremely personal fashion throughout her childhood by her parents: African-Americans with firsthand experience of life in the segregated South.

Her father, a New Orleans native who met Williams' mother, a cook while stationed on a military base in rural Georgia, was hit in the head with a gun and has a plate in his head to this day.

"Because he didn't say, 'Yes sir' to some guy," Williams said. "My mother had a cousin who was cut by a man at a grocery store," ostensibly because he was black.

Already steeped in such close personal remembrances of the struggles during the civil rights movement, Williams delved into the events and people who shaped the era through her undergraduate courses at Xavier University. While pursuing degrees in political science and English, she immersed herself in literature written by well-known and obscure black authors.

By the time she was confronted with the question of what to do after graduation, Williams said a legal career seemed all but inevitable, the most obvious way for a woman whose family had struggled and endured her own share of hardships as a child to make a difference in peoples' lives.

Williams, the only girl among seven siblings, said her father worked various odd jobs to piece together a living while her family relied on the hospitality of relatives. Her family was without a permanent home until she was 3 years old.

As her forbearers' experiences largely shaped her decision to pursue a legal career, so did Williams' own experience.

Outside of a couple years in which she worked as a plaintiff's litigator, a period she describes as the only one in her professional life in which she earned what is thought of as a lawyer's salary, Williams said she has committed her working, and much of her personal life, to helping the less fortunate. Her heart is especially soft when the homeless and troubled youth are concerned.

"I'm helping people who can't help themselves," said Williams, who runs a private practice covering an array of legal services. "It's not always about money. A lot of my friends don't understand why I don't want to be a plaintiff's lawyer. The most rewarding thing to me is to help someone who cannot afford a lawyer."

After all, she adds, considering for a moment a case involving a homeless woman seeking rights to her children, "You can be a homeless parent and still love your kids."•

— *Emilie Bahr*





Rachel Wisdom

Position: Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann attorney
Age: 48

Family: husband, Arthur; children, Pierce, 17, Leila, 16, Jacqueline, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in international relations and political science, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

When asked to describe her most challenging case, Rachel Wisdom, an attorney for Stone Pigman, finds it impossible to name just one.

"Every case presents unique challenges and difficulties," said Wisdom, who recently defended a case in which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sued her client, accusing the company of race and sex discrimination and unlawful retaliation against five employees

"When I first got the case, I assumed there must be something substantial to the EEOC's claim," she said.

But there was not.

"I was shocked to find that there really was no legitimate evidence to support the claims against my client. The tricky part was finding a way to convince the court and/or the jury that five employees and the EEOC were wrong and that my client had done nothing bad."

Wisdom was able to do so, though, and won the case, which is now on appeal, at the district court level.

Wisdom, a self-described "law geek," was introduced to the legal world in the office of Ralph Whalen, who, according to Wisdom, was known as "The Whacker" when he worked at the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office.

She describes his practice as "crazy" and included defending murderers, drug traffickers, bad cops, crooked jockeys "and a cast of other lost souls."

Wisdom also does pro bono work, which she considers indescribably rewarding. One case that sticks out for Wisdom involved a homeless man named Richard Peck who she met while she was volunteering at St. Joseph's Church on Tulane Avenue.

"Richard was cognitively disabled and essentially unemployable," Wisdom said. "He had information requests from the government that he did not understand, and after Katrina, his Social Security benefits were cut to zero. The Ozanam Inn provided him with temporary food and shelter and referred him to me for legal assistance."

Wisdom recalls Peck as "a very small, very skinny, dark-skinned man, with a polite, deferential manner and a soft, quiet voice."

After many meetings with caseworkers, countless phone calls and four submissions to the Social Security Administration, Wisdom managed to have Peck's benefits completely restored. He was able to move out of the Ozanam Inn and rent an apartment.

Within days of receiving his benefits, he was shot to death on the street outside his apartment building. •

— Lisa Bacques

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