

THE BEST OF THE BAR

CLOSE to 48,000 lawyers practice in Los Angeles County. That's about 30 percent of California's entire legal workforce and an amount equal to the population of Beverly Hills and Malibu combined. But in that legal army, how can you determine which individuals are the standouts, the ones regarded as the best in their business? The Business Journal sought to do just that in compiling this year's Who's Who in Law list. The staff of the newspaper sought nominations for outstanding lawyers in 10 practice areas. An informal committee comprised of knowledgeable figures in the local legal community select-

ed from the nominees those attorneys whose career achievements merit special designation. Some lawyers were favored because they are great business generators, for example, while others are known as having a legal acumen that is unmatched and a select few excel in both areas. Some lawyers were picked because they produce work that's consistently great and others were selected for their leadership abilities. Regardless of why they were chosen, what follows is a compilation of what the Business Journal considers the lawyers who stand out in L.A.'s crowded legal field – the best of the bar in Los Angeles.

TRANSACTIONS/CORPORATE



LARRY BRAUN

Firm: Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Law School: Northwestern University

Clients: Northrop Grumman Corp., Alcatel-Lucent and Sanders Industries Inc.

LARRY Braun, a corporate lawyer at Sheppard Mullin, has worked in investment banking, restaurants, oil and gas. But he chose law because he loves dealing with people.

"A lot of my practice is dealing with business owners. They're very different people from very different backgrounds," he said.

Braun believes that his first job selling sneakers in Brunswick, N.J., taught him to understand the needs of a much broader group, business owners' families.

His practice is primarily buying and selling businesses, but he appreciates what it means to his clients' households.

"That may be the third or fourth most important event in their lives," he said of his clients. "There's getting married and having kids, and pretty soon after that is creating family wealth and family liquidity."

There are a number of ways Braun said he gets involved.

"I keep them out of jail and sometimes I make them very wealthy, but I help them with issues facing the business when it comes to dealing with the government, their employees or their families," he said. "You actually help them make their lives better."

One of the more interesting times of his career, Braun said, was working with the Rose Bowl in trying to attract an NFL team for Southern California. While ultimately unsuccessful, crafting the complex business and real estate proposal required navigating the City of Pasadena's laws and the powerful Tournament of Roses Association.

Braun said his worst career moment was when he left the hospital for a few minutes after his son was born. He was a young associate in the midst of structuring a deal, and he'd taken some work to a colleague. But while he was bragging about the baby, his car was broken into and confidential documents were stolen.

"Explaining that to the client and partner was hard enough, but recreating months of work in a few days was even tougher," he remembers. "I did get the deal closed."

– Emily Bryson York

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

WEEK OF AUGUST 20, 2007

SPECIAL REPORT WHO'S WHO IN L.A. LAW

LITIGATION

JOSEPH COYNE

Firm: Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Clients: Northrop Grumman Corp., Georgia-Pacific LLC, Abraxis Bioscience Inc.



Coyne

Most Interesting Matter:

Representing Northrop as part of a team in an antitrust case in which Northrop alleged that McDonnell Douglas Co. monopolized the worldwide market for F-18 fighters.

Worst Career Moment:

When Litton obtained a \$1.2 billion jury verdict in a patent case against Honeywell. But the best moment was when it

was reversed on appeal and the trial court entered summary judgment.

My Colleagues Don't Know: I sometimes miss being the young associate reading cases and writing briefs from scratch.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

RICHARD SIMMONS

Firm: Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Clients: Whole Foods Market Inc., California Hospital Association and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.



Simmons

Reason I'm a Lawyer: Since I was a teenager I have wanted to practice law.

Most Interesting Case: Successfully defending Long Beach Memorial Medical Center in a class action case before the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court involving employee scheduling flexibility.

Best Career Moment: A unanimous jury trial verdict is highly exhilarating and gratifying.

My Colleagues Don't Know: I have authored over 30 publications.

MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

BOB DARWELL

Firm: Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Clients: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Focus Features and Disney ABC Cable Networks Group.



Darwell

Most Interesting Matter: The financing arrangements on director Steven Soderbergh's films about Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Most Challenging Matter:

Representing Disney in connection with its separation from Bob and Harvey Weinstein.

My Colleagues Don't Know: Let's keep it that way.

If I Weren't an Attorney: I would be a disc jockey in Reykjavik.

MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

MARTY KATZ

Firm: Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

Clients: Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc. and Lockheed Corp.



Katz

Reason I'm a Lawyer: I liked Perry Mason better than Marcus Welby, M.D. And high school debate sealed it for me.

Most Interesting Case: Wolf vs. Walt Disney Pictures and Television, which has already resulted in two published opinions, followed by a 16-week jury trial.

Most Challenging Matter: A battle between two entertainment powerhouses, but it was the subject of a confidential arbitration.

Best Career Moment: When the opposing expert broke down at trial and started screaming uncontrollably in front of the jury.

My Colleagues Don't Know: My favorite job other than practicing law was selling shoes.