

## Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

Don't need a lawyer? You will — if not to defend you, then to help you buy a house, write a will, or start a business. Here are this town's best — and worst.

By Elaine McArdle

Wyoming has its Gerry Spence; Los Angeles, its Johnnie Cochran. But Boston is the indisputable birthplace of the Celebrity Lawyer.

F. Lee Bailey. Alan Dershowitz. Rikki Klieman. Arthur Miller. Charles Ogletree. Lani Guinier. Laurence Tribe. Anita Hill. Roderick MacLeish Jr. and Mitchell Garabedian, newly famous for their lawsuits against priests. Even fictional figures like Paul Newman's Frank Galvin in *The Verdict* and the casts of *Ally McBeal* and *The Practice*. All familiar faces to a national audience; all from in and around Boston. This is, after all, a city with a disproportionate number of high-powered law firms and three law schools in the top 25, including, arguably, the very best.

So why is it so hard to find a good lawyer?

For one thing, there are just so many. More than 45,000 lawyers are licensed to practice in Massachusetts. In the Boston-area yellow pages alone, there are 64 pages of lawyer advertisements vying for attention.

Yet unlike doctors, lawyers aren't required to specialize. Anyone who has passed the bar can draft a will, handle a divorce, or try a murder case — even if they have absolutely no idea what they're doing. For the unwitting public, there's no easy way to separate accomplished lawyers from the inept or lazy.

Nobody ever plans to need an attorney. But when you do, who do you call? You can rely on recommendations from friends and family, but can your neighbor really judge whether his divorce lawyer is any good? You can try the lawyer referral service of your local bar association, but there's no real quality assurance, since any lawyer in good standing with the bar is eligible.

We wanted to find the best lawyers in Boston who represent typical people with typical legal needs. We selected 10 categories of consumer law: criminal defense, personal injury, family/divorce, startup companies, employment, real estate, bankruptcy, estate planning, intellectual property, and entertainment and media law. The lawyers listed here are all in private practice, except for one public defender. We did not include government lawyers or lawyers at big firms whose



clients are mainly corporations.

We interviewed hundreds of lawyers, judges, clients, and others in the legal system, and asked them these kinds of questions: If your brother were charged with a serious crime, who would you want to represent him? If your best friend were buying a house, where would you send her for the legal work? What if your neighbor needed a will written, or was thinking about filing for bankruptcy, or had a valuable, groundbreaking invention and needed a patent lawyer?

Our sources were remarkably candid with us. They told us which attorneys they think are the best and which are past their prime. Which deserve their golden reputations and which don't. Which are popular with other lawyers but rude to, or neglectful of, their clients.

When a lawyer was recommended for our list, we checked out his or her professional credentials. Is he or she a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the top one percent of trial lawyers in the country? Is a specialist in family law a fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers? Does he or she lecture on the law to other lawyers?

The lawyers listed here meet three criteria: They're very good at what they do. They're ethical. And they meet that elusive third measure of quality, customer satisfaction. More than mere technicians, they're counselors who care. If they leave clients in tears or don't return phone calls, you won't find them on this list — no matter how famous they are.

Criminal Defense

Personal Injury

Family and Divorce

Real Estate

Employment

Bankruptcy

Intellectual Property

Startup Companies

Entertainment and Media

Trusts and Estates

Criminal Defense

**Kevin J. Reddington**

**Brockton**

The affable Reddington ranks as the best criminal defense attorney in the state: tough, honest, and able to charm juries while controlling difficult clients. He has so far handled more than 50 first-degree murder cases. But you don't have to get charged with murder for Reddington to represent you. Except where domestic violence is concerned, he says, "I'll take any criminal case." Reddington convinced a jury in 1998 that former Red Sox first baseman Mo Vaughn failed a sobriety test because of a bad knee; he now represents Ronald Paquin, a former priest accused of raping an altar boy more than 50 times. [508-583-4280]

**Richard M. Egbert**

Boston

After making a name for himself defending mobsters, the indomitable Egbert has built the most exclusive criminal defense practice in New England. High-profile clients — including controversial Superior Court Judge Maria Lopez, fighting charges of ethics violations — pay \$525 an hour for his services. Of course, if you're Providence Mayor Buddy Cianci — convicted in June on just one of 12 federal corruption charges — Egbert is worth the money. (Cianci's legal bills are expected to top \$750,000.) He's also the first choice of other lawyers who find themselves in trouble with the law. But don't expect his astronomical fees to include handholding. Egbert, 55, whose meek accountant appearance masks a warrior's personality, is abrupt and no-nonsense with clients and prosecutors alike. Other big clients: Stephen Fagan, who avoided prison after pleading guilty in 1999 to kidnapping his two daughters during a bitter divorce, and former Rhode Island Governor Edward DiPrete, who was accused of bribery. Egbert got most of the charges against DiPrete dismissed. [617-737-8222]

**J. W. Carney Jr.**

Carney &amp; Bassil, Boston

Carney, 50, has a kind of specialty in defending irate husbands, including Dr. James Kartell, who shot his wife's lover in a hospital room, and Joseph E. McLaughlin, who paid \$50,000 to have his wife run over in a Boston parking garage. He's probably best known for defending John C. Salvi III in the Brookline abortion clinic murders. (Salvi was convicted in 1995 and committed suicide in prison.) He also represents the Corneaus, the Attleboro cult couple locked up for refusing to reveal the whereabouts of a baby they say was stillborn — then released after Carney's deft legal maneuvering. Carney's other clients range from gang members to Patriots players to the woman who has hired him to keep her budding dominatrix business within legal limits. A familiar face on the Boston music scene, he loves alternative bands like Radiohead; spotted buying scalped tickets for a Prince concert, he said: "I got them from a future client." [617-338-5566]

**Robert L. Sheketoff**

Boston

Sheketoff, 53, a Yale Law School grad who works alone and answers his own phone, shrugs off any suggestion that he's one of the brainiest lawyers in the bar. In contrast to many in this field, he isn't driven by ego: He avoids media attention and doesn't save his press clippings. But Sheketoff, equally adept at trials and appeals, is "very, very smart," a colleague says. He's also described as a mensch with a self-deprecating sense of humor. Clients have included members of the Angiulo crime family and William Bennett, the Mission Hill man falsely fingered by wife-murderer Charles Stuart. Sheketoff wryly takes credit for jump-starting Tom Reilly's political career, by trying — and losing — the Danny LaPlante triple murder case in 1988, which led to prosecutor Reilly's election as Middlesex DA. [617-367-3449]

**Joseph J. Balliro Sr.**

Balliro & Mondano, Boston

After all these years, he's still the Dean — a gifted trial lawyer jurors instantly love. True, he lost the Dr. Richard Sharpe murder trial, but what chance did he have with a cross-dressing dermatologist as a client who gunned down his wife in front of witnesses? Still in his prime after 50 years in practice, Balliro, 74, has handled countless high-profile cases, including the Fells Acres Day Care sex abuse trial for defendants Violet Amirault and Cheryl Amirault LeFave, and the case of Richard C. Arrighi, an aide to former Treasurer Joe Malone who pleaded guilty to his role in a \$9.4 million theft from the state Treasury. In June, Balliro tried to take the fall for his cousin Rocco Balliro, in prison since pleading guilty in 1965 to killing his girlfriend and her child. But the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) apparently didn't buy attorney Balliro's claim that he was capable of anything less than a superb defense. [617-737-8442]

**Stephanie Page**

Committee for Public Counsel Services, Boston

Public defender Page, 53, of the state's Committee for Public Counsel Services, is the best lawyer money can't buy; she has been defending indigent defendants since 1978 without the glamour or big money enjoyed by her private-sector colleagues. Fiercely committed to her clients, Page, who grew up in Haverhill and was a scholarship student at Vassar, is now fighting to keep federal prosecutors from seeking the death penalty against Gary Sampson, the alleged carjacker charged with killing three people in a shooting binge in 2001. Along with Reddington and Carney, she was one of the first Massachusetts criminal defense lawyers invited to join the prestigious American College of Trial Lawyers, limited to the top one percent of trial lawyers in each state. [617-482-6212]

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Personal Injury

**Andrew C. Meyer Jr.**

Lubin & Meyer, Boston

Year in and year out, no one comes close in the big-verdict tally to Meyer, a silver-haired whirl of energy who bears a resemblance to Steve Martin. "We're in first place — there's nobody in second, third, or fourth," Meyer, 53, says with a laugh. But he means it. In the past 10 years, Meyer, an obsessive student of the art of jury trials, has landed in excess of \$95 million in verdicts (including a record-breaking \$30 million verdict in 1992 for a brain-damaged child) and another \$150 million in settlements. This at a firm made up largely of alumni of his alma mater, Suffolk University Law School. "We're not Ivy Leaguers," says Meyer. "We're more scrappy." [617-426-6006]

**Marianne C. LeBlanc**

Sugarman and Sugarman, Boston

Just 34, LeBlanc has already set a state verdict record. In March, she landed the largest verdict ever in Massachusetts District Court: \$1.2 million against a gynecologist who botched exploratory surgery, in a case that had been thrown out of Superior Court because the judge thought damages wouldn't reach \$25,000. In 1999, LeBlanc racked up one of the largest verdicts in state history, \$28 million against the companies that ran a Kenmore Square bar after underage drinkers beat and chased another patron into traffic, where he was fatally injured. (That case is on appeal.) LeBlanc is one of three women partners at Sugarman and Sugarman, a personal injury powerhouse. [617-542-1000]

**Robert W. Casby**

Sugarman and Sugarman, Boston

Another partner at the Sugarman firm, Casby, 51, has a string of megaverdicts, including \$8.4 million for a plane crash, \$6.3 million in an obstetrical medical malpractice case, and \$6 million for a boy run over by a train. Despite movie-star looks and a national reputation in the courtroom, Casby steers clear of media attention, insisting, "I'm just a thick Mick from Boston." A kid from the rougher side of the tracks, whose mother ran a rooming house and worked as a waitress to raise him, he always planned on being a trial lawyer. If it didn't work out, says Casby, a student of human nature, "I'd probably still be a bartender." [617-542-1000]

**Leo V. Boyle**

Meehan, Boyle, Black & Fitzgerald, Boston

"The genuine thing." "Deeply connected to his clients." That's how other lawyers describe Boyle, 56, who talks not of the size of awards (including a \$13 million verdict against Chrysler and a \$6 million settlement for the parents of an MIT freshman who died in a hazing incident) but of the lessons he learns from his catastrophically injured clients. When he was president of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, Boyle organized 2,000 lawyers to do free legal work for victims of the September 11 attacks and got many lawyers to agree not to sue over the tragedy. [617-523-8300]

**Elizabeth N. Mulvey**

Crowe & Mulvey, Boston

She's had at least a dozen verdicts above \$1 million, including a \$7.5 million medical malpractice win and \$2.2 million against a car seat manufacturer. And her personal-injury firm, Crowe & Mulvey, has a long list of top verdicts. Yet Mulvey, 44, is publicity shy and keeps her practice small so she personally knows each client and case. [617-426-4488]

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Family and Divorce

### **David H. Lee and William M. Levine**

Lee, Levine & Bowser, Boston

Lots of lawyers handle divorce. But few do it well, and fewer still have the family's interests in mind. "There are lots of bad divorce lawyers, and they can ruin a client's life," notes one practitioner. The best commit to getting a divorce over with as painlessly as possible, with minimal damage to the kids. Lee, 55, is one of only three attorneys in Massachusetts elected to the American College of Family Trial Lawyers, which is limited to 100 lawyers in the nation. His law partner, Levine, 50, a child custody expert, is also one of the state's best. Their firm, which charges top fees, represents mainly wealthy clients with complex marital estates. Both lawyers are fellows of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), a prestigious organization of family law experts. [617-266-6262]

### **Norman Jacobs**

Boston

Another top-dollar lawyer, whose clients tend to be high-profile and wealthy. "His cases look like Securities and Exchange [Commission] cases," says one colleague. The avuncular Jacobs, 62, loves trials but views them as a last resort in divorce work. "At this stage of the game, I want clients I genuinely like, who I believe in, and who appreciate what I do," says Jacobs, who is also an AAML fellow. [617-482-0333]

### **Janice Bassil**

Carney & Bassil, Boston

Bassil, 48, an expert in cases involving allegations of sexual abuse or domestic violence, is one of the toughest lawyers in court and the most compassionate with clients — a "velvet fist in an iron glove," as another lawyer puts it. Legal groups have given her awards for zealous advocacy on behalf of indigent clients, and for professionalism and ethics in family law. A former public defender, she also handles criminal cases, such as the Paula Rosa murder case, in which her client, an alleged gang member, was acquitted of charges of accidentally shooting a grandmother. Bassil, too, is an AAML fellow. (Bassil has served as an attorney for the writer.) [617-338-5566]

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## Real Estate

### **Kevin Kerr**

South Boston

There's more to real estate law than showing clients where to sign. Selling a house you've owned for 40 years — or buying your first home — is an emotional milestone. Top practitioners combine a personal touch with a sharp eye for potential legal pratfalls. Kerr's such a typical guy from Southie that clients have no idea he went to Harvard; the down-to-earth Kerr, 44, wouldn't dream of telling them. "The anti-lawyer," one client calls him. "No slickness to him," says another. His fees are low — as low as \$550 for a residential closing — but he's a pit bull when the other side tries to take advantage of his clients. Kerr also handles landlord-tenant cases. [617-269-3329]

### **Ernst Guerrier**

Guerrier Associates, Dorchester

Guerrier, 34, has built a three-lawyer firm that goes out of its way to make clients comfortable. He gives them his home and cell phone numbers, and takes calls at all hours. "I guarantee you that a first-time homebuyer will have a question at 6 o'clock at night," he says. "If they can't reach me, their frustration builds up." Guerrier gives frequent public lectures on first-time house-buying and teaches the art of client relations to other lawyers. [617-825-2700]

### **Judith R. Pike**

Wellesley

A refugee from a big Boston firm, Pike, 43, set up her solo shop nine years ago and loves the personal relationships she develops with clients. "When they call, they either get me answering myself or I call back in a short period of time," she says. Many of her clients are referred from big firms that don't do residential real estate but know buyers will benefit from Pike's common sense. [781-237-2727]

### **Martin A. Loria**

Cherwin Theise Adelson & Loria, Boston

Loria, 51, counts sports figures and high-profile business and corporate names among his clientele, yet, with a number of in-house title examiners at his firm and other efficiencies, his fees are competitive. Loria also gets referrals from big firms who know clients are in good hands with this 27-year veteran. [617-330-1625]

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## Employment

### **Nancy S. Shilepsky**

Perkins, Smith & Cohen, Boston

Twenty years ago, employment law was a low-paying backwater whose pioneers were women more interested in equal rights than money. With today's explosion in workplace discrimination and harassment lawsuits, this field is one of the hottest — especially during the current employment slump. Shilepsky has the distinction of having bested Alan Dershowitz in *Bowman v. Heller*, when the SJC agreed that circulating phony lewd photos of a coworker was not free speech entitled to First Amendment protection. The author of several books on employment law, Shilepsky, 50, also represented a former Harvard employee who got a settlement from the university after claiming antiheterosexual discrimination by a gay supervisor. Last year, she won a Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination (MCAD) claim against Stonehill College on behalf of a Chinese-American professor paid less than white professors. [617-854-4000]

### **Dahlia C. Rudavsky and Ellen J. Messing**

Messing, Rudavsky & Weliky, Boston

Along with Shilepsky, these two Ivy League law partners were trailblazers in the field of employment and discrimination law. In a landmark case, Rudavsky, 51, won a federal jury trial against the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which paid a female veterinarian much less than her male colleagues. She also represented Professor Julia Prewitt Brown in her successful tenure battle against BU, which Brown accused of gender bias. [617-742-0004]

### **Gretchen Van Ness**

Boston

Van Ness, 44, is the patron saint of underdogs. She was part of the legal team that fought to allow gay and lesbian groups to march in Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade; landed a confidential settlement for fired Boston College feminist theologian Mary Daly, who refused to teach men and women together; and engineered another settlement for a 41-year-old college senior who claimed the *Atlantic Monthly* turned her down for an internship because of her age. [617-723-5060]

### **Charles P. Wagner**

Charles P. Wagner Associates, Boston

Wagner, 32, has such a remarkable win record before the MCAD that seasoned lawyers call for his advice. He takes pride in being visible as a gay attorney, contributes significant time to legal issues involving gay rights, advises small businesses

on how to comply with employment laws, and lectures frequently to bar groups. [617-723-0008]

**Katherine J. Michon**

Kimball, Brousseau & Michon, Boston

One of the best negotiators in the business, Michon, 38, is one of three women founders of Kimball, Brousseau & Michon, an employment-law boutique. Many clients are referred by defense lawyers who respect her work, which includes litigation, contract review, and mediation. Michon, who concentrates on sex-harassment cases, cochaired a subcommittee that has drafted new sex-harassment guidelines for the MCAD. [617-367-9449]

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Bankruptcy

**Richard S. Hackel**

Boston

"One of the most caring practitioners a client could meet," says one court source. An idealistic child of the '60s, Hackel, 61, says most people who file for bankruptcy are "damned embarrassed about it. I'm just appreciative I can help people and eke out a modest living." A pragmatist, yet willing to go the extra mile for all his clients. [617-742-1899]

**Lynne F. Riley**

Riley & Esher, Cambridge

A sophisticated practitioner who teaches bankruptcy seminars to other lawyers, Riley, 42, says she enjoys the satisfaction of helping people get a fresh start. Also adept at real estate issues, Riley was part of a task force that established a committee now attempting to return civility to the local legal profession. [617-876-3755]

**Gary W. Cruickshank**

Boston

Described as "a gentleman," Cruickshank, 53, is respected by judges, who say his word is his bond. He "can make deals no one else can," a court official says. Since time is of the essence for his clients, Cruickshank focuses on resolving cases quickly. [617-330-1960]

**Anne J. White**

Klieman, Lyons, Schindler & Gross, Boston

In practice for more than 20 years, White, 49, switched from litigation to bankruptcy because, she says, "You feel like you're actually making a difference." In her free time, she plays standup bass with her family in a blues-country band. [617-443-1000]

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Intellectual Property

**William F. Lee**

Hale and Dorr, Boston

In this hotbed of tech and biotech creativity, the law of patents, trademarks, and copyrights — intellectual property, or IP — is big business. After Hale and Dorr loaned litigator Lee to serve as a prosecutor in the Iran-Contra scandal in the late '80s, he returned to try his hand in the nascent field of biotech patent law. He has since built a reputation as one of the world's top patent trial lawyers. He successfully defended a \$600 million patent claim for videoconferencing equipment, and won at trial for Biogen over a patent for interferon, the protein used to treat multiple sclerosis. Lee, 52, who works 11-hour days, six days a week, is also managing partner of his 475-lawyer firm and teaches IP litigation at Harvard Law School. [617-526-6000]

**Frank P. Porcelli**

Fish & Richardson, Boston

A partner at one of the nation's oldest and largest IP firms, Fish & Richardson, Porcelli, who has a master's degree in chemistry, has worked with big-name clients including St. Jude Medical, Eastman Chemical, and Genzyme. He won a \$129 million judgment for 3M against Johnson & Johnson for patent infringement and theft of trade secrets, and a \$10 million jury verdict for the manufacturer of a pacemaker. [617-542-5070]

**Bruce D. Sunstein**

Bromberg & Sunstein, Boston

His dad was an inventor, so patent lawyer Sunstein is simpatico with such clients as technology wunderkind Dean Kamen, whose latest creation is the Segway Human Transporter, that two-wheel motorized scooter. An MIT grad, the kindly Sunstein, 58, has helped clients with patents for speech-recognition systems, athletic shoes, data compression software, and devices to inspect cargo and luggage for explosives. [617-443-9292]

**Zick Rubin**

Hill &amp; Barlow, Boston

Rubin handles copyright and trademark work for authors, publishing and media companies, cultural institutions, and universities. A former psychology professor at Harvard and Brandeis, Rubin, 58, represents Alice Randall, author of the controversial *The Wind Done Gone*, and last year led a team that convinced the SJC that the state's proposed "Son of Sam" bill was unconstitutional. (His firm, Hill & Barlow, represents this magazine, though Rubin himself does not handle magazine business.) [617-428-3408]

**Michael J. Bevilacqua**

Hale and Dorr, Boston

An expert in licensing, trademark, and copyright, particularly for technology companies, Bevilacqua, 45, is "exactly the lawyer an entrepreneur needs," says one colleague. High-tech clients have included Spyglass, Wang Laboratories, and Analog Devices. [617-526-6000]

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## Startup Companies

**John H. Chory**

Hale and Dorr, Waltham

Two friends tinkering in a garage come up with a great idea for a new product. Helping them launch it takes a creative and high-energy lawyer who can assist rapid-growth clients in attracting investors and — with luck — going public. This former military intelligence officer, a graduate of West Point and Harvard Law, has helped at least 100 clients bring their ideas to market. "I love the energy level of entrepreneurs," says Chory, 44. Clients have included Open Market, one of the hottest IPOs of the mid-'90s; SilverStream Software; and American Hard Cider, which named its popular "Cider Jack" after Chory's son. He also helped launch Akamai Technologies. Last year, Chory opened an office for Hale and Dorr in Waltham to be closer to the tech world. [781-966-2000]

**John M. Hession**

Testa, Hurwitz &amp; Thibeault, Boston

Early mornings Mondays through Thursdays, Hession meets with new entrepreneurs to go over their business plans, help them find jobs in the tech industry, and network. His advice is free — and so is the coffee. "I have fun with what I do. I love working with small companies seeking growth and needing help to get started," says Hession, 50, who taught e-commerce and intellectual property at Boston University's School of Law. Taken with the enthusiasm of a computer

executive with a funky idea, Hession helped get financing for Cool Dog, a sponge cake bun filled with ice cream and a Fenway favorite. Other clients he's assisted with licensing and venture capital financing include Turbine Entertainment Software, maker of multiplayer Internet games; Presstek, which makes computer-to-plate imaging for the graphics industry; and MarketSoft, producer of marketing automation software. [617-248-7000]

**Mark G. Borden**

Hale and Dorr, Boston

Borden, 51, has represented hundreds of technology startups. Coauthor of *Start-Up and Emerging Companies: Planning, Financing and Operating the Successful Business*, he likes gambling on entrepreneurial ideas. "If you have a great idea and a good business plan, we'll say, 'Yeah, come in,'" he says. [617-526-6000]

**Richard S. "Chip" Morse Jr.**

Morse, Barnes-Brown & Pendleton, Waltham

"An entrepreneurial person with a cool idea — that's the backbone of our practice," says Chip Morse, 60, who has 32 years' experience in this field. His 22-lawyer Waltham firm, Morse, Barnes-Brown & Pendleton, is unique in the state because it focuses on startup companies. It also charges lower fees than its Boston competitors, he says. "The law itself is relatively uncomplicated," he says. "It's the business advice that's more important." [781-622-5930]

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## Entertainment and Media

**John Taylor "Ike" Williams**

Hill & Barlow, Boston

Writers, independent filmmakers, musicians — Boston's full of 'em. Some lawyers in this field act as agents, landing deals while also providing legal advice. After all, in this industry, it's all about contacts. In the world of entertainment law, Williams is in a league of his own — charming and funny; discoverer of new talent and friend to the famous; and codirector of the Hill & Barlow Agency, the largest literary/film agency in New England and the only one wi