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TOP LAWYERS

Whom do lawyers call on when a loved one needs legal help?

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Legal eagles Jacqueline DeAndrus Bucar and Michael Koskoff

Top Lawyers

Whom do other lawyers in the state call on when a loved one needs legal help? Meet the 264 Connecticut lawyers they named the most.

We've done the Top Docs, now it's time for the Top Lawyers. The lawyers you'll find here have been nominated by their peers and then listed in the 2001-2002 edition of Woodward/White Inc.'s *The Best Lawyers in America*®, in response to the following question: "If you had a close friend or relative who needed a real estate lawyer [for example], and you could not handle the case yourself—for reasons of conflict of interest or time—to whom would you refer them?" More than 350,000 individual evaluations were processed for this edition, which includes listings for 14,509 lawyers in 27 specialties, in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

As with similar surveys, even though lawyers were urged to evaluate their peers based on professional merits only, inclusion is ultimately subjective, and thus the list is susceptible to criticism. Some may argue that the list rewards visibility or popularity over competence or effectiveness, but the two attorney-editors, Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, stand behind the methodology used.

In the end, readers should use this list—and similar "best" lists—as one of many tools available when choosing a lawyer. Consider it a reference, a comprehensive and well-thought-out one, but still, one of many, to be weighed with the opinions of family and friends, and the ultimate maker-or-breaker, your own gut feelings.

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Photography by Jeff Kaufman
Profiles by Dale B. Salm

Martin Wolman, Day, Berry & Howard, Hartford; Specialty: Trusts and Estates

What do you like most about your work?

What I like most is the opportunity to interact with a variety of interesting and accomplished individuals, some wealthy, others not, but all challenging and stimulating—you can never tell

"the system," and as a result have greater influence in setting policy and controlling economic relationships. In America, lawyers have this function. In Europe, it's often civil servants; in other societies, it's religious leaders.

Do you think lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

As a group we are very visible and, therefore, should expect to be the subject of news stories, the central players in movies and TV series, and the people quoted in commentaries on our political process. Although often the objects of jokes and derision, lawyers are also frequently recognized in respected roles in fiction (*To Kill A Mockingbird*) as well as in real life (analysis of current affairs). Visi-



what intriguing set of circumstances or problems will present itself for analysis or resolution. I also enjoy being in effect a family counselor, and playing a part in helping fashion the economic, and sometimes personal, lives of many families.

What do you like least?

Sending bills, but I do.

Do you think lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

No. I believe every society has one or more groups who are called upon for their experience and understanding of

bility carries with it a price and I do not believe lawyers are any more unfairly maligned than politicians, athletes or police officers.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

Rumpole of The Bailey, in those wonderful books by John Mortimer. Though a bit of a scoundrel, he has great flair and is blessed with joie de vivre. One of my colleagues had a needlepoint that read, "Lawyers were children once . . . I think." We should strive to preserve the child in all of us and Rumpole has accomplished that.

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Jacqueline DeAndrus Bucar, Tyler Cooper & Alcorn, New Haven; Specialty: Immigration Law

What do you like most about your work?

It's intellectually challenging. I enjoy finding creative solutions to issues as well as trying cases.

What do you like least?

Every day begins and ends with a problem to solve. Unreasonable attorneys can make the job frustrating.

Do lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

I think lawyers influence American life, whether "unduly" depends. Without them, people have fewer protections. A good influence can be seen in cases such as that presented in *A Civil Action* or even *Erin Brockovitch*. A bad influence is when some lawyers seek to expand the reasonable limits of the law. We've become a society that shifts responsibilities to others.

Do lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

Definitely. The vast majority want to help their clients. Many undertake pro bono cases. Unfortunately, it's the outrageous ones you typically read about.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

Rumpole, the English barrister. He is witty, has an understated, dry sense of humor, and is intelligent. His integrity is unquestioned. And he's entertaining.

Michael Koskoff, Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, Bridgeport; Specialty: Personal Injury & Civil Litigation

What do you like most about your work?

What I like most is the ability to make an impact on clients' lives. I consider myself privileged to be able to help people out of deprivation, misery and despair.

What do you like least?

I dislike the frustration of not being able to help resolve a case quickly enough. I share my clients' frustration at the slow pace of litigation. I also dislike lawyers and judges who abuse the system by not treating all people with respect and dignity.

Do lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

No. I think most of what is best about America is the result of the work of lawyers—the Constitution, social-welfare laws, Medicare, etc. Lawyers are the only force standing between big business and big government and the rights of individual citizens. As society gets more complex, the role of lawyers becomes more important.

Do lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

Yes, but I think it is inevitable as long as we are doing our job. We remind society of those who have been left behind, uncover ugly truths, take on unpopular clients and their causes, criticize the powerful and redistribute wealth from rich to poor. Some abuse this role, but most lawyers work to protect the interests of those in need. Shakespeare is noted for the line, "First, let's kill all the lawyers," but he said it as the first step toward a tyrannical government. Lawyers stand in the way of tyranny.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

I find fictional lawyers not nearly as inspiring as real lawyers throughout history—Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and, in modern times, Clarence Darrow. He used his enormous trial skills against the powerful on behalf of the injured and the poor.

**William F. Dow III, Jacobs, Grudberg, Belt & Dow, New Haven;
Specialty: Criminal Defense**

What do you like most about your work?

Dealing with problems and trying to solve them; getting people to understand my clients, who they are, and how they came to be in the position they are in.

What do you like least?

When prosecutors refuse to understand how a client can make a mistake without being a vicious criminal.

Do lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

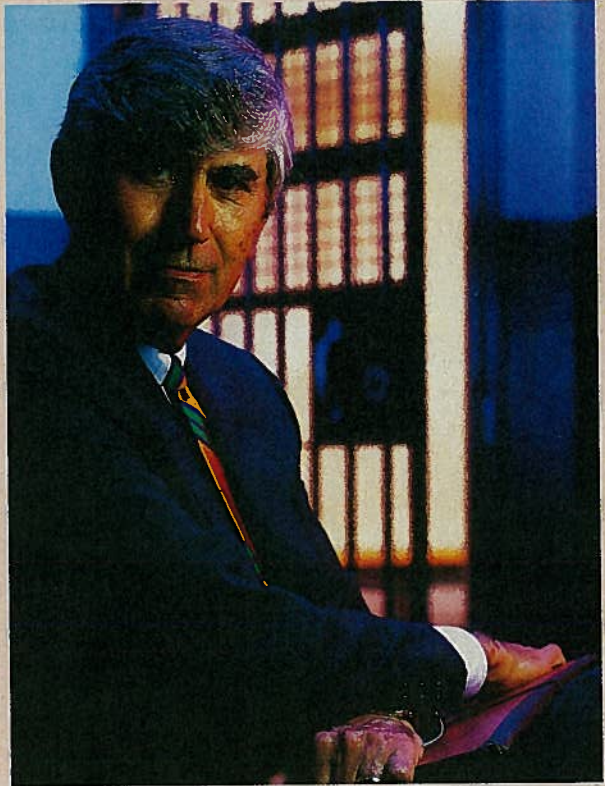
Lawyers certainly have an influence; query whether it is undue. Without them, the incompetent forensic scientists in Oklahoma would not have been exposed; the executions in Illinois would have continued; and many dangerous products would remain on the market. On the other hand, sometimes people tend to adopt a defensive posture through life, always protecting against lawsuits.

Do lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

Yes. Most people fail to understand that good lawyers conduct themselves within the rules—they don't lie, cheat and steal for their clients. They are honest with judges and take pride in conducting themselves with honesty and integrity. They are not "mouthpieces" who just do what clients tell them or knowingly present perjured testimony or manufactured evidence. Lawyers require the prosecution to prove its case within the rules. Most strive to make sure the rules are applied fairly.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

The traditional favorite is Atticus Finch of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There is much to be said for him as a role model. On the other hand, I have a fleeting memory of an old TV program called "The Trials of O'Brien" starring Peter Falk in his pre-Columbo days. Perhaps he was not a role model, but he sure was funny.



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Jean Welty, New Haven; Specialty: Family Law

What do you like best about your work?

I enjoy solving problems and counseling clients. It is very satisfying to obtain a beneficial resolution for a client going through the already difficult process of separation and divorce.

What do you like least?

Family law can be emotionally draining, and any trial practice requires long hours—nights and weekends are the norm.

Do lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

I think lawyers greatly influence modern American life, but I firmly believe it is a positive influence. Lawyers are stewards of the greatest legal system in history, and they can, and do, use that system for the betterment of



society. Great social changes have occurred as a result of court actions. As private citizens, lawyers hold public office and volunteer their time and expertise on local boards and commissions.

Do lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

Yes, and the organized bar has been working to improve its public image. Every profession has members who do not uphold its standards, and it must deal with them. My experience, however, is that most lawyers reflect the integrity and dignity that is the bar's finest tradition.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

Perry Mason. He never raises his voice in the courtroom, he's very smart and—he always wins (that's the fictional part).

Garrett M. Moore, Moore, O'Brien, Jacques & Yelenak, Cheshire; Specialty: Personal Injury and Civil Litigation

What do you like most about your work?

The best thing is the positive effect you can have on people's lives. For example, I represented a 19-year-old girl who became a quadriplegic after a tractor-trailer accident. After I settled the case for \$4.5 million, a special home was built for her, taking all her limitations into consideration. She had two children after the accident and now, with the settlement, can enjoy her children and make the best of a difficult life.

What do you like least?

Dealing with insurance companies. In Connecticut, it takes at least three to four years to have a jury trial. Insurers take advantage of the time lag—to use the client's funds for investment and business purposes—and withhold payments, even under tragic circumstances, until reaching the courthouse steps. This makes an injured person's difficult situation even worse.

Do lawyers unduly influence modern American life?

Lawyers have had a long and positive influence on American life. Unfortunately, it is not as widespread as it was 30 years ago when large numbers of lawyers were in state and federal legislative bodies, so many bills being passed today have not undergone a lawyer's review. Some are so broad they encompass things they were never intended to cover. Lawyers today have no more influence than any other segment of society. Indeed, much of the public has a very low regard for them; lawyer bashing is rampant. Gone are the days when a lawyer's view was sought after; today a lawyer's endorsement is often the death knell for a public-policy initiative or legislative proposal.

Do lawyers get a "bum rap" in the media?

On the contrary, much of the negative press is brought on by lawyers themselves. Advertising is the worst thing that ever happened—it makes the law less a profession and more like any other business. But practicing law is not like selling cars; restrictions on advertising should be imposed as a condition of the privilege to practice law. I have yet to find an injured person who got better representation by pulling a lawyer's name off a parking meter. On the other hand, it does seem the media is more apt to report only extraordinary cases,



like the McDonald's case. The headlines made the jury's award sound ridiculous. All the facts were not reported, nor was the fact that the judge reduced the award so the plaintiff received only 10 percent of the verdict.

Who is your favorite fictional lawyer?

Atticus Finch, from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is a terrific example of what lawyers should strive to be. He took on a controversial client in controversial times at great personal sacrifice, representing his client against all odds. Every lawyer should always remember he or she is helping to mold the rights of individuals for generations to come and is acting as the trustee of society's liberties.

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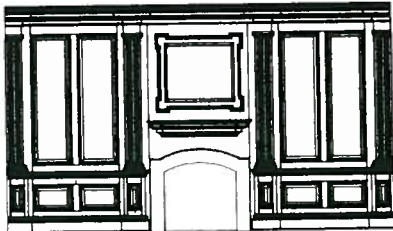
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