

Spotlight: Litigation Attorneys and Mediators

Posted By [Dan Verel](#), Business Journal Staff Reporter On March 29, 2010 @ 2:09 am In [Industry News, Law](#) | [1 Comment](#)

(Listed alphabetically by firm name. [See photos below](#) ^[1].)

David Berry

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David Berry was born in Tulsa, Okla., and moved to Sonoma County in 1998. He currently lives in Santa Rosa.

He attended **U.C. Berkeley** for his undergraduate degree and received his J.D. from the **University of California, Hastings College of the Law** in 1995, where he was a member of the Hastings Law Journal.

He said his career in law was foreseen by his parents at an early age. "My parents tell me I was a litigator from the start, always prodding them for exceptions to the rules," he said.

A North Bay Business Journal Forty under 40 winner in 2008, he was recognized in the Super Lawyers-Rising Stars in 2009. That same year, he graduated as a member of the 25th class of **Leadership Santa Rosa**, a year-long program for selected community leaders intended to expose members to pertinent issues in and around Santa Rosa and Sonoma County.

He serves on multiple boards and has a long history of participating in community service, serving as the president of **Legal Aid of Sonoma County** and a member of its board of directors from 2001 through 2005. In 2009, he came up with the idea for and helped found the **Real Property Section of the Sonoma County Bar Association**, of which he is the inaugural chairman. He is also on the board of the **Sonoma County Bar Association**.

Chris Mazzia

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Chris Mazzia, a native of New York City, came to the Bay Area in 1977 and moved with his family to Santa Rosa in 1983 after graduating with a B.A. from **William College** in Massachusetts in 1976. He obtained his J.D. from **Golden Gate University** in 1980. After living in Washington, D.C, briefly, he said he "experienced the importance law and administration of justice make in people's lives and our society." He began litigation upon graduating from law school "because the courtroom is where effective, energetic legal representation is needed to protect litigants' legal rights," he said.

He is currently a senior litigation partner and director at the 30-person firm **Anderson, Zeigler, Disharoon, Gallagher & Gray** and has been with the firm for more than 20 years.

Throughout law school, he worked as a legal researcher and tutor. He helped fund his law school education by working as a temp typist.

The bulk of his work consists of litigation as well as counseling on matters ranging from employment law, environmental law, real estate and property law on businesses-related matters.

He has been recognized for volunteer services to the **Sonoma County Superior Court**, has served

on the board of directors of the **Sonoma County Bar Association** and was an officer and member of the executive committee. The firm specializes in estate planning, trusts and estates, employment, real estate and civil litigation.

Mr. Mazzia is currently running for judge of the **Sonoma County Superior Court**.

Peter Simon

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Peter Simon, a native of Northern California who grew up in Alexander Valley near Healdsburg, is a shareholder at **Beyers Costin**. He's been with the firm for 13 years, previously working at large trial firms in San Francisco, the South Bay and in Fresno, all of which had an emphasis on business and real estate litigation and trial work.

He attended **UCLA**, where he received a B.A. in communication studies with an emphasis on interpersonal communications in 1992. He attended **Santa Clara University** and received his J.D., cum laude, in 1995.

"I pursued a law career after becoming interested in the trial process and after studying interpersonal communication – including within a jury – at UCLA," he said.

He said about 90 percent of his work is litigation and trial work. He added, "We try to reach a resolution of the dispute as efficiently as possible. Mediation, arbitration and trial are processes utilized in achieving our clients' goals."

Much of his experience involves vineyards and wineries, environmental law and insurance.

He is a former **Sonoma County Bar Association** board member and is the current president of the **Richard M. Sangster Inn of Court**, which focuses on professionalism, excellence and collegiality amongst the bar and the bench and is an invitation-only organization.

Kevin Block

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Kevin Block is a partner and litigator for **Block, DeVincenzi & Zelazny** and has been practicing law since 1985. A native of Napa, Mr. Block has the distinction of practicing in Russia from 1992 to 1998, one case involving a venture capital firm, **Western NIS Enterprise Fund**, versus the government of Ukraine. He represented the venture capital firm and achieved a settlement favorable to the fund.

He holds a B.A. from **Oberlin College** in Ohio in Russian language and literature and obtained his J.D. from **New York University Law School** in 1985. He also holds a Master's of International Affairs from **Columbia University**, 1992, and is fluent in Russian.

His practice currently focuses on equal parts litigation and transactions and land use, primarily in the wine industry.

He served on the **Napa City Council** from 2003 to 2007 and was vice mayor from 2005 to 2007. He is currently a member of the **Blue Oak School** trustees and advisory committee.

Arthur Curley

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Arthur Curley, a native of Arlington, Va., and the son of an Army officer at the Pentagon, moved to California when his father was reassigned to the Presidio in San Francisco in 1952. He moved to Tiburon with his family shortly thereafter. He currently lives in Larkspur and is a partner at the 40-person firm **Bradley, Curley, Asiano, Barrabee & Gale**.

He attended **U.C. Berkeley**, where he obtained a B.S. in business in 1970. He received his J.D. from the **University of California Hastings College of the Law** in 1974. He said he got into law because, upon graduating, it was the most practical route. "I looked at the graduate options, and law school provided the shortest tract," he said. He worked as a law clerk upon finishing law school and became a full-fledged attorney in 1975. He went on to try his first case four months later.

Before working in law, he pumped gas and cleaned windows at a Union 76 station in Greenbrae and also worked as a cook during college so he could always have something to eat. "Being half Hawaiian, that is a requirement," he said.

Currently, the majority of his income and time comes from litigation and mediation, except about 1 percent, which comes from lecture services.

Mr. Curley is an assistant professor of jurisprudence at the **University of the Pacific** in San Francisco and has been the Northern California chapter president of the **Professional Liability Underwriters Society** for the past five years. At present he is a member of the **American Board of Trial Advocates**.

Gil Purcell

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Gil Purcell is a partner at the 36-attorney firm **Brayton Purcell**, which has a total North Bay staff of 250. Mr. Purcell is the partner that oversees trial work at the North Bay's largest civil litigation firm, which has a nationwide presence with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Alameda, Marin County, Portland, Seattle, Nevada and Salt Lake City.

A native of Amarillo, Texas, Mr. Purcell moved to the Bay Area in 1972 from Norman, Okla., and he currently lives in Sausalito. He attended **UCLA** and received a B.A. in economics in 1980, and he obtained his J.D. from **Pepperdine University School of Law** in 1984. While in law school he worked as a clerk with the prominent Los Angeles plaintiff firm **Girardi Keese**. "It exposed me to what good plaintiff attorneys can do for deserving people who need help in courtrooms," he said.

He began litigating in 1984 and has been doing so continuously through present day.

The firm does very little mediation and typically does not charge hourly rates for clients. "We get paid when we win for the client and don't get paid anything when we don't," Mr. Purcell said. "The vast majority of our clients could not pay an attorney hourly rate to represent them."

Mr. Purcell serves on the board of directors of the **Consumer Attorneys of California** and is a diplomat in the **American Board of Trial Advocates**. He's been named a Super Lawyer for 11 straight years.

The firm, he said, has close ties to many charitable organizations in the Bay Area, among them: **Great Chefs of Marin, Marin Valentine's Ball, North Bay Children's Center, Sunny Hill Services** and others.

Dawn Ross

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Dawn Ross, a litigator, partner and founder at **Carle, Mackie, Power & Ross**, was born in New Jersey and moved to California when she was three years old, "so no memory of New Jersey," she

said. She attended law school at **U.C. Davis** and received her B.A. from **Cal State Fullerton**. She spent her first five years of practice at a large firm in Sacramento and moved to Santa Rosa in 1994, where she still resides in Rincon Valley.

She has specialized in a wide array of employment law as well as commercial litigation, representing employers and large wineries.

She became interested in law by proxy, while helping a friend study for the law school admission test, or LSAT. It was at that point she became further intrigued by the questions of the test. "I took the LSAT on a lark, did really well and decided to apply to law school," she said.

Approximately 75 percent of her time and income is derived from litigation, she said, with the other 25 percent coming from advising clients on employment-related issues.

She has been named a Super Lawyer and has is currently rated AV, the top rating from **Martindale-Hubbell**. She is also a former president of the **Sonoma County Bar Association** and **Sonoma County Women in Law**.

She also serves as trial counsel in intellectual property and commercial litigation matters such as breach of contract, real estate transfers, fraud, trade secret, trademark violations and construction defects.

Clay Clement

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Clay Clement is a partner at **Clement, Fitzpatrick & Kenworthy**. He's been at the firm since 1975. Prior to that, he worked for **Arata, Misuraca & Clement** in Santa Rosa, and his first job as an attorney was with **Cox & Cummins** in Contra Costa County, which specialized in real estate litigation and eminent domain. He's been involved with litigation ever since he received his law degree.

He graduated from the **University of the Pacific** with honors and attended law school at **U.C. Berkeley, Boalt Hall**.

He is a member of the **American Board of Trial Advocates** and a fellow of the **American College of Trial Lawyers**, both of which are invitation-only positions. He's also been named a Northern California Super Lawyer every year the list has been published since 2004, when he was named one of the Top 100 Lawyers in California.

Areas of specialty are real estate litigation, including property tax, broker liability, eminent domain, partnership and other business disputes involving property. Additionally, he's worked with contract, anti-trust, unfair competition, false advertising, title insurance and employment litigation. He's also handled major property tax cases throughout the state that involved oil, gas, geothermal and refinery properties and has tried more than 100 cases in more than 15 counties and federal district and bankruptcy court.

He has taught real estate and litigation subjects at **Kennedy Law School, Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa Junior College** and the **Hastings College of Law Business Litigation Institute**.

Outside of law, he is on the Capital Campaign Cabinet for the **Redwood Empire Food Bank**.

He was born in Oakland and has lived in Santa Rosa since 1972.

Catherine Connor

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Catherine Connor is a founding partner at **Connor Lawrence & Rodney**, which was started

immediately after she graduated from law school with a classmate. She was born in Indiana, but her family moved to Southern California shortly after.

She moved to Santa Rosa in 1982, when she completed her J.D. at **U.C. Berkeley, Boalt Hall**. Her B.A. was completed at **UCLA**.

She specializes in mediation, particularly in divorce law, with the hope of resolving disputes before reaching the stage of litigation.

"In the mid-90s, I decided to focus more on alternative dispute resolution, first by increasing my mediation caseload and then by adding collaborative practice," she said.

In 2001, she stopped litigation altogether to focus primarily on mediation, collaborative practice, private judging and representing parties in settlement negotiations.

In 2003, she received the Judge Sater Award for Excellence in Family Law and has also received a Eureka Award from **Collaborative Practice California**. Since 2005, she's been designated a Super Lawyer and one of the Best Lawyers in America since 2006.

She is on the board of the **International Association of Collaborative Practitioners**, is a mediation and collaborative trainer with the **Center for Understanding Conflict** and a trainer for **Collaborative Practice Trainers**. Trainings have been conducted in Germany and Hong Kong.

Amy Rodney

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Amy Rodney is another main mediation attorney and a partner at **Connor Lawrence & Rodney** and been with the firm since 1989. A native of New York City, she moved to the North Bay in 1974 and currently lives in Santa Rosa.

Ms. Rodney is both a mediator and litigator, splitting the two evenly, although she said, "Mediation was naturally my style to try to resolve things." She wanted to get into law as a way to help children – she's also been a teacher – and is often appointed by the court to represent children.

She received a B.A. in social science from **UCLA** in 1969, a teaching credential from **United States International University, San Diego** in 1971 and her J.D. in 1980 from **Golden Gate University**, where she was first in a class of 240. She has been listed as a Super Lawyer in Northern California since 2004, and in 2006 and 2007 was listed in Best Lawyers in America.

Also in 2007, she received an Amicus Curiae Award. In 2002 she received the Rex Sater Award for Excellence in Family Law and is AV-rated by **Martindale-Hubbell**. From 1994 to 1996 she was the founding chair of **Kid's Turn Advisory Board** and has been a member ever since, and in 2009 she was the president of the **Collaborative Council of the Redwood Empire**.

Malcolm Mackenzie

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Malcolm Mackenzie is a senior partner with **Coombs & Dunlap** and has been with the firm since 1970. Areas of practice include real estate, land use, business, writ and appeals and wine law, with specialties in family law – for which he is a certified legal specialist – litigation and estate planning

He received a B.A. from **Stanford** and his J.D. from **U.C. Berkeley, Boalt Hall**.

He served as the **Napa County Bar Association** president and as the city attorney for **Napa and Calistoga**. The Southern California native moved to Napa Valley in 1970. He has also served as the president of the **Richard M. Sangster Inn of Court**, president of the board of directors of the **Episcopal Diocese of Northern California** and is a member of **Kiwanis**.

Paul Carey

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Paul Carey has been a civil litigator for **Dickenson, Peatman & Fogarty** since 1982 and has been a director there since 1989. It's the only firm the Santa Monica native and Napa resident has worked for since finishing law school. The firm now has 27 attorneys.

He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from **UCLA** in 1979 and his J.D. from **U.C. Berkeley, Boalt Hall**, in 1982.

His background in litigation stems from his time at UCLA as an undergrad, when he took a speech class that spurred an interest in inter-collegiate debate.

"I found debate to be both intellectually stimulating and exciting," he said. "I also enjoyed success at it. I thought litigation was the logical progression from there."

While studying law, he won the McBaine Moot Court Competition, where he argued before **Justice Potter Stewart** of the **United States Supreme Court**. Following that, he won the statewide Traynor Moot Court Competition.

Approximately 85 percent of his time and income comes from litigation, with the remaining 15 percent from title review and assessment. Current areas of expertise include real property and business.

He's served as the head of the **Napa County Bar Association Real Estate Section** for the past three years and is currently the vice president of the same association. Next year he will serve as its president.

Rick Van Duzer

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Rick Van Duzer is the head of **Farella Braun & Martel's** litigation practice in St. Helena and chairs the firm's construction group. He's been with the firm for 25 years and has specialized in the wine, construction, hospitality and real estate industries. In the wine industry he's represented grape growers, wineries, custom crush facilities and nurseries.

In construction, he's represented contractors, owners, subcontractors and design professionals in disputes ranging from delay and cost overrun claims to construction defects. He's also worked extensively in real estate and land use litigation, including disputes, partnerships disagreements and patrician actions, among many others.

He often speaks on issues in the construction and wine industries and is a member of the board of directors of **Hearthstone**, which is the largest institution investment manager in residential development projects in the U.S. He received his B.A. with honors in economics from the **College of Wooster** in Ohio and his J.D. from **Vanderbilt University Law School** in Tennessee in 1987. The Cleveland, Ohio, native now lives in Napa with his family.

Peter Kleinbrodt

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Peter Kleinbrodt is the managing partner and a litigator with **Freitas, McCarthy, McMahon &**

Keating. He's represented clients in areas such as business and real estate matters and has extensive litigation and transactional experience with clients in Europe, Asia and throughout North America.

He is a member of the **Marin County Bar Association**, serving as the chairman of the insurance and entertainment committees, and the **State Bar of California**, which has included the **Litigation Section, Real Property Section, Business Section, the Rules and Procedures Committee** and the **Committee on the Administration of Justice**. He has also been appointed as the Judge Pro Tem, commissioner and arbitrator for the **county of Marin**.

John Friedemann

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John Friedemann is a partner with **Friedemann Goldberg**, practicing in the areas of banking, business and entertainment law, with extensive experience in businesses and commercial litigation. He frequently lectures on banking operations and lending law, including loan documentation matters, database contract disputes and UCC issues.

A graduate of **University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law**, he's been named a Super Lawyer and is a member of the **Sonoma County** and **Los Angeles Bar Associations**. He received his B.A. from **UCLA** and is a member of the **Pacific Law Journal at University of the Pacific** and the **Century City Bar Association**.

Teresa Cunningham

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Teresa Cunningham is a board member and chair of the litigation department for **Gaw Van Male**, with areas of practice in employment law, labor counseling and civil litigation, which includes personal injury, medical malpractice and businesses disputes. She joined the firm in 1998 as an associate and become director of litigation in 2001.

She previously practiced insurance defense litigation for ten years in San Francisco prior to joining Gaw Van Male. Upon graduating from the **University of San Francisco School of Law** in 1988, she was admitted to the **California State Bar**, the **U.S. District Court, Northern District of California** and the **U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit**. She received her B.A. from **U.C. Davis** in English in 1985. The Marin native now lives in Napa where she is on the board of directors at **Legal Aid of Napa Valley** and vice president of the board for **Napa Solano SANE/SART**.

Stephen Mitchell

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Stephen Mitchell is a shareholder and a litigator with **Geary, Shea, O'Donnell, Grattan & Mitchell**, specializing in business disputes, public entity and enforcement law defense, real estate litigation, land use projects, personal injury and labor and employment litigation.

He's been with the firm since 1989.

He works in litigation and mediation, at times using arbitration and other alternative dispute resolution forums, and has extensive experience in federal and state courts.

He graduated in 1981 from **Stanford University** with degree in economics and worked as a

consultant for **Arthur Anderson & Co.** in San Francisco before attending law school at **UCLA**, graduating in 1986. He started his legal career at **Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton**. He is a member of the **State Bar of California**, executive council and board of directors for the **Sonoma County Bar Association**, **Richard M. Sangster Inn of Court** and the **Association of Defense Trial Attorneys**.

Jordan Lavinsky

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Jordan Lavinsky is a litigator and partner at **Hanson Bridgett**, specializing in commercial and private real estate. He's represented commercial creditors, shopping centers, real estate owners, managers and developers, with experience in trial and appellate litigation in state courts, federal courts and administrative forums in the areas of commercial, construction, real estate and trust litigation, bankruptcy and travel law.

The Philadelphia native moved to Marin in 2000 and now lives in the town of Ross. He said he was inspired by his grandfather, who was both a lawyer and a judge, to become an attorney.

He attended the **University of Colorado, Boulder** for his B.A. and obtained his J.D. from the **University of San Francisco**.

Paul Smith

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Paul Smith is a partner with **Keegin, Harrison, Schoppert, Smith & Karner**, practicing in the areas of real estate, land use and related civil litigation. He also advises individuals, businesses and public entities on real estate and land use issues. He joined the firm in 1998 and became a partner in 2002. **The University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law** alum has been a Super Lawyer from 2005 to 2009. As a law student, he served as an extern for **Justice David Eagleson**. He received his B.A. from **UCLA** in 1982 and his J.D. in 1988.

He started his legal career in Sacramento, first at **Nossaman, Guthner, Knox & Elliot**, and then as a general counsel to **Navis Corp.**, an international software company out of Oakland. The Marin County native was at one point the mayor of Tiburon, in 2006; he had been elected to the city council in 2003 and served on the **Tiburon Design Review Board** and **Planning Commission**. He currently chairs the **Real Property Section** of the **Marin County Bar Association** and is a member of the **State Bar of California**, admitted to practice at all of California's state courts, the **U.S. District Court (Northern and Eastern Districts)** and the **U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth District**.

Michael Brook

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Michael Brook is a partner with **Lanahan & Reilly** and is a member of the firm's banking group while specializing in complex litigation on matters of real estate, securities and commercial disputes.

A native of West County, North Devon, England, Mr. Brook moved to Northern California in 1982, first to Marin, then to San Francisco, Oakland and finally to Santa Rosa. He currently lives in Windsor.

He's well-versed in both litigation and mediation, having argued cases across California and throughout federal courts around the U.S.

"With all litigation, first you have to pursue mediation," he said. In addition to more than 20 years of litigation experience, he utilizes pre-litigation mitigation, including dispute resolution.

He's been named a Super Lawyer in both 2007 and 2008 and is a member of the **Sonoma County Bar Association Rules Committee**. He's been admitted to practice for the **California State Bar**, all **U.S. District Courts of California**, the **Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals** and the **U.S. Supreme Court**.

He attended **Cambridge University** in England, completing his B.A. with honors in 1976 and an M.A. in 1983. For law school he attended **Golden Gate University**, obtaining his J.D. in 1989. He's also won the American Jurisprudence Award for Civil Procedure. In addition to law, he is also on the board of directors for **Shakespeare on the Green** in Windsor.

James Parrinello

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James Parrinello is the senior litigation partner and a member of the management committee at **Nielsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Mueller & Naylor**. For more than 25 years, he has represented clients in regulatory, constitutional and government law, including complex litigation, arguing successfully before the **U.S.** and **California Supreme Courts** as well as the **Courts of Appeal**. His expertise is in constitutionality of government regulations, legality of state and local initiatives and referenda, voting rights and reapportionment, rent control and property rights.

He attended the **University of San Francisco** for both his undergraduate degree as well as his J.D. He was class valedictorian at USF and is member of the **Litigation and Government Litigation Sections** of the **American Bar Association**. He's also been a governor's appointee to the **California Commission on Ballot Initiatives** and has served on the faculty of the **Hastings College of Trial and Appellate Advocacy**.

Michael Watters

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Michael Watters is the senior litigation partner and the administrative partner at **O'Brien, Watters & Davis**, specializing in trial work involving civil litigation, business litigation, employment litigation, family law and insurance defense, including professional liability, alternative dispute resolution and defending professional licenses.

He attended **U.C. Berkeley** and received a B.S. in business administration with an emphasis in managerial economics in 1967, then earned an MBA from the **Haas School of Business** in 1968.

Following that, he served as a **U.S. Marine Corps** officer from 1969 to 1971, with tours in Vietnam and Okinawa, and received a Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V."

After his tours ended in 1971, he attended **Hastings College of Law** and received his J.D. in 1974. He then became an associate with **Sprigden, Barrett, Achor, Anderson, James & Zeigler**, where he became partner in 1982. He helped found **O'Brien, Watters & Davis** in 1982.

He is member of the **State Bar of California** and the **Sonoma County, Marin County, Napa County and American Bar Associations**, and has been an arbitrator for the **Sonoma, Marin and Napa County Superior Courts** since 1979.

He was also a mediator and an arbitrator for the **American Arbitration Association** and is currently a member of **Association for Conflict Resolution**.

John Johnson

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John Johnson is a partner and a founding member at Perry, Johnson, Anderson, Miller & Moskowitz and has practiced law since 1984. The firm was founded in 1997. He is from Crescent City and currently lives in Santa Rosa.

He began practicing law as a naval officer for the United States Navy Judge Advocate General Corps. He received his J.D. in 1984 from the University of Santa Clara.

After his time as a naval officer, he worked primarily in civil litigation and now works exclusively as a family law attorney. His experience in litigation includes defending military service members in 12 jury trials and more than 50 court trials as a defense counsel for the Jag Corps. Additionally, as a civil attorney, he's worked on more than 30 jury trials and over 100 court trials. He's also mediated or arbitrated more than 100 matters.

Among recognitions, he's been an AV-rated attorney, is a certified family law specialist and just recently completed "Developing Technology in California Law Strategies," a Thomson Reuters publication.

He's developed various unique trial methods that incorporate technology into trials.

He is a member of the Sonoma and California Bar Associations and the Richard M. Sangster Inn of Court, the board of directors of the Legal Aid of Sonoma County, and he received the Legal Aid Service Award for Most Significant Contributions in 2004 and 2005.

Gary Raghianti

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Gary Raghianti, a resident of Marin County since 1948, has practiced law in Marin since 1969 and is a partner at **Raghianti Freitas** with areas of focus on civil litigation, mediation, real estate, municipal law and land use. According to **Resolution Remedies**, he has a settlement rate of 95 percent for mediation.

He's worked extensively in zoning, employment, wrongful termination, insurance coverage and has mediated cases involving construction defects, product liability, property damage, contract disputes and personal injury.

He has served as a city attorney for four cities – Tiburon, Corte Madera, Belvedere and San Rafael – and has served as special counsel to the **Marin County Sheriff** and **Marin County Superior Court**.

He received a B.A. in political science from the **University of San Francisco** in 1965 and his J.D. from the same school in 1968. He also holds an M.S. from **Dominican University** in humanities, which was obtained in 2004. He is admitted to practice in all **California State Courts**, the **U.S. District Court**, **U.S. Court of Appeals Ninth District** and the **U.S. Supreme Court**. He's also served as president of the **Marin County Bar Association**, taught criminal law at **College of Marin**, was named to the Best Lawyers in America from 2003 to 2005 and was a Super Lawyer in 2005 in Northern California.

Glenn Smith

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Glen Smith, a native of Newark, N.J., moved to Southern California after attending **Seton Hall** and

graduating from **Marist College** in New York, where he finished with a B.S. in business in 1975. He practiced criminal defense law in Orange County after obtaining his J.D. from **Western State University** in Fullerton.

He attended law school in the evenings while working as a sales engineer for a structural steel and metal building manufacturer. In 1981, he was admitted to the bar and has been litigating cases ever since. He helped found **Smith Dollar** in 2005. Of his litigation career, he said, "A courtroom is the venue for civilized combat, and I am very comfortable in that arena."

"There is nothing more engrossing than deciding how to best position an issue, nothing more compelling than pleading your client's case to a judge or jury and nothing more satisfying than convincing a trier of fact of the righteousness of your client's position," he added.

Prior to working as an attorney, Mr. Smith held positions in an array of fields, among them, factory worker, an auto mechanic, a shoe salesman, radio advertising sales, a bartender, a roofing salesman and a sales engineer.

About 80 percent of the caseload at Smith Dollar is litigation, much of it in representing banks, thrifts, mortgage lenders, secondary-market participants and government agencies. He handles primarily commercial litigation matters for companies in Northern California while managing the firm's local practice group.

He has been recognized by the **Sonoma County Superior Court** for work as a settlement conference panelist and as Judge Pro Tem for traffic court. He was president of the **Sonoma County Bar Association** in 2008 and served as its director for seven years prior to that. He is also the general counsel for the **American Subcontractors Association** and has served on the following boards: the **Boy Scouts of America**, **Blood Bank of the Redwoods**, **Empire College School of Law**, **North Coast Builders Exchange**, **Sonoma County Convention & Visitors Bureau** and **Sonoma County Legal Aid**.

Lisa Ann Hilario

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Lisa Ann Hilario has been a civil litigator for **Spaulding, McCullough & Tansil** for the past seven years, specializing in employment law and litigation, human resources and business litigation. She's also worked on contracts, real property, premises liability, personal injury and medical malpractice defense and insurance coverage matters.

She obtained her J.D., with distinction, from the **University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law** in 1990 and a B.A. with honors from **U.C. Davis** in economics and Spanish in 1987. She was admitted to the **State Bar** and the **U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit**, in 1990. She also is qualified to practice in the Northern, Southern, Central and Eastern Districts of California.

She represents small, medium and large employers, using mediation as a primary tool and litigation as a last resort. She "strongly believes in the value to businesses of well-thought-out guidelines for both supervisors and employees that allow both sides to remain always within the complex requirements of the law and to foster good communication and understanding of those requirements."

Ms. Hilario has taught employment law and other law-related classes at **Sonoma State University** and **Santa Rosa Junior College**.

Michael Estrada

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Michael Estrada is a founding partner and a litigator with **Vasquez, Estrada & Conway**, which was founded in 2001, and has more than 20 years experience practicing law in California. Some of his specialty areas include products liability claims and insurance coverage disputes.

He earned both a B.S. and a master's in sociology from **U.C. Berkeley** in 1978 and 1983, respectively, and his J.D. from **U.C. Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law** in 1985.

Prior to the founding of Vasquez, Estrada & Conway, he was a partner in the San Francisco office of **Hinshaw & Culbertson**, an in-house coverage counsel for **CNA Insurance Companies** and a litigation associate with **Long & Levitt**. He also worked as a felony trial deputy with the **Office of the Public Defender** in Contra Costa County.

He is a member of the **California Bar Association** as well as the **Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals**, the **Marin County Bar Association**, the **Bar Association of San Francisco** and the **San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association**. He was also recognized as a Super Lawyer in 2008 in Northern California.

Fred Walter

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Fred Walter is a partner at **Walter & Prince**, where he specializes in **Occupational Safety and Health Administration** matters on behalf of employers, many of them including "serious and willful misconduct" claims since 1985.

He said was attracted to litigation "because I like the action." He added, "I saw law as a way to serve people who needed help."

Prior to law, he was a subrogation counsel for workers' compensation carriers in personal injury actions stemming from industrial accidents. His law career began as an associate to a medical malpractice plaintiff's attorney in Sacramento.

The Los Angeles native attended **San Jose State** and got a B.A. in political science. He received his J.D. from **Lincoln University School of Law** in Sacramento and moved to Healdsburg in 2000. In 2008, he and his partner were awarded the **Associated General Contractors of California's** Vickie Schlecter Associate of the Year Award. He is admitted to practice in all California courts, the **Ninth Circuit court of Appeals** and the **U.S. Supreme Court**.

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