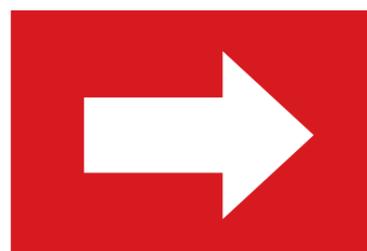


FIELD GUIDE TO DIVORCE LAWYERS

BY DOREE SHAFRIR

Divorce lawyers are a peculiar breed. "At the highest level of matrimonial practice, it's a pretty small field," says Manhattan divorce lawyer Allen Drexel, who worked for four years for one of the giants of New York divorce law, Robert S. Cohen, and now has his own boutique firm. "You're all repeat players against each other, sometimes in multiple cases in any given year. And the competitiveness inherent in the litigation process makes chummy casual interaction between divorce lawyers pretty infrequent." In other words, in the animal kingdom of law, divorce attorneys are the lone wolves. And yet, regionally, the species does have some common traits. Read on for our findings.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN VOLDMAN



ELEANOR ALTER, NEW YORK
Clients: Madonna, Ethan Hawke, Mia Farrow



NANCY CHEMTOB, NEW YORK
Clients: Tory Burch, Richard Jefferson ex Kesha Nichols, Diandra Douglas



ROBERT S. COHEN, NEW YORK
Clients: Michael Bloomberg, Tommy Mottola, Christie Brinkley



RAOUL FELDER, NEW YORK
Clients: Rudy Giuliani, Stephanie Seymour, Robin Givens



SANDY AIN, WASHINGTON, DC
Clients: S. Epatha Merkerson, Mike Tyson ex Monica Turner, Frances Glendening



GLENN C. LEWIS, WASHINGTON, DC
Clients: Steve Case, BET founder Robert Johnson



MARNA TUCKER, WASHINGTON, DC
Clients: Georgetown basketball coach John Thompson, Michael Huffington



MARTIN HAINES, MIAMI/PALM BEACH
Clients: Dennis Kozlowski, former Apple CEO John Sculley, Greg Norman



TOM SASSER, MIAMI/PALM BEACH
Clients: Tiger Woods, Jeff Gordon



JOEL WEISSMAN, MIAMI/PALM BEACH
Clients: New York Yankees partner Jack Satter, Red Sox owner John Henry



DON SCHILLER, CHICAGO
Clients: Michael Jordan ex-Juanita Jordan, Robert Pritzker



IKE VANDEN EYKEL, DALLAS
Clients: millionaire rancher Rex Cauble ex-Josephine Cauble



SORRELL TROPE, LOS ANGELES
Clients: Cary Grant, Nicole Kidman, Nicolas Cage



DENNIS WASSER, LOS ANGELES
Clients: Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg, Alec Baldwin



LAURA WASSER, LOS ANGELES
Clients: Angelina Jolie, Christina Aguilera, Spike Jonze

NEW YORK

NATURAL HABITAT: Upper East Side
MIGRATORY PATTERN: The Hamptons in summer months
FEEDING GROUNDS: Maloney & Porcelli
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: Anything with a chauffeur

ELEANOR ALTER

Kasowitz Benson Torres & Friedman
 Alter is often described as the grande dame of New York City divorce, with a mix of celebrity and finance clients such as Madonna, Ethan Hawke, and the late founder of the Dreyfus Fund, Jack Dreyfus. “She’s at a firm primarily set up to serve corporations, not individuals, so her billing rate is probably a bit higher,” says a source.
BIG KILL: Woody Allen, who not only lost custody of his children to Mia Farrow after she hired Alter but was forced to pay her legal fees.
MORTAL ENEMY: Christie Brinkley, who had used Alter for two previous divorces but fired her in the midst of her legal battles with fourth husband Peter Cook.
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Nonsense. Fame-hungry clients like Tricia Walsh-Smith (who took to YouTube to air her grievances against her former husband, Broadway mogul Philip Smith) sometimes don’t mesh with Alter, who advised Walsh-Smith to lie low. (Instead, Walsh-Smith fired Alter.)

NANCY CHEMTOB

Chemtob Moss Forman & Talbert
 A star among the younger generation of divorce attorneys in the city, Chemtob tends to handle the affairs of the moneyed under-fifty set: she’s represented Tory Burch, Tiki Barber’s ex-Ginny, and Kesha Nichols, who was engaged to NBA star Richard Jefferson before he canceled their wedding via e-mail and locked her out of

their Tribeca apartment. Most recently Chemtob was in the news for taking Michael Douglas to court to try to get some of the proceeds from the *Wall Street* sequel for his ex-wife, Diandra.
FLOCKS WITH: The Upper East Side socialite crowd
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Bossily maternal. Chemtob, who resides in Manhattan and East Hampton, becomes familiar with her clients’ personal lives, helping them find financial planning, therapy, and life-coaching.
SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: Her perfect blond mane.

ROBERT S. COHEN

Cohen Lans
 A couple of years ago, Cohen and his wife bought a \$4.4 million apartment at 1 Beekman Place in Manhattan—the funds for which undoubtedly came in large part from the work he’s done over the years for clients including New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, financier Henry Kravis, music mogul Tommy Mottola, James Gandolfini, and Christie Brinkley. He’s managed to nab a lot of big-money referrals. “Cohen had a major success in the eighties with Henry Kravis,” says a source. Since then, “a lot of peers and intimates of Kravis” have become Cohen clients.
BIG KILL: Cohen won Brinkley sole custody of her children with Peter Cook, as well as their shared property.
MORTAL ENEMY: Donald Trump, who had to face Cohen in his divorces from Ivana Trump and later from Marla Maples. Trump was clearly impressed; he later hired Cohen’s firm to represent him in a suit against a golf course contractor who he says overcharged him—only to sue Cohen’s firm for alleged overbilling once the golf course case was settled.
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Calculating. He keeps a lower profile than Raoul Felder but isn’t beyond issuing a zinger or

two in court, as when he described Cook as “a self-obsessed sex addict who spent thousands of dollars on Internet porn before he began wooing a 17-year-old girl.”

RAOUL FELDER

Raoul Felder
 The dapper, blustery Felder has long been at the top of the New York divorce lawyer heap—especially when it comes to getting publicity (and sympathy) for his clients (and, it must be said, himself). “He’s probably the most quote-happy divorce lawyer in town,” says a source. Working alongside his wife Myrna (to whom he’s been married for more than 40 years), Felder’s roster of clients includes Rudy Giuliani, Stephanie Seymour, Robin Givens, and Larry Fortensky. He has collaborated on two books with comedian Jackie Mason and, at 71 years old, shows no sign of retiring.
BIG KILL: He won a reported \$10 million for Givens in her 1989 divorce from Mike Tyson and then went on to sue the boxer for \$125 million more for allegedly libeling Givens; that case was settled for an undisclosed sum.
MORTAL ENEMY: Longtime rival and fellow Manhattan-based divorce lawyer Norman Sheresky, now 82, whom Felder unsuccessfully sued for libel in the eighties for telling a reporter that Felder “pretends to be a trial lawyer when he is not.”
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Narcissistic. Craves attention so much he can often be found publicly opining—pro bono—about celeb splits that don’t involve him. He didn’t rep Tiger Woods or Elin Nordegren, but he dined out on their feud on morning television. His website lists some of his clients, including, in Felder’s words, “Alec Wildenstein—Married to woman who turned herself into a cat.”
SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: Opposing counsel might think twice about crossing him. He has a permit to carry a gun in New York City.

WASHINGTON, DC

NATURAL HABITAT: Bethesda, MD, or McLean, VA
MIGRATORY PATTERN: Maryland’s Eastern Shore in summer, Virginia horse country in spring and fall
FEEDING GROUNDS: The Palm
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: BMW 7 series

SANDY AIN

Ain & Bank
 Ain might be the only divorce attorney in the country who has gotten a shout-out from an actor on national television. In 2006, *Law & Order* star S. Epatha Merkerson thanked Ain on live TV while accepting a SAG Award. (The low-profile Ain was shocked.) His merger with Marna Tucker (see below) protégée Rita Bank created the preeminent divorce law firm in DC.
BIG KILL: In 2003 he managed to get \$6.5 million in future earnings from a then-broke Mike Tyson for ex-wife Monica Turner.
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Discreet. He’s known for quietly handling the affairs of blue-chip names, including former Maryland first lady Frances Glendening, Danaher Corp. head Steven Rales, and tycoon Herbert Haft, whose divorce from ex-wife Gloria went on for most of the 1990s. *Washingtonian* magazine called him “confident, trustworthy, and ethical.”
SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: A well-groomed mustache.

GLENN C. LEWIS

The Lewis Law Firm
 The former host of his own cable TV show has attracted clients like AOL cofounder Steve Case, BET founder Robert Johnson, and Christine Rales, ex-wife of billionaire Steven Rales.
MORTAL ENEMY: Former client Steve Firestone. Lewis was recently embar-

assed after he sued Firestone for more than \$500,000 in unpaid bills. Firestone countersued, and the court found in his favor. Lewis ended up having to pay Firestone \$102,000.
FLOCKS WITH: DC’s business elite
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Bravado. Lewis is reportedly not shy about the fact that his \$850-per-hour rate is the highest in the area.

MARNA TUCKER

Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell
 When Tucker entered the field in 1965, she was one of just a handful of female graduates of Georgetown Law School—and one of the even smaller number of female divorce lawyers in the country. The first female president of the DC Bar, Tucker has a client list that includes former Georgetown basketball coach John Thompson and Michael Huffington (former spouse of Arianna).
BIG KILL: Won \$50 million and significant real estate for Gloria Haft in her divorce from Herbert Haft.
MORTAL ENEMY: Sandy Ain. As the queen of DC divorce, she has sparred with Ain, the king, in the Haft case and many times since.
SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: Sensible strands of pearls.

MIAMI/PALM BEACH

NATURAL HABITAT: Lake Worth
MIGRATORY PATTERN: Bermuda during high season (April to October)
FEEDS AT: Flagler Steakhouse at the Breakers
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: Bentley

MARTIN HAINES

Martin Haines III, Chartered
 Haines represented disgraced Tyco CEO Dennis Kozlowski in his divorce from his wife Karen, former Apple CEO John Sculley, and

Greg Norman, whose divorce dragged on for two years and ended up costing the golfer \$103 million—though given Norman’s net worth, it could have been far worse.
BIG KILL: In 2003 he extracted half of 70-year-old Palm Beach real estate tycoon Fred Keller’s \$60 million-dollar fortune on behalf of his 34-year-old wife, Rose. Tragically, Keller murdered Rose eleven days later.
DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Coldly pragmatic. During the Norman divorce, Haines filed a motion requesting that Greg get most of the assets, telling the court: “The wife did not teach the husband how to swing a golf club. The wife did not teach the husband how to win.”
FLOCKS WITH: Other lawyers. He’s the son of a superior court judge and serves on numerous councils and boards.

TOM SASSER

Sasser, Cestero & Sasser
 The denizens of Palm Beach don’t like to kiss and tell, and that’s why they turn to the famously tight-lipped Sasser when it comes time to dissolve their marriages. When NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon sought a divorce after a seven-year marriage, Sasser argued that Gordon shouldn’t have to split the accumulated assets equally because the racing star had risked his life to accumulate them. He also represented Tiger Woods in his battle with Elin Nordegren. The 40-year-old Sasser—who joined the firm started by his father, Don—is considered one of the fastest-rising stars in Palm Beach County.
BIG KILL: Sasser’s made news more for protecting fortunes than for raiding them. Gordon’s ex-wife agreed to wave alimony in exchange for a sum significantly less than half of Gordon’s estimated worth, which is close to \$50 million.
FLOCKS WITH: State congressmen. Sasser was key in the passing of two recent Florida state family laws, one involving alimony and

the other involving child support. **DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT:** Subtle. Sasser has been described as an intellectual and a technogeek. He's less overtly aggressive than his peers in the field, he's almost never quoted in the press, and he refuses to name his clients.

JOEL M. WEISSMAN

Joel M. Weissman
Weissman has been aiding Floridians in their high-stakes divorces for 35 years, but he was thrust into the spotlight in 2001 when he became the first lawyer ever to prove adultery using DNA. Nanette Bailey, suspicious that her 74-year-old husband, former Massachusetts Financial Services chief Richard Bailey, was cheating, took their sheets to a DNA lab and was proved correct. The attention surrounding the case helped land such clients as New York Yankees partner Jack Satter and Red Sox owner John Henry, but Weissman hasn't become picky about whom he represents. In fact, he says, "If you can afford me"—reportedly a \$15,000 retainer and \$450 per hour—"you've got me. Before your husband calls."

MORTAL ENEMY: Fellow Palm Beach attorney Jeff Fisher, with whom he's butted heads in the divorces of Boca Raton hedge fund manager David Polen and ex-wife Rosa (Weissman, representing Rosa, planned on calling more than 150 witness) and Checker Motor mogul David Markin and ex-wife Susan. After the court ruled that Susan would receive half of David's \$106 million in assets, David and Weissman appealed—unsuccessfully—and were caught in legal battles with Fisher for another four years. **SIGNATURE PLUMAGE:** His black belts—in jujitsu, kung fu, and judo.

DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Aggressive. In the seventies a judge gave Weissman the nickname "Mad Dog" for his courtroom style, and the nickname has stuck ever since.

CHICAGO

NATURAL HABITAT: Winnetka
MIGRATORY PATTERN: Lake Geneva, WI, in the summer
FEEDING GROUND: Morton's
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: Mercedes

DON SCHILLER

Schiller DuCanto & Fleck
Chicago's a tough town, and in the world of Chicago attorneys there are few tougher than Schiller, who can claim as clients the boldest of the town's boldface names. They include Andrea Kelly, the wife of R&B singer R. Kelly, who several years ago was embroiled in an underage sex scandal; Chicago Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher; Hyatt Hotels scion Robert Pritzker; Elaine Wynn, ex-wife of casino magnate Steve Wynn; and Joan Stonecipher, ex-wife of former Boeing CEO Harry Stonecipher. "If a Bull, a Blackhawk, a Bear, or a Cub has been through

a divorce, he has probably been in a room with Don," wrote one local magazine.

BIG KILL: The \$168 million settlement he won for Juanita Jordan, ex-wife of Michael Jordan, which *Forbes* deemed the most expensive divorce in entertainment history.

FLOCKS WITH: The athletes he's often called on to represent.

PERSONALITY TRAIT: Gracious. He's often referred to as a gentleman in an ungentle field.

DALLAS

NATURAL HABITAT: Highland Park
MIGRATORY PATTERN: Aspen in winter
FEEDING GROUNDS: Capital Grille
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: Escalade

IKE VANDEN EYKEL

Koons Fuller
The upper echelons of Dallas/Fort Worth society have long turned to Ike Vanden Eykel when it comes time to separate—without the whole world knowing. With an hourly rate of \$700, the 60-year-old Vanden Eykel, whom the *Dallas Morning News* called the most powerful divorce attorney in Texas, is also reportedly the state's highest-paid one.

BIG KILL: A \$61 million settlement for Josephine Cauble, ex-wife of rancher and convicted drug smuggler Rex Cauble. **DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT:** Business-savvy. Vanden Eykel has a banker's grasp of finance and is a pro at analyzing statements and evaluating assets.

PREYS ON: Hypocritical spouses who accuse his clients of overspending while they indulge in their own extravagances—which Vanden Eykel's eagle-eyed researchers always uncover.

LOS ANGELES

NATURAL HABITAT: Beverly Hills
MIGRATORY PATTERN: Ojai in the summer; Mammoth in the winter
FEEDING GROUNDS: Culina, Modern Italian (inside the Four Seasons Beverly Hills)
MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: Mercedes E-Class or Lexus hybrid SUV

SORRELL TROPE

Trope and Trope
If there's anyone in Hollywood who can claim to have seen it all, it's probably Sorrell Trope, who's been hearing some of the biggest names in entertainment air their grievances about each other since 1949—among them Cary Grant (for whom he also filed a \$10 million lawsuit against the *National Enquirer* in 1981), Rod Steiger, Nicole Kidman, Nicolas Cage, Britney Spears, Shaunie O'Neal (ex of Shaquille), Dennis Quaid, and Melissa Carrey, ex of Jim. **MORTAL ENEMY:** Bad boys. Though he's been busy representing Dodgers owner Frank

McCourt in his divorce, Trope has recently signed on to represent Oksana Grigorieva in her feud with Mel Gibson and Brooke Mueller against Charlie Sheen.

PREYS ON: Inexperienced attorneys who are oblivious to his pedigree.

DENNIS WASSER

Wasser, Cooperman & Carter
Wasser has a list of clients that reads like the Hollywood Walk of Fame: Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg, Clint Eastwood, Jane Fonda, Stevie Wonder, Alec Baldwin, Jennifer Lopez, Tony Curtis, James Woods, Lionel Richie. He shot to fame with tennis icon Billie Jean King's so-called "galimony" case in the early eighties. (King's live-in girlfriend wanted alimony and their Malibu beach house.) Today he takes only "high-asset" cases—most recently, Frank McCourt's wife, Jamie—and requires a \$25,000 retainer. (For more on the McCourt case, see page 85.)

MORTAL ENEMY: The FBI, which declared Wasser a "person of interest" on account of his business dealings with Anthony Pellicano, the jailed private investigator who was arrested for unlawful wiretapping and racketeering.

DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Resourceful. Wasser puts his Hollywood connections to good use. He once got an ex-girlfriend of Clint Eastwood's a first-look deal at Warner Bros. to settle a palimony case.

SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: Tailored suits, sunglasses.

LAURA WASSER

Wasser, Cooperman & Carter
It was practically preordained that Laura Wasser would become—at the age of 42—the go-to divorce lawyer for young(ish) Hollywood. After all, not only has dad Dennis (see above) long been one of the town's big-name divorce lawyers (not to mention Laura's boss), she's just as glamorous as much of her client list, which includes Angelina Jolie, Britney Spears (though she dropped Spears when the pop star refused to take her advice in her custody battle with Kevin Federline), Kate Walsh, Spike Jonze, Patricia Arquette, and, most recently, Christina Aguilera. Often quoted in the press, Wasser doesn't shy from the spotlight. A couple of years ago she celebrated having a tequila drink named after her at the Sunset Tower Hotel, and consulted (along with her father) on *Liar Liar*, the Jim Carrey movie about a divorce lawyer.

FLOCKS WITH: A fast-moving L.A. crowd of publicists, agents, and studio execs.

DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAIT: Strong-willed. Divorced herself at 25, Wasser swore she'd never marry again; today she's happily unmarried but resides with the father of her younger son in the Hollywood Hills.

SIGNATURE PLUMAGE: Prada, Lanvin, Alberta Ferretti—and an ankle tattoo that she tries to keep out of sight of the judges she faces.

MEDIA HOUNDS

VS.

QUIET CATS

Divorce attorneys who specialize in wealthy clients generally fall into two camps: those who want to keep their own names—as well as those of their clients—in the press, and those who are never quoted on the record. Entertainment industry clients (like recent divorcees Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, and Denise Richards) tend to see nabbing headlines as good strategy, but other types of clients—particularly those in the finance world—seek out attorneys who will do anything to keep their names out of the papers. "Some high-profile clients run the other way from publicity hounds," says one divorce attorney who handles prominent clients, "while others believe that media attention can engender sympathy for, say, a father deprived of access to his child or a mother who alleges some sort of abuse." The attorney adds that it's "not unheard of" for a big-time divorce lawyer to work with a public relations expert on a particular case. "That sort of investment, in my experience, can be money very well spent."

THE MEDIA HOUNDS

Nancy Chemtob
Raoul Felder
Martin Haines
Glenn C. Lewis
Don Schiller
Dennis Wasser
Laura Wasser

THE QUIET CATS

Sandy Ain
Eleanor Alter
Robert S. Cohen
Tom Sasser
Sorrell Trope
Marna Tucker
Ike Vanden Eykel
Joel M. Weissman