

2008 NATHANIEL AWARD

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SPERANZA
LAW OFFICE

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BY ELIZABETH STULL
Daily Record Reporter

John F. Speranza gets a lot of bad press, and he doesn't mind a bit.

As a preeminent criminal defense attorney in Rochester, Speranza is used to seeing his name linked with notorious bad guys. That's his job.

He likes to quote the British barrister Henry Brougham (1778-1868) on the role of an advocate, which is, essentially, to represent his client no matter what anyone

else says or does. Speranza has lived that creed, and said recently he has never shied away from tough cases assigned to him in the state and federal courts.

"They all have their own unique, interesting aspects," Speranza said.

He has handled many murder cases, including suspected mafia hits. One of them broke every county record for trial length in the early 1980s: The trial of *People v. Thomas Taylor and Thomas Torpey* — involving "Mad Dog" Joe Sullivan — began shortly after Labor Day and didn't reach a verdict until early January.

"This thing had all the trimmings of a film noir. The shooting took place about a week before Christmas in front of a bar called the Blue Gardenia. It was day and night [media coverage] for over a year," Speranza recalled.

In the early 1990s he represented city policemen charged with abuse of force for their work on a special "jump out" vice squad formed to control the illegal drug trade. They were acquitted.

"I guess [it was] good lawyering. It was a good lawyer team that we had," Speranza said.

He also won an acquittal in a \$7.5 million Brinks armored depot heist and handled another case involving horse trainers charged with fixing races at the Finger Lakes Raceway.

As he enters his 37th year at the bar, Speranza continues to take on tough, high-profile cases. He represents former county legislator William Bastuk, who is accused of raping a girl at his yacht club, and Howard Eddy, whose boat hit a Lake Ontario pier last summer and killed three people.

Speranza also has represented a lot of attorneys in professional disciplinary proceedings, often *pro bono*.

Why does he take on such often thankless cases?

"It's a profession and, in many ways, it's an art form," Speranza said. "It involves so many aspects of not only your intellect, but your personality. And from that perspective, it has always been fascinating."

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— John F. Speranza

A graduate of Colgate University, he earned a Master's degree in public administration from the SUNY at Albany and a law degree from Albany Law School of Union University.

"He's an outstanding defense attorney who's not only shared his knowledge and expertise with younger lawyers, but he's also

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The MCBA Congratulates The Nathaniel Award Nominees

Michael Buckley
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

Mary Corbitt, Executive Director
Monroe County Bar Association

Brian Shiffrin
Monroe County Public Defender's Office

John Speranza
John F. Speranza Law Office

Elaine Spaul, Executive Director
Center for Youth

**The Society for the Protection and
Care of Children (SPCC)**

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2008 NATHANIEL AWARD

Albert Paley's inspiration for The Nathaniel Award print

How can we portray the pursuit of justice, our system of law and excellence in an individual's chosen profession all into one?

This was the question *The Daily Record* asked itself when looking for a way to honor recipients of its Nathaniel Award. The newspaper turned to an internationally known sculptor for assistance.

In 1996, the newspaper commissioned Rochester sculptor Albert Paley to create a rendering representative of the award to be framed and presented to the award recipients.

The print is unique in the sense that no other organization honors members of the legal community in this fashion.

Paley has been commissioned to do a number of projects, including sculptures for the Smithsonian Institute and the University of Florida in Tallahassee. In the Rochester area, he is well known for his Genesee Passage, a sculpture that greets visitors to the Bausch & Lomb headquarters. He also created Bridge Railings for the City of Rochester when it was revitalizing Main Street.



His work is displayed throughout the country and the Nathaniel Award is the first print rendering Paley has ever been commissioned to do.

"I wanted something that was sophisticated and would be appropriate for acknowledging the honor being conferred upon the various individuals," he said. "With awards like this, I think this is really something that is underestimated in our culture — the sense of symbolism. We deal on a day-to-day basis with very pragmatic situations ... and symbolism seems to play a very small role in our daily conscientiousness. But I think that subconsciously a symbolic content is very important."

"I think generally what the print deals with is this state of equilibrium where you have order and chaos that continually interact with

one another," Paley explained. "Order being the structure of law that regulates and evaluates human endeavor, which by its nature is chaotic an ephemeral and ever changing."

"In print you will see that there are logical systems of order that are dealing with other systems that are more fragmented and more chaotic and the one system interacts with the other," Paley said. "There is some imagery like sheets of paper or parchment that is kind of spun through the composition and that very specifically relates to *The Daily Record*, whether its the newspaper or various briefs — that type of thing and the composition is anything but staid — it is dynamic, it deals with emotion and interaction. And the same as human activity — it is not staid, it is not formal, it is one that is ever changing."

SHIFFRIN from page 6A

imagine finding more meaningful and more significant legal work.

"All of my clients are poor people who might not otherwise be getting the highest quality service, and I'm working in an organization that works to provide poor people with as good or better legal representation than other people in the community," Shiffrin said. "And it's quite an honor."

Shiffrin admits the work can be challenging. There are percep-

tions about the clients in the public's mind — that they're guilty until proven innocent — and even about the attorneys, Shiffrin said. Many assume they're only working in the office because they're not good enough for the private sector. And, if public defenders win a case, the public sometimes sees it as a miscarriage of justice, Shiffrin said.

Plus, the office's resources are generally less than that of the police

and prosecutors, he said, meaning public defenders must work that much more diligently to provide the best representation to their clients, of which there are many.

"People are upset here at times, not because they don't like the work, but because they're worried they're not doing enough for their clients, and that's a tough thing," Shiffrin said.

Despite retiring, he's not leaving law behind. He's joining Easton

Thompson Kasperek. But he'll stay involved with his former employer.

"I care very much about this office," he said. "To the extent that I can be of help to our clients, I hope I can continue to do so."

2008 NATHANIEL AWARD

The Nathaniel Award's Past Recipients

- 2007**
The Hon. John C. Ninfo, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, on behalf of the Credit Abuse Resistance Education (CARE) program
- 2006**
The Honorable Frank P. Geraci Jr., Monroe County Court Judge;
Attorney Steven Modica, Modica & Associates;
Lifespan's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program;
- 2005**
10-year anniversary – all previous award recipients are recognized and honored again – no new awards are presented.
- 2004**
Dean Fero, senior partner, Fero, Pilato & Ingersoll;
Monroe County Domestic Violence Intensive Intervention Team;
Beth Ela Wilkens, partner, Harris Beach;
J. Coyne O'Brien, attorney, Allen and O'Brien;
Angelo G. Faraci, senior partner, Faraci & Lange;
Sharon M. Rivaldo, retired lieutenant, Monroe County Sheriff's Office;
Richard Rosenbloom, senior counsel, Boylan, Brown, Code, Vigdor & Wilson;
Thomas Trevett, attorney, Trevett, Lenweaver & Salzer;
- 2003**
J. Coyne O'Brien, attorney, Allen and O'Brien;
Angelo G. Faraci, senior partner, Faraci & Lange;
Sharon M. Rivaldo, retired lieutenant, Monroe County Sheriff's Office;
Richard Rosenbloom, senior counsel, Boylan, Brown, Code, Vigdor & Wilson;
Thomas Trevett, attorney, Trevett, Lenweaver & Salzer;
- 2002**
JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D., director of Program Development, Children's Institute;
Irving Kessler, partner, Underberg & Kessler;
James P. Mulley, Jr., special counsel to Monroe County Executive;
Judge Michael Telesca, U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York;
Susanne VanStrydonck, administrative caseworker, Child Protective Services;
- 2001**
Catherine Cerulli, director of research, Family Violence Clinic, SUNY Buffalo School of Law;
Frank Crego, partner, Underberg & Kessler;
James S. Grossman, founding partner, Beebe, Grossman & Bergins, LLP;
Monroe County Bar Association's Lawyers For Learning;
Carolyn G. Nussbaum, partner, Nixon Peabody LLP;
- 2000**
Robert J. Duffy, chief of police, Rochester Police Department;
Bryan D. Hetherington, chief counsel, Public Interest Law Office of Rochester;
John W. Crowe, managing partner, Underberg & Kessler;
Judge Michael Miller, Monroe County Family Court judge;
The late Gary Amendola, partner, Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP;
The late Justice M. Dolores Denman, Appellate Division, Fourth Department, presiding justice;
- 1999**
Steven L. Brown, executive director, Greater Upstate Law Project;
City of Rochester Drug Treatment Court;
- The late Hanna Cohn, executive director, Volunteer Legal Services Project;
Magdalyn (Maggie) M. Cyganovich, estate paralegal, Boylan, Brown, Code, Vigdor & Wilson;
James Moore, partner, Harter, Secrest & Emery;
- 1998**
Judge David O. Boehm, Appellate Division, Fourth Department Justice;
Judge William Bristol, Monroe County Court judge;
Robert Brown, partner, Boylan, Brown, Code, Fowler, Vigdor & Wilson (now known as Boylan, Brown, Code Vigdor & Wilson);
The Center For Dispute Settlement; Justin Vigdor, partner, Boylan, Brown, Code, Fowler, Vigdor & Wilson (now known as Boylan, Brown, Code Vigdor & Wilson);
- 1997**
Judge Evelyn Frazee, New York State Supreme Court justice;
Main West Attorneys at Law, Inc.; Andrew Meloni, Monroe County Sheriff;
Rochester Police Department's "Do the Right Thing" Program;
Michael Wolford, managing partner, Michael R. Wolford & Associates (now Wolford & Leclair);
- 1996**
LeAnna Hart Gipson, executive director, Monroe County Legal Assistance Corp.;
Carole Mulhern, director, Monroe County District Attorney's Victim/Witness Center;
Rochester Police Department, Victim Assistance Unit;
Sanford Shapiro, senior partner, Shapiro, Rosenbaum & Liebschutz;
Judge Charles Willis, former Seventh Judicial District administrative judge.

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2008 NATHANIEL AWARD



THE SPCC

THE SOCIETY
FOR THE
PROTECTION
AND CARE OF
CHILDREN

BY COLLEEN M. FARRELL
Daily Record Reporter

For more than 100 years, the Society for the Protection and Care of Children has helped to care for children and families in the Rochester region.

Over time, its mission evolved from one of preventing child abuse and seeking the arrests of those who committed the crimes to supporting victims of domestic violence, teen parents and people navigating the court system.

Founded in 1875, Rochester's SPCC is the second-oldest of its kind in the country, and one of the oldest human service agencies in the community. It serves about 8,000 people each year.

The organization is a candidate for the 2008 Nathaniel Award. The Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys nominated the SPCC.

"They provide an incredible service to this community and are an incredible recourse and support for family court and the practitioners of family court and obviously give a lot to the families that participate in this program," said Heidi Schult Gregory, president of GRAWA.

Lisa Butt, president and CEO of the SPCC, said the nomination validates the hard work her 80 employees do.

The private, nonprofit group provides services to victims of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and community violence. The society's offerings include after school programs, teenage parent support services, and the Finger Lakes WIC Program, which provides nutrition education and counseling to 5,000 women and children each month. The organization also has a family outreach program with home-based intervention services for children at risk of going into foster care and a family violence program that offers advocacy, support and counseling for children and families impacted by domestic violence.

For more than 20 years, SPCC has provided supervised visitation services for Article 10 proceedings,



SPCC President and CEO Lisa Butt (left) and VP of Programs Laurie Valentine

when children are placed in foster care through child protective services.

Noting it can take months for a family matter to be settled in the court system, attorney June Castellano said the SPCC stabilizes what can be a volatile situation for the family.

"The programs offered by the SPCC allow my clients to work through their own trauma knowing their children are being kept safe and are in the counseling they need to address their emotional concerns," she said.

Butt agreed.

"I think we help to reduce the stress that the system often produces for families," she said. "I think that we help families to focus on their children versus the litigation and improve the relationships they have."

The SPCC recently received funding for its supervised visitation program through the Violence Against Women Act. The grants were given to just 17 sites nationwide. SPCC will be able to double the capacity of its program.

Still, there are challenges. The WIC program, for instance, stretches out almost as far away as Ithaca and the the group works to make sure people in need know of the program.

Overall, funding dictates how many people the SPCC can help, Butt said, and many programs have waiting lists.

"We always wrestle with the challenge of ... know[ing] there are people out there who need the services, but we need to connect them," she said.

The group does its work quietly and humbly and is an incredible

resource, Castellano said.

"I think they're one of our unsung heroes in the community," she said. "You don't see them and yet,

without them, with respect to the legal system as it attempts to serve children, [it] would be really hamstrung."

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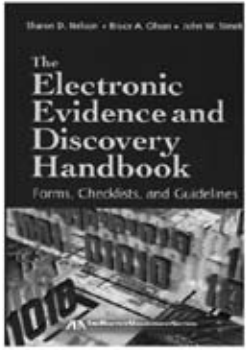
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served on a number of commissions," said Judge Patricia Marks, supervising judge of the Criminal Court, Seventh Judicial District, and presiding judge in the Monroe County Drug and Mental Health Courts in Monroe County. "He's a terrific lawyer and a credit to our community."

Speranza is chairman of the Character and Fitness Committee for the Seventh Judicial District, which reviews new attorney applications. He served on statewide court commissions on indigent defense and the death penalty, and when New York had capital punishment, Speranza was a designated capital attorney.

He was a regional representative to the criminal defense section of the New York State Bar Association and a trustee of the Monroe County Bar Association. He has taught and lectured extensively.

"He is probably one of the most

eloquent speakers and prolific writers that I know," said Judge Joseph Nesser, of Monroe County Family Court, who nominated Speranza for the Nathaniel Award. "He is a perfect example of a person who embodies the law as a noble profession."

Speranza has received the MCBA's Charles F. Crimi Award (2001) and the Robert C. Napier Award (1993).

What's the secret to all of his success?

"Hard work. I've just been working very hard all these years. It always comes down to hard work," Speranza said.

"He continually impresses me with his ability, his dedication to his clients and his real respect for the law," U.S. District Judge Charles Siragusa said. "If you want to see how a lawyer should act, you just need look no farther than John Speranza."



Congratulations to our valued partner Mike Buckley, and to all his fellow nominees for the Nathaniel Award. Your service to the law and to our community is exemplary.

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company



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