

They should only be used for target practice or for our law enforcement personnel who protect the community from dangerous people.

## NEW ATTORNEYS PRACTICING LAW



**Anthony Girgis** obtained his Juris Doctorate degree from Whittier Law School after receiving his bachelor's degree from UC Los Angeles. After passing the California Bar in 2007, he opened Girgis Law Firm and

has concentrated his practice in consumer bankruptcy (specifically Chapter 7 and Chapter 13), criminal defense and personal injury. Girgis is admitted to practice law in the United States Central District Court, as well as the Eastern District Court of California.



**Nicole Kamm** received her B.A. in American Studies/Public Health from UC Berkeley in 2000. She joined Lewitt Hackman in Encino after receiving her law degree in 2006

from Pepperdine University School of Law, where she graduated Cum Laude. While at Pepperdine University, Kamm was a member of Phi Delta Phi and the Women's Law Association, and was Lead Articles Editor of the National Association of Administrative Law Judges Journal. Kamm's practice currently emphasizes the areas of employment, corporate, and civil litigation.



**Steven Platt** joined Parker Milliken in downtown Los Angeles as an associate in 2006. He specializes in litigation, including trade secret litigation and employment

litigation, and he has experience in tax and probate matters. Platt graduated from UC Davis School of Law in 2006, where he was elected to the Order of the Barristers and served as Managing Editor of the UC Davis

Law Review. He graduated from UC Irvine in 2003 with a B.A. in Political Science and a Spanish minor. He was President of the Associated Student Body during his junior year.

### Valley Lawyer: What is the most challenging aspect of working for a large firm? What do you like most?

**Nicole Kamm:** Part of my job is advice and counsel and part of my job is litigation. Litigation can be challenging because you are always dealing with deadlines: deadlines to file a motion, deadlines to respond to discovery, etc. Once one deadline is met, there is another one around the corner. To make sure every deadline is met, I keep both written and electronic calendars. I also keep multiple post-it reminders on my desk and computer. I enjoy the people I work with at Lewitt Hackman very much. They are all professional, very good attorneys. But they are also decent people, who care about their employees and clients.

**Steven Platt:** The best thing about Parker Milliken is that we have a wonderful group of people working together. When I first joined the firm, I was surprised to see that many of the attorneys had been working there for 20, 30, and sometimes even 40 years. That type of tenure is unique among law firms, and I am excited to be a part of it. Working at a large firm has also allowed me to gain experience in a broad array of areas, which helps me assess clients' problems from many angles. It is amazing how often corporate and tax questions arise in litigation. Also, with so many attorneys working together out of the same office, no matter what type of issue I encounter, there is a very good chance that someone else at the firm has already faced, and resolved, a similar issue.

### VL: What inspired you to start your own law firm?

**Anthony Girgis:** I wanted to take more of a lead role in order to provide more of a personal, one-on-one relationship with clients. Since my clients are my top priority, I felt that the best way to achieve this relationship was by starting my own law firm.

### VL: What is the most challenging aspect of having your own firm?

**AG:** The most challenging aspect of having my own firm is competing with the larger, more established law firms.

### VL: What inspired you to practice law?

**SP:** When I was very young, my sister and I would conduct mock trials with my grandparents. We would take turns playing the roles of judge and attorney, and we would assemble a jury panel of our favorite stuffed animals. Though I only won about half of our mock trials (my sister, of course, won the other half), I do recall one particular stuffed panda that usually voted with me. I continued to pursue law-related activities throughout my youth. I joined the speech and debate club in junior high, and in high school I participated in mock trial. By the time I reached college, I was certain I wanted to practice law.

### VL: How did law school prepare you for the daily responsibilities you have at the firm?

**NK:** In truth, law school does not prepare you very well for the practice of law. Law school teaches you the law itself. You learn to be a "lawyer" on the job. Pepperdine gave me a great foundation of legal knowledge. I also learned good study skills and a strong work ethic. I loved Pepperdine. It is the number one law school in terms of professor accessibility and that was so important to me.

### VL: What do you enjoy most about working with your clients?

**AG:** I really enjoy building a personal relationship with my clients while providing a solution to their legal situation. In today's economy, my practice is primarily focused in representing debtors in bankruptcy. I chose this area of law because it feels great assisting clients to obtain financial freedom. I enjoy making a positive difference in my client's life when he/she is in financial distress.

### VL: What do you like most about your areas of practice?

**NK:** By far, I enjoy the advice and counsel part of employment law the best of all the areas I practice in. I like fielding calls from clients who have questions about how to handle an employee complaint, want a policy drafted or are concerned with complying with the complex aspects of California wage and hour law. Advice and counsel lets me have an immediate impact on the clients. I feel like I get to use my knowledge in a productive and beneficial way. It is the most rewarding part of the job.

**VL: As a new attorney, what barriers have you overcome in the legal field?**

**SP:** Two different challenges come to mind. First, I think young attorneys have to work very hard to earn the respect of opposing counsel and the courts. Many judges and opposing counsel seem reluctant to listen to a young attorney. As I become more experienced, I am learning to use this to my advantage – particularly when dealing with opposing counsel. Second, I find it difficult to manage the idiosyncrasies of different judges. For example, some judges adhere strictly to the letter of the law. Other judges are much more lax, particularly on timing and service issues. I tend to prefer judges that closely adhere to the law, because I know what to expect from them.

**VL: As a new mom, how do you balance work, family and personal time?**

**NK:** Balancing work and home life as an attorney is challenging. This career demands a lot from you. The hours are not always predictable. Client issues are not always easy to handle or on your time clock. It can be stressful. There is often a lot at stake. I try to balance my life by making sure that when I am at work, I am 100% focused on work and when I am at home with my family, I am 100% focused on them. This in itself is a challenge, but I try.

**VL: Why did you decide to join the SFVBA?**

**AG:** I decided to join the SFVBA because I wanted to get involved in the community and meet local attorneys. Being born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, I felt that it was a good starting point for both my career and my law firm.

**VL: What moved you to become involved in the SFVBA?**

**NK:** I joined the SFVBA Diversity Committee because I am interested in helping young people with an interest in a career in the law. I also understood that the Committee would be involved in promoting women and minority lawyers and judges, which I also support.

**VL: How has SFVBA helped your professional growth in terms of networking?**

**SP:** Professional groups such as the SFVBA are useful because they understand the difficulties faced by young lawyers, especially when it comes to business development and marketing, and they offer useful programs and events tailored to our demographic. Although I have yet to sign

a new client or bring in a new case at a bar event, I have developed relationships that will benefit me for years to come.

**AG:** The SFVBA has provided me with a great opportunity to meet local attorneys in the community. Thanks to the SFVBA, not only have I built a friendly relationship with these attorneys, we now provide each other with an excellent source of referrals for potential clients.

**VL: Why do you feel it's important to give back to your community?**

**SP:** I would never have achieved my goal of becoming a lawyer without the support of people in my different communities. I want, and feel a moral obligation, to do my part to help future generations benefit as I did.

**SEASONED ATTORNEYS  
TEACHING LAW**



**Dmitry Gorin** has been involved in criminal trial work and pretrial litigation since 1994.

Before becoming partner in Kestenbaum, Eisner & Gorin LLP, Gorin was a Senior

Deputy District Attorney in Los Angeles for more than a decade. As a criminal trial prosecutor, Gorin specialized in complex trial work including gang murder trials, sex crimes, major narcotics cases and white collar crimes. He received numerous awards for successful trial work from the Association of District Attorneys and the U.S. Postal Inspector.



**Myer Sankary** has been a mediator for over 13 years with specialties in probate, trusts and estates, corporations, litigation and business, having practiced in a variety of areas of law

since 1966. Sankary has been appointed by Superior Court to serve as trustee for several trusts since 1989. After graduating Harvard Law School in 1965, Sankary began practicing law in Beverly Hills with the firm of Wyman, Bautzer, Rothman & Kuchel. Since then, he has become known for his extensive knowledge, experience and reputation for honesty and integrity, both as a litigator and as a transactional attorney.

**Valley Lawyer: What subjects have you taught or currently teach?**

**Dmitry Gorin:** I am an Adjunct Law Professor, teaching at Pepperdine University School of Law, and at the UCLA Speech and Communications Department. My instruction and expertise relate to trial advocacy, public speaking, constitutional rights (Miranda Rights and Unlawful Searches), alternative sentencing, and pre-trial litigation, and jury trial litigation.

**Myer Sankary:** I teach Negotiation Strategies in Mediation and Using the Science of Influence in Negotiations.

**VL: What level of students and which college(s)?**

**MS:** I teach MBA students at the Marshall School of Business at USC and I am a guest lecturer in a mediation workshop for law students at the USC Law School.

**DG:** UCLA Communications Department (undergrads Communications majors) and Pepperdine Law School (upper-division law students).

**VL: Identify a valuable lesson you learned from your law students.**

**DG:** Most law students feel like the general public – once a person is arrested he or she likely did something unlawful. Before teaching, I assumed they believed in the concept of presuming a suspect innocent, at least before the prosecutor has decided to file criminal charges.

**MS:** Business students and law students are very competitive negotiators. But they learn quickly the valuable of cooperation and creating value to settle disputes.

**VL: Tell us about your most poignant teaching experience/moment.**

**MS:** In the business school, I use an exercise based on one of my age discrimination cases. After hearing an introduction to the mediation process in a litigated case, they actually negotiate the age discrimination case in a simulation where the students take the part of mediator, clients, and lawyers. After an hour of simulated negotiations, they return to the classroom to discuss their strategies and describe their experience of mediating a dispute. Each group of students then reports the result of their mediation — most cases are settled.

At the end of the class, I have each mediator (there are usually 5 to 8 mediators, one for each simulation group) pick a slip

of paper at random out of a bag. I confirm that they do not know what is on the paper. I then ask each mediator, one at a time to read the slip of paper. Each slip announces a different verdict from no recovery for plaintiff to a verdict of \$500,000 plus costs and attorney fees. I then have each mediator compare the verdict with their settlement figure. I then explain to the class that the likelihood of getting a verdict in trial is about as random as drawing a verdict from a bag! The expressions on the faces of the students show that they get the point - it's usually better to settle than get a random adverse verdict in trial.

**DG:** Seeing my law students working as attorneys for the Office of the District Attorney or the Public Defender, having been motivated by the coursework and lectures, is very exhilarating.

**VL: Finish this sentence, "The next generation of attorneys..."**

**DG:** Will be very-well informed about the criminal justice system, sensitive to an accused criminal's constitutional rights, and understanding of the roles prosecutors and defense lawyers play in the criminal justice system.

**MS:** Have greater opportunities in the future to become better at their profession because of the advances in psychology, social science, negotiation strategies, game theory and decision analysis. These are tools that were not available when I was going to school back in the 60's. There is much more information about how to negotiate a deal today so that the next generation of attorneys should be better equipped to represent their clients and to be much more effective negotiators. ⚡



## SFVBA and California Society of CPAs present...

### A Joint Networking Mixer

Free to SFVBA Members!  
Great opportunity to network  
and meet other professionals!

Thursday, November 19, 2009  
6:00 PM — 8:30 PM

Woodland Hills Country Club  
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RSVP to (818) 227-0490, ext. 105  
or [events@sfvba.org](mailto:events@sfvba.org).

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