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Top Boutique/s/ GENERAL LITIGATION



Alex Drecun/Special to the Daily Journal

From Left : Gary Lincenberg, Ekwon Rhaw, Benjamin Gluck, Paul Chan

One of the only ways to tell that a third or fourth generation of attorneys is taking over the leadership at Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Dooks, Lincenberg & Rhaw PC is to look at the ever-expanding shingle.

While there are certainly other changes — the firm has expanded its roster of institutional clients in recent years — the firm has kept its commitment to functioning as a litigation-only, national trial boutique.

“We all love litigating and we’re all good at it,” said Benjamin Gluck, one of a new generation of Bird Marella partners. “That’s why clients come to us and it’s what’s helped us grow the practice and work with an incredible group of national and international clients.”

The firm also has a very homegrown flavor. Many of the newer partners have been with the firm since they were associates and credit the older generations, starting with Terry Bird and Vincent Marella, with both nurturing them and giving them the freedom to develop their own practice.

“It’s a credit to the firm that it’s been supportive of the younger lawyers,” said co-managing partner Paul Chan, who’s spent his entire career at Bird Marella. “The older partners have told us, ‘do what you want to do’ and let the younger lawyers handle the decisions about the future of the firm.”

That future isn’t likely to include merging with a big firm. While Bird Marella said it receives numerous offers from large firms looking to establish a base in Los Angeles, it has yet to seriously entertain an offer. Part of the calculus in remaining independent helps the firm’s attorneys remain free of conflict, but more of it has to do with camaraderie.

“There’s no politics, there’s no jerks and we all get along,” said Ron Nessim, who might be considered one of the more senior partners at the firm these days. “We’ve changed to some extent, but we’re still an old-fashioned firm.”

The formula seems to be working. Ekwon Rhaw, the newest partner to have his name added to the shingle, has been integral in

BIRD, MARELLA, BOXER, WOLPERT, NESSIM, DROOKS, LINCENBERG & RHAW PC

Los Angeles

Litigation

Managing partners: Mitchell A. Kamin and Paul S. Chan

Other key partners: Gary S. Lincenberg, Ronald J. Nessim, Ekwon E. Rhaw

- Represents JM Eagle, the world’s largest plastic-pipe manufacturer, in federal False Claims Act litigation, a parallel federal class action, and related state court litigations.
- Won a dismissal of criminal charges against the former chairman of the UCLA Political Science Department, Michael Lofchie.

developing the roster of institutional clients including Hyundai, Samsung and Xerox, without having to sacrifice the boutique life.

“We get to [represent] Fortune 500 companies in bet-the-company cases without the bureaucracy of a big firm,” Rhaw said.

And the firm’s vaunted white collar practice? It’s still going strong. Gary Lincenberg — who’s been rumored as a candidate for U.S. attorney in the Central District — is considered one of the most sought after criminal defense lawyers in the state, if not the nation.

“In the white collar area where people or companies are looking for an attorney to represent them in a bet your liberty or bet the business case,” Lincenberg said, “we stack up pretty well.”

— Henry Meier