

# THE AMERICAN LAWYER

In 1995, *The American Lawyer* identified the private bar's next generation of leaders. Now, we look back at them—and ahead to their successors.

The word "elite" comes from an Old French verb meaning "to choose." In its modern connotation, the word has also come to stand for high achievement. Both meanings apply to the special report that follows—the culmination of an intensive effort by the staff of *The American Lawyer* to choose 45 of the highest-performing members of the private bar under the age of 45.

We had help. Many months ago, we contacted all the firms in The Am Law 200 to seek their nominations. We also spun our own Rolodexes, scanned Web sites and news clippings, and reached out to luminaries within particular practice areas to solicit their thoughts.

As for criteria, there were a very few. We looked for prodigies who had already notched a major trial win or complex deal, for those who had established remarkable records of professional development, for those who could point to an independent book of business, for those who might have overcome adversity. We also looked far and wide. It would be possible to construct a list of 45 young bankruptcy specialists whose accomplishments were noteworthy (particularly in this market), but we wanted to draw from many walks of law.

The result, we think, will stand up over time. That was certainly true of the alumni from our last such effort; their impressive updates appear throughout the following pages. So, for all you elitists out there, happy talent scouting.

## 45 UNDER Forty-Five The Rising Stars of the Private Bar

# 45 UNDER 45



GREGORY  
EVANS, 42

**GREGORY EVANS WAS GETTING A HAIRCUT** in 1996 when the general counsel of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation called. A freight train carrying hazardous materials had derailed on California's steep Cajon Pass. Evans was just a sixth-year associate, but the in-house lawyer wanted him at the scene.

Evans, then with Los Angeles's Hill, Farrer & Burrill, spent a week at the isolated site, sleeping in his car and acting as the railroad's point person. Later he oversaw all the litigation arising from the accident, including three toxic tort class actions, and he successfully kept his client from indictments in grand jury proceedings.

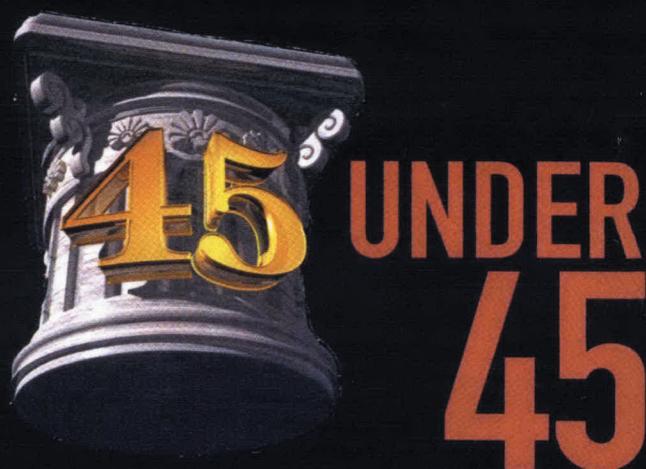
Now a partner at Orrick, Evans still likes taking the adrenaline-fueled calls. When The Sherwin-Williams Company faced state and local environmental charges, Evans won some dismissals and settled the rest of the charges for small fines. "He cut to the chase and got quick results," says Donald McConnell, Sherwin's in-house environmental counsel.

These days, Vodafone Group PLC is Evans's biggest source of business. Last year he defended a senior executive in a fraud suit by a former vice president who threatened to release trade secrets. Evans won preliminary injunctions in London and San Francisco, and the plaintiff agreed to dismiss her case without recovery.

Raised by a single Mexican American mother, Evans grew up poor in East Los Angeles. "I first learned about advocacy when my mom tried to

get child support from this deadbeat dad," he says. Evans, who earned a master's degree in social work before attending Notre Dame Law School, has not forgotten the problems of the poor. After law school, he spent a year working at the Coalition for the Homeless. In private practice, he has taken on a string of pro bono cases, including one that created new housing for a poor, rural African American community. Evans acknowledges that his commercial work might seem to conflict with his interest in social justice—such as the time he defended 3M Company against environmental suits brought by a self-proclaimed public interest group. But not all causes pursued in the public's name are meritorious, he points out. "If you want to do battle with Greg Evans," he says, "give him a case where you're purporting to do good and you're really doing harm."

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