



EXCELLENCE
IN THE LAW

Inside:

- Up and Coming Lawyers



MERRILL SHEA

LEFTERIS K. TRAVAYIAKIS

By Eric T. Berkman

When Lefteris K. Travayiakis was studying environmental engineering in college, he never envisioned spending his days engaged in courtroom combat on behalf of accused felons.

But when he took an undergrad environmental law course, he fell in love with the law and decided to switch gears. And when he took criminal law as a 1L, he knew he had found his true calling.

Today, Travayiakis runs a thriving criminal practice in West Roxbury. He has more than 20 jury trials under his belt and has not received a guilty verdict on a lead charge in six years.

“All my trials since then have resulted in either an acquittal or a conviction on a reduced charge, which I consider a win,” he says.

But he hasn’t done it the easy way. He went solo less than a year out of law school, forcing him to develop his trial skills and hone his style completely on his own.

He hasn’t shied away from the tough cases, either. For example, in 2008, he defended a young man facing serious prison time for the alleged attempted armed robbery of a pizza delivery driver.

The defendant insisted on going to trial despite overwhelming evidence against him. For one thing, he was arrested at the scene in a sting

operation, though he had not yet made an overt move on the driver. Additionally, police obtained the cell phone used to place the delivery order that lured the driver to the building. Not only had that phone been used in at least one other similar robbery, it contained photos of the defendant posing with a gun.

However, prosecutors — who had never turned on the phone — were unaware of the photos. Accordingly, they offered only the cell phone itself as evidence but not its contents. So the jury, which did see the photos when it switched on the phone during deliberations, properly disregarded them, as incriminating as they were. Verdict: “Not guilty.”

Travayiakis, who had not seen the photos either before jury deliberations, readily admits the outcome would have been far different had the commonwealth done its homework. But he has no misgivings about the results in that or any other of his cases.

“It’s not my job to put people away or make them pay for their crimes,” he says. “My job is to make sure my client gets a fair shake. We’re in an adversarial system, and I won’t hold [the commonwealth’s] hand to help them convict my clients.” **MLW**

Eric T. Berkman, an attorney and formerly a reporter for Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, is a freelance writer.

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AGE: 34

GRADUATED: Suffolk University Law School, 2002

POSITION: Sole practitioner, West Roxbury

One thing about him that might surprise people: “I’m a golf fanatic.”