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CORPORATE
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George Stamboulidis

Taking bigger caseload

Ex-federal prosecutor moves up in corporate world to head Baker Hostetler's NY office

BY HILARY POTKEWITZ

GEORGE STAMBOULIDIS had always been taken seriously. After all, he'd spent 13 years as a federal prosecutor, taking down mafia bosses, drug lords and white-collar criminals. But as he stood before the court trying his first corporate civil case in 2001, he saw the judge smirking at him. Smirking!

"Whom are you representing, counselor? I didn't quite hear you," said the judge. It was a trademark infringement case over a company's use of Peanuts comic book characters without permission.

Mr. Stamboulidis cleared his throat. "Snoopy, your honor. I'm representing Snoopy."

It was the start of his career as a private-sector attorney, and Mr. Stamboulidis admits he briefly wondered if he'd made a mistake leaving the Justice Department for Baker Hostetler.

Prior to the Peanuts case, Mr. Stamboulidis had become well-known on the judicial circuit. He'd even been selected by then Attorney General Janet Reno to prosecute physicist Wen Ho Lee in the Los Alamos nuclear weapons secrets case.

"I was standing there thinking, I used to handle our nation's nuclear secrets, and now I'm representing Snoopy?" he recalls.

From mob to Madoff

THE SECOND GUESSING was short-lived. "We won that case, actually," he says.

And he's won many since. Mr. Stamboulidis was promoted to managing partner of the firm's New York office in January. He now runs the 75-lawyer office, the second-largest at the 600-attorney firm. To those who have worked with him, Mr. Stamboulidis is an obvious choice to lead during uncertain times.

"The distinctive thing about George is that he was well-respected by the FBI agents, by the judges, by the defense lawyers and even by the defendants themselves," says Judge John Gleeson, Eastern District of New York, who used to head the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's office. "[George] was an aggressive and effective prosecutor, and you just knew he was a completely honorable guy."

To wit, Mr. Stamboulidis has been five times appointed by the government to serve as an independent monitor for financial giants whose compliance practices came into question, including Merrill Lynch (following the

PERSONNEL FILE

COMPANY Baker Hostetler

TITLE Managing partner, New York office

AGE 47

RÉSUMÉ Federal prosecutor, U.S. Justice Department, Organized Crime Division

PERSONALITY TYPE Principled and tenacious



KARJEAN LEVINE

collapse of Enron), Bank of New York and Mellon Bank.

Baker Hostetler is currently in the spotlight because Manhattan-based partner Irving Picard is the court-appointed trustee in charge of liquidating Bernard L. Madoff's investment firm. At a time when most law firms are shedding lawyers by the hundreds, Baker is actively hiring in New York.

It took Mr. Stamboulidis longer than most to cycle through the federal prosecutor's office. An admitted Godfather buff, he relished chasing down Cosa Nostra.

"You were always looking for the next big case," he explains.

"Chin" down

THE HIGH POINT CAME with the successful prosecution and 1997 conviction of Vincent "Vinny the Chin" Gigante, boss of the Genovese crime family, best known for his years spent wandering Greenwich Village in a bathrobe and slippers in a bid to plead mental illness.

The case involved a cast of characters whom Mr. Stamboulidis and his team were able to flip for the prosecution, including Salvatore "Sammy the Bull" Gravano, former underboss of the Gambino crime family, and various underbosses of the Lucchese and Bruno/Scarfo crime families.

He is now steeped in corporate intrigue, instead of violent crime, and says he has no regrets. "After a while in that world, you've pretty much seen it all," he says. "It was time to move on." ■

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