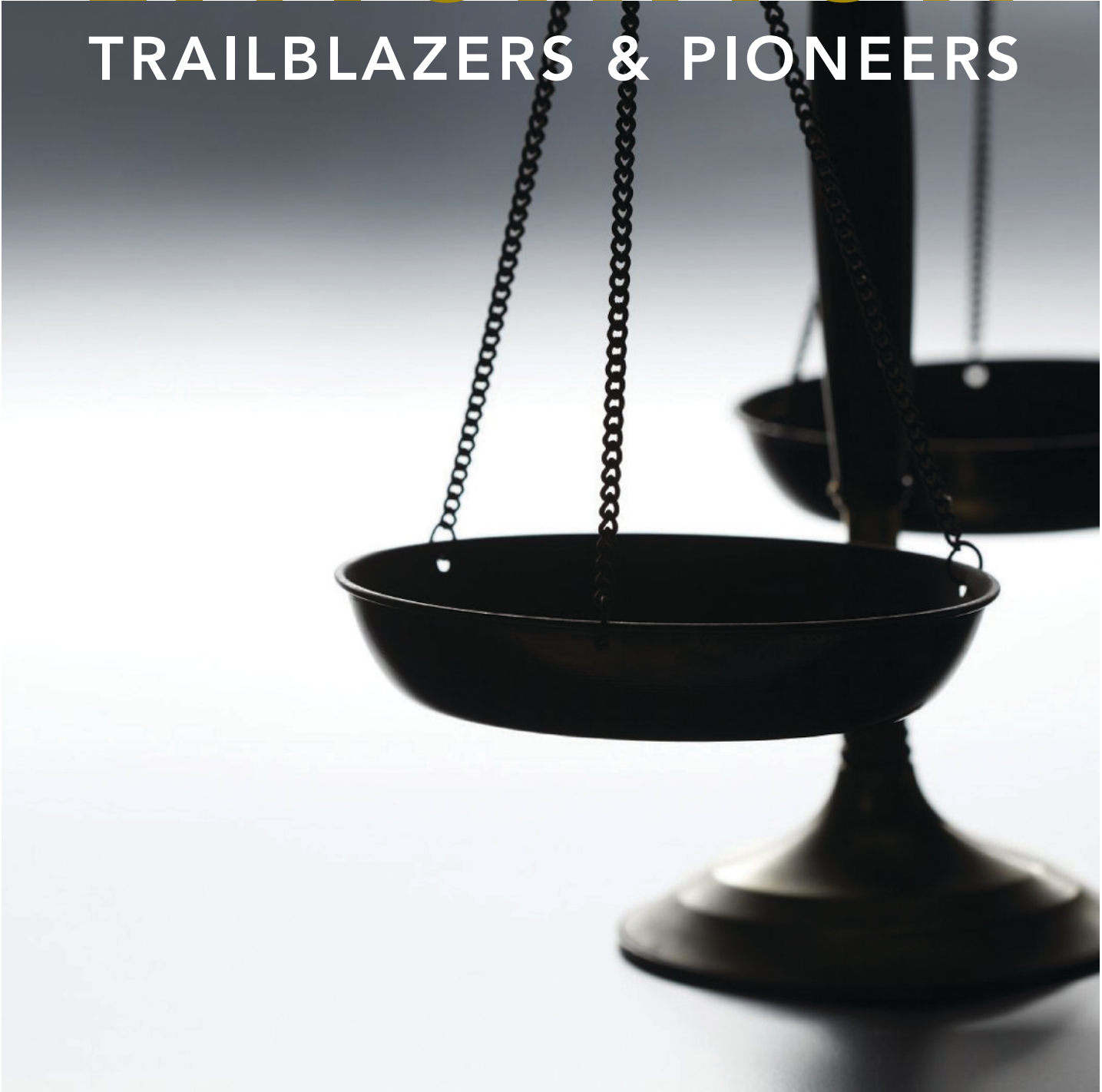


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LITIGATION

TRAILBLAZERS & PIONEERS



THOMAS A. DEMETRIO

CORBOY & DEMETRIO



PIONEER SPIRIT In 1973, Tom Demetrio was clerking for a judge who introduced him to Philip H. Corboy, who was “the guy for plaintiffs’ personal injury and wrongful death.” Demetrio joined up with Corboy’s firm and made partner in 1982. “That started a national trend. Before this, all of the really good plaintiff’s lawyers were ‘lone rangers.’”

TRAILS BLAZED Demetrio’s first big case was the crash of American Airlines Flight 191 in 1979, and he’s been involved in every major air crash since. He’s negotiated more than \$1 billion in settlements and has acquired over \$130 million in jury verdicts, but he also tries to solve social problems. One example was the Tylenol tampering case in 1982, which was the catalyst for today’s tamperproof packaging. “That’s what tort lawyers are supposed to do: make things safer.” In 1994, he also created the Chicago Bar Association’s Lawyers Lend-A-Hand mentoring program for inner-city kids. “It’s dedicated to giving kids an alternative to gangs. That’s more fulfilling than a victory in the courtroom.”

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Demetrio believes that he started at a perfect time. “It was easy to get to trial, and they were fun and there was a great camaraderie between plaintiff’s lawyers and defense lawyers and judges.” That has changed. He also sees a glut of lawyers. “Law schools have been taking kids in, taking their tuition, leaving them in debt, and there are no jobs.” He expects law schools to downsize as part of a change in the profession, especially as mediation has taken over. “It’s not necessarily a bad thing, but young lawyers aspiring to be a great trial lawyer will be disappointed.”

MICHAEL E. ELSNER

MOTLEY RICE



PIONEER SPIRIT Before law school, Michael Elsner worked at a small law firm in his parents’ small town in Tennessee. “It was a town with a jail above the courthouse. It was always something different, and I always got the opportunity to understand someone’s story.” After law school, he went to work for the Manville Trust, where they decided to sue tobacco companies to recover their share of asbestos and tobacco-related injuries. “I was a young lawyer and really enjoyed digging into the facts.”

TRAILS BLAZED In 2002, Elsner started working at Motley Rice on 9/11 litigation and in the course of that got approached to work on terrorist cases. They took a case for financial restitution from the Arab Bank for those who were injured by suicide bombs in Israel. “I worked on that for 10 years. Ultimately the jury found that the bank knowingly and intentionally provided support to Hamas that was a substantial contributing factor to 24 terrorist attacks in Israel.” This was the first time that a financial institution had been held liable for financing terrorists. Elsner has also been consulting on the first occupational disease case ever in South Africa. “We are trying to help 27,000 gold miners who have developed silicosis.”

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Elsner thinks the Arab Bank matter should be a wake-up call to financial institutions that “if you work with terrorists, you’ll be liable in the United States.” He also sees a real movement internationally to open courthouse doors and provide access to justice to those—like the South African mine workers—who have historically been unable to assert their human rights for various reasons.