

THE GULFSHORE'S Go-To Lawyers

... when winning is a must.

THEIRS ARE THE DISCREET ears privy to a family's most intimate affairs.

Theirs are the voices of calm and reason counseling both the aggrieved and the accused. Above all, they are the rays of hope when things look darkest—the ones to call when you're only allowed one call. These are Southwest Florida's go-to lawyers. To find these A-list advocates, we approached several trusted local attorneys for a list of their esteemed peers. These same names appeared on everyone's short list. Their specialties vary, but these counselors share a few common traits: high ethical standards, terrific intelligence and a passion for doing what they do best.

JERRY BERRY

Berry, Day, McFee & Martin, Naples

CRIMINAL DEFENSE

Whether they're rich and powerful, or just feel powerfully wronged, lots of criminal defendants make their first post-arrest phone call to Jerry Berry. A skilled cross-examiner who might have stepped from central casting, Berry has garnered lots of ink for his high-profile defenses of everyone from a Benson & Hedges heir accused of blowing up his family to Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson, involved in a little dust-up at the Ritz a couple of years ago.

EDWARD K. CHEFFY

Cheffy Passidomo Wilson & Johnson, Naples

CIVIL LITIGATION

Tenacious, detail-oriented and hyper-articulate, Ed Cheffy also has the sort of savoir-faire that gives him an undeniable edge in the courtroom. In addition to his accomplished partners, the firm he co-founded includes a stable of young associates learning litigation techniques from the master. And for years he lent his mentorship to the Community School of Naples' formidable mock trial team.

KEVIN G. COLEMAN

Goodlette, Coleman & Johnson, Naples

REAL ESTATE AND BANKING LAW

Got to get the deal done? Admiring peers say Kevin Coleman can put an air-tight agreement together over the phone in the time it would take most of us to find a scrap of paper and a

working pen. Coleman understands the ins-and-outs of complex financial transactions, and he knows even more than your favorite condo commando about the arcane workings of homeowners' associations.

JOE B. COX

Cox & Nici, Naples

ESTATE PLANNING

There's something about Joe Cox that just makes people want to trust him with their money. For decades, the estate-planning guru has been a quiet confidant for many of Naples' most wealthy residents, customizing complex arrangements for their assets and smoothly tying up the financial loose ends that will let their legacies live on.

YALE T. FREEMAN

Yale T. Freeman Law, Fort Myers and Naples

CRIMINAL LAW/COMPLEX LITIGATION

There are rainmakers and there are noisemakers, but it's the rare attorney who can navigate both personas. A one-man show, Yale T. Freeman made a splash in Southwest Florida in the early 1990s with a suit that involved a downed airliner in the Everglades and the low-wage mechanic who was about to take a fall for his corporate employer. As with a recent controversy over Bibles in Collier classrooms, it's also inevitable that the phrase "ACLU attorney" is often followed by Freeman's name.

By Tracy Jones

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAURA COYLE