

# Legal eagles, actors and cowboys

*A glimpse into life outside the courtroom*

By  
**CLAUDE  
SOLNIK**

UNIONDALE – Winning and losing is nothing new for lawyers.

But few attorneys know the physical thrill of victory that George Casale, a partner at Rivin Radler's Insurance and Coverage Litigation Practice Group, experienced May 10 when he crossed the finish line at the Yonkers Raceway.

Casale, 57, rode his horse, dubbed Northeast, to victory in the C.K.G. Billings Ama-

teur Driving Series, arriving at the finish line 2 minutes and 2 seconds ahead of former Yonkers Trot winner Goalfish.

"It was exhilarating," said the horse enthusiast, adding that law and horseracing are worlds apart. With the latter, there's an element of fear, he said. "People have gotten seriously injured. And some very famous drivers have gotten killed racing."

Other attorneys play it somewhat safer outside the courtroom.

Take A. Thomas Levin, a partner at

Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein, and an avid photographer whose work adorns his office walls and holiday cards he sends to friends and family each year. Or Joel Markowitz, a partner at Melville-based Lamb & Barnosky who sheds his suit for a costume when he takes the stage as an actor.

Then there's Manuel Romero, president of the Brooklyn Bar Association and a solo practitioner. In his downtime, Romero hunts Medieval-style – with a

bow and arrow – scuba-dives and plays tennis.

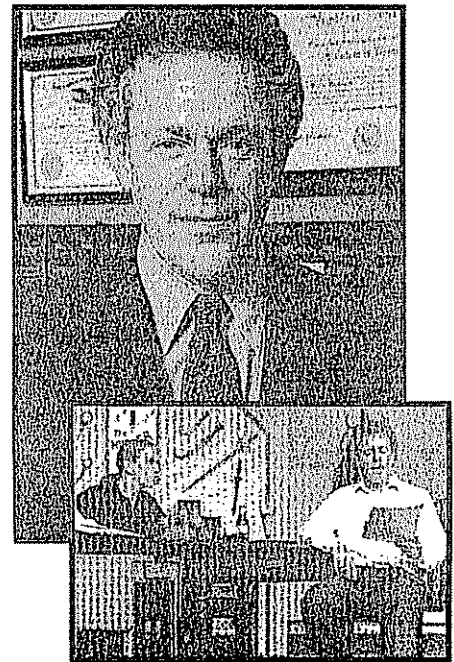
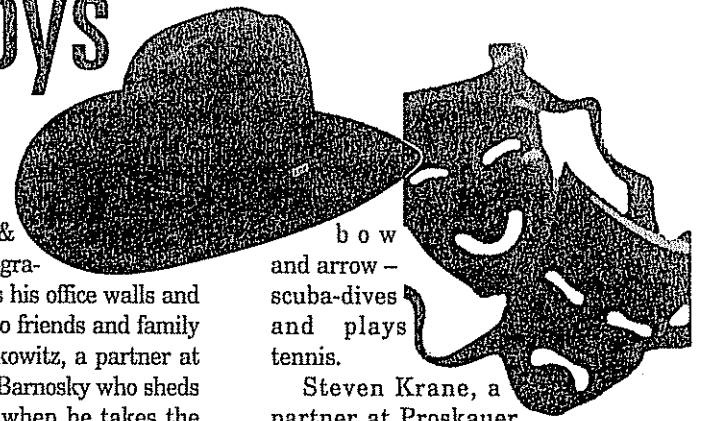
Steven Krane, a partner at Proskauer Rose in Manhattan and a former president of the New York State Bar Association, chases tornadoes in Kansas, the Dakotas, Oklahoma and elsewhere.

"He photographs them," said Kenneth Standard, president of the New York State Bar Association, an avid squash and tennis player, and a friend of Krane. "They drive around in planes, look for funnel clouds and get as close as they dare."

But no matter what the hobby, chances are that having it can somehow enhance an attorney's position in the legal arena.

For lawyers with unusual hobbies, that could mean standing out from the crowd.

"People may not remember you so much as a lawyer but as a lawyer who races harness horses," said Casale. "You're



**HAMMING IT UP:** Joel Markowitz of Lamb & Barnosky emotes in *Deathtrap* (inset) as a member of the Township Theatre Group in Huntington.

remembered in that vein, for doing something out of the ordinary. It helps me in terms of building relationships with clients. It distinguishes me.

Markowitz, a member of the Township Theatre Group in Huntington, said there's a strong parallel between acting out on stage and participating in courtroom drama.

"What's similar is having to stand up there and be vulnerable, and, in effect, put on a show," he said. "That's what lawyers do, particularly for jurors, who have to like you, just as an audience does. You have to be able to express yourself so they understand you. And you have to articulate as an actor on stage as well."

Also, Markowitz said, acting has taught him a lot about what audiences and, by extension, juries like.

"I have more of an understanding of

See **HOBBIES**, p.8B

**SAY CHEESE:**

A. Thomas Levin, a partner at Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein, is an avid photographer whose avocation takes him all over the globe.



# Legal eagles and cowboys

## HOBBIES, From p.4B

myself and what I'm capable of doing by way of self-expression," said Markowitz. "I also have more of an understanding of what people hear when you talk to them."

Hobbies can also toughen you up for the role of lawyer.

"I manage stress, I think, very well," said Casale. "Racing may have something to do with that."

He concedes, however, that it might work the other way around – that perhaps his choice of hobby reflects his tendency to be less risk-averse than others.

"Maybe it's a way of looking at certain cases," Casale said of a willingness to take chances. "Perhaps you can find a winning way. But if you were too conservative, you wouldn't."

For some lawyers, hobbies are what they do to relax; for others, hobbies are more like second careers.

Casale's horseracing practically provides him with a second life. In those circles, he's known as George "the Brooklyn Cowboy" Casale.

"I always had a love for horses. I grew up in the 1950s with a lot of Westerns," he said, noting that his hobby has allowed him to live out a childhood dream. "I fell in love with the horses. I always liked to compete. This gave me a combination of both."

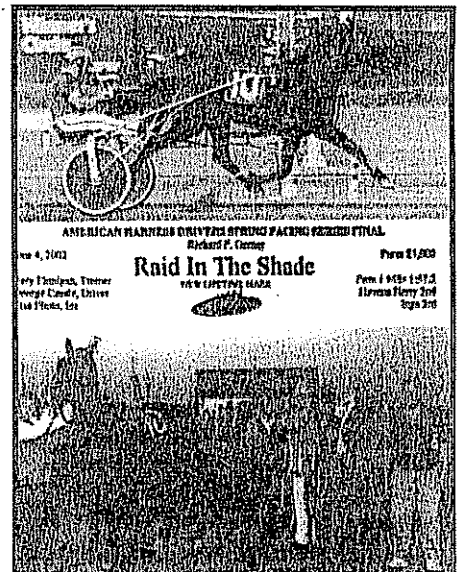
And Casale, who's been racing horses since 1994, has recently taken to the sky as well as the track.

"I just got my private pilot's license last month," he said. "I've been flying planes for the last year and a half."

Robert Pryor, a founding partner at Pryor & Mandelup, is an avid – and very competitive – tennis player, hitting the court as often as he possibly can.

"The point is, if you're competitive, it doesn't matter what you do," he said. "There are people who play passively and those who play aggressively. When you play a sport, you play to win."

Markowitz's hobby is a more mellow activity, allowing him to reflect and get to



**RIDING HIGH:** Racing horses is a dream come true for George 'the Brooklyn Cowboy' Casale, who grew up watching Westerns.

"know" an array of characters.

"The one thing I haven't played is a lawyer," he said. "I've played physicians, murderers. I was the stage-door slasher in the Musical Comedy Murders of 1940."

Ultimately, having hobbies is a necessity for many attorneys, allowing them to express other sides of themselves and step back from the high-pressure world of law.

"It's a real challenge for me to find the time to act," said Markowitz. "But it's something that keeps me sane, so I have to find the time."

"I do it is because I think everyone ought to have a hobby," he added. "This is a very intense profession I'm in. It requires a lot of hard work and long hours. I [act] because I love it, not because it helps me in my business." ■