

Louis W. Tompros

POSITION: Partner, WilmerHale, Boston
AGE: 33
LAW SCHOOL: Harvard Law School
BAR ADMISSION: 2003

Q. What do you consider your biggest achievement as a lawyer to date?

A. The win we had last year in *In re Klein* before the federal circuit court. I represented an inventor whose patent application had been rejected by the patent office and by the Board of Patent Appeals. When I saw the board's decision, it was clear to me they were misapplying the law. To get a patent, you have to have an invention that is new and not obvious. The way the patent office decides if something is obvious is to look at what has been done before in analogous areas.

Our client had invented a mixing device for hummingbird and oriole nectar. Your ratio of sugar and water is very important in the bird-feeding world. He invented a container with dividers that allow you to gain the right ratio and concoct your nectar in the right way. The patent office rejected his application not because anybody had invented a similar bird-feeding device, they rejected it on the basis of prior pieces in different fields. Notably, one of them was a desk drawer from the 1800s that had movable dividers. I didn't think this sounded right. I argued the appeal and we won. It's a bit of a rare thing to overturn the Board of Patent Appeals. The patent office has since changed its procedures.

Q. What's the most satisfying case or matter you've worked on so far?

A. An incredibly satisfying case was a trial for a pro bono client referred to us through Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. We represented a Jamaican artist who had loaned some artwork to a museum. The artwork was damaged while in the museum's custody, and the museum refused to take responsibility. We took the case and we won.

Q. Who was your most important mentor, and how has that person impacted your career?

A. Jack Regan is a trial lawyer and intellectual property lawyer in our Boston office. I have a vivid memory of sitting at the counsel table, fresh out of law school, with Jack next to me and giving me advice as to why he's doing what he's doing. The fact that he would take the time to explain, in the moment, why we were doing what we were doing was terrific.

Q. What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. It should be your goal at all times to be doing something you're not quite comfortable doing and don't quite know how to do. If you do one thing over and over again, you don't learn.

Q. If you hadn't become a lawyer, what field would you have entered?

A. I would probably be a high school teacher or a college professor. The learning and teaching process has always been something I've been drawn to.



Q. What's the biggest challenge of being a lawyer?

A. Speaking as a litigator in high-stakes cases, it is almost always possible to do more, and figuring out where to draw the line is a hard thing. Figuring out where to draw the line for your clients so you're not costing them a fortune; figuring out where to draw the line personally to make sure you still have time for family and other things that matter.

Q. Do you see yourself striking out on your own one day?

A. I don't think so. For this kind of litigation, it's great to have the resources of a firm like ours. It would be tough to be doing what I'm doing now alone.

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. I am a big fan of reality TV, particularly the competition shows like "Survivor" and the ones that show people at their most conniving. I find them absolutely fascinating.

Q. What is your favorite movie and why?

A. "Field of Dreams." The idea that you can be so overcome with something so inspiring that you would be willing to just drop everything and run with it — I love that idea.

