

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA

PHILADELPHIA'S  
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LAWYERS®

2010 EDITION

SHANIN SPECTER'S  
PERSONAL INJURY  
VICTORIES

WHO ARE THE  
LAWYERS OF  
THE YEAR?

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An **ALM** Publication

*The Legal Intelligencer*



# SHANIN SPECTER'S PERSONAL INJURY VICTORIES

**"T**he life of a trial lawyer makes the country a little safer one case at a time, one product improvement at a time, one policy change at a time," Shanin Specter says. "We aren't legislators. We don't engage in sweeping changes; we produce incremental changes. But these incremental changes add up."

Specter's impact on individuals and families both in Pennsylvania and beyond can be seen through numerous multi-million dollar verdicts and settlements, plus various changes in law and policy. Specter finds it gratifying to help families of individuals who have suffered catastrophic injury or wrongful death.

"Families who have had a loved one sustain a severe injury need help in every way imaginable from nursing care to income replacement to wheelchairs, lifts and customized vans," he says. "In these cases, there is someone at fault who needs to be held accountable and responsible for what they've done."

In January and February 2009, Specter worked with colleagues Andrew Youman and Gary Zakeosian to try the case *Volutza v. McBryan*. After experiencing chest tightness, thickening in his throat, lightheadedness and other symptoms, a pharmacist went to see his internist. The internist diagnosed the man with non-cardiac chest pain instead of possible acute coronary syndrome. The man suffered a fatal heart attack four days later. After a two-week trial, a Berks County jury awarded \$4 million to the victim's family.

"The case was tried in a rural jurisdiction where malpractice cases are rarely successful. The doctor was a well-known, likable and respected member of the community," Specter says. "But we were able to show the jury that it was important to hold a doctor accountable for his mistakes. The substantial verdict will permit Volutza's daughter to receive a proper education and will protect her from the economic loss her father's absence has created."

In March 2009, Specter and colleagues Kila Baldwin and Dominic Guerrini, helped another family in the case of *Blumer v. Ford Motor Company*. The team secured an \$8.75 million jury verdict for the wife and daughters of a tow truck operator who was killed when the parking brake on his 2002 Ford F-350 tow truck spontaneously disengaged, trapping him underneath.



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This wasn't the first time Specter took on Ford. In 2008, Specter represented the family of a three-year-old boy who was killed when the parking brake in his father's F-350 disengaged. Specter won a \$153 million verdict and a \$52 million verdict in *White v. Ford*. The case was settled just before its scheduled third trial in June 2008. Specter asked the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to review the safety of the brakes which were installed in the 1999-2004 F-Series trucks.

In November 2009, Specter secured a \$7.5 million settlement against La Salle University for an injured football player. In 2005, the football player suffered a concussion in practice and was prematurely cleared to play again. The man then suffered a severe brain damage in a game. The settlement will support his need for lifelong, 24-hour care. "Many of my clients agree to sign a confidentiality agreement in a settlement because they have no particular interest in publicizing what happened to them, or how much they've received," Specter says. "In this case, my clients did not agree to sign. They did a great service to literally hundreds of thousands of athletes from peewees to the pros in educating them and their families about the importance of following a few basic rules when it comes to head injuries."

Specter earned a JD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984 and an LL.M. with First Honors from Cambridge University. The Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association honored Specter with the Michael A. Musmanno Award. Specter also received the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association's (now the Pennsylvania Association for Justice) Milton D. Rosenberg Award. In addition, *The National Law Journal* selected Specter as one of the top ten litigators in Pennsylvania. Specter says that his greatest personal accomplishments are his four daughters. Professionally, it's the law firm he built with Thomas R. Kline.

"I was recently told that students in a law school class were discussing a hypothetical problem, and our firm name was used to describe the plaintiff's firm," Specter reflects, with a laugh. "It was nice to know that we have achieved that measure of immortality. Now we're part of the lexicon."

—Ashley Cisneros