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Lubin Constantly In The Spotlight

April 4, 1999 | By NICOLE STERGHOS BROCHU Staff Writer

A Hawaiian pineapple heir facing charges of fleeing the state to avoid a 15-year sentence for arson. A wealthy furniture executive who tried to [buy](#) a local election to escape punishment for DUI manslaughter. A former Palm Beacher accused of hiring a hit man to kill his estranged wife.

If they're rich, quirky and in big-time trouble, chances are they are [banking](#) on criminal defense attorney Richard Lubin to dig them out.

F. Lee Bailey, a member of O.J. Simpson's famed "Dream Team" of criminal defense lawyers, can see why.

"If I were in big trouble, I could think of a half-dozen lawyers in the country I could turn to," Bailey said, "and Richard is one of them. He is a top-of-the-line trial lawyer."

Lubin, a New Yorker raised in a modest household by Russian Jewish immigrant parents, counts Constitution protector U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas as one of his idols. He is a former anti-Vietnam War protester with a passion for golf and his Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Along the way, he has gained national prominence.

A few years ago, when NBC's Today show producers needed an expert on child abuse law for a segment on a crucial U.S. Supreme Court decision, they called Lubin. Local news station, WPEC-Channel 12, hired him as a legal analyst during its coverage of the Simpson trial. And he was one of nine [attorneys](#) from across the nation sent to Russia to teach lawyers how to conduct jury trials after the fall of communism.

Advocate for the poor

Renowned for keeping the [wealthy](#) out of jail, he is also devoted to helping the poor. And while some consider him one of the best criminal defense minds in the country, critics revile him for the people he represents.

The West Palm Beach attorney has been a frequent target of death threats, especially during last year's DUI manslaughter case against local Badcock executive James Clyde Baber III. He has received seething hate mail, and he has been approached in restaurants with verbal rebukes.

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"I hope your wife or daughter gets raped one day," one woman wrote Lubin after he got date rape charges dropped against Michael Hummel, of Boca Raton, in 1997. "Then you'll know what a scumbag you represent."

While he has no daughters, Lubin, 51, does have two sons. Benjamin, 21, a product of his first marriage to fellow '60s war protester Lois Frankel, is intent on becoming an officer in the U.S. Marines. Frankel, now a state representative, calls it "the revenge of the next generation."

Lubin's other son, Justin, has made no plans for his future. At 11 months, the round-faced babe with his father's curly mop spends much of his time scampering after his mother, Kathy Kazen, Lubin's wife of three years and a former public relations power [broker](#).

A devoted family man who totes Justin's picture on his golf bag, Lubin admits the threats make him a bit

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uneasy. But he makes no apologies for his clients.

He stands behind the credo of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, whose members consider themselves "liberty's last champions." It's all about preserving the Constitution, which he calls "the only thing separating a free society from a repressive society."

"To me, the whole thing comes down to fairness," Lubin said. "We have to represent people charged with the most heinous crimes because it's those cases that test the Constitution."

Such remarks may seem self-serving coming from a seasoned criminal attorney, but his friends and colleagues insist his idealism is genuine.

Success, "hasn't changed his [values](#)," said Frankel, who met Lubin at Boston University. "He still has a very strong social conscience. He's always been someone for the underdog."

And that makes him an easy mark for the outstretched hand, his friends say.

He'll readily hand a \$5 bill through the sunroof of his black Volvo to the bearer of a "Please Help" sign or fish a few [dollar](#) bills from the pockets of his impeccably tailored suits if approached for a handout.

Tony Natale, a criminal defense lawyer and former Lubin associate, remembers the time Lubin noticed a poor blind woman trying to find her way around the courthouse. Realizing she was in the wrong place, Lubin drove her to his office in his Porsche and fed her lunch while his staff called a list of social service agencies to help her.

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Helping hand

When she tried to [save](#) half of her sandwich for dinner, Lubin gave Natale cash and sent him to the grocery store. He then called a limo to take the woman and her bags of food back home to Belle Glade.

"He wants to represent everybody," said Tom Gano, Lubin's longtime law partner, adding that Lubin insists on taking many cases for free. "He wants to save the world from injustice."

Lubin's concern for the disenfranchised could be inherited. His father, who turned a fledgling zipper [business](#) into a profitable enterprise, once walked away from his favorite boating club because it did not accept blacks as members. It was a position Philip Lubin couldn't fathom, even in the 1950s.

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