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his career, and Musgrave was lead trial counsel in obtaining one of the largest judgments ever rendered under the Colorado Uniform Trade Secrets Act. In the mid-1990s, both were instrumental in forming the Denver office of Seattle-based Perkins Coie, but their litigation practice later departed en masse.

The attraction to Holme Roberts was the firm's size, its status as an indigenous Colorado firm and its "strong client base."

"I sat down with my partners, and we decided we would like to look for an opportunity to get into bigger, better cases and clients who do big cases," Theis said. "We do represent some very large clients, but we were looking for an opportunity where there'd be more depth and breadth."

Musgrave & Theis' website is filled with multimillion-dollar verdicts and defenses on behalf of companies like Qwest, StorageTek and Sonoco, but "sometimes one of the things you're looking for is getting the depth of resources to deal with those big cases," Theis said.

Bob Bach, chair of Holme Roberts' executive committee, said of Musgrave and Theis, "There are probably no two people in town with strong reputations. It was a real chance to bring in well-respected lawyers."

Bigger and better

Holme Roberts pursued the combination both to get larger and to gain Theis and Musgrave's expertise.

"More than numbers, when clients look to the firm they want to hire, they look at who are the marquee people," Bach said. "They want to get people as prominent as Bobbee and Larry, as respected as Musgrave & Theis."

Litigation work is said to be cyclical, booming in bad times and swooning in good times. But that hasn't been true in the current cycle of economic growth, Bach and Theis said.

"I've heard people say they think it's down, but we've certainly not experienced that," Theis said. "We've stayed very busy."

Bach said, "I see our litigation as being less market cyclical than it used to be. We see the corporate practice as still being fairly market driven, but I think as we broaden the kind of clients we work for, as our work becomes more national in scope, the cycle is much less of a litigation cycle."

Denver's commercial litigation market has been ultra-competitive, with smaller firms such as Reilly Pozner & Connelly, Hill & Robbins and Jacobs Chase Frick Kleinkopf & Kelley carving a niche among more regional legal providers such as Holme Roberts, Davis Graham & Stubbs, Holland & Hart and Faegre & Benson.

In the latest Chambers USA rankings, the No. 1-ranked commercial litigation firms in Colorado were Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott, Davis Graham, Hoffman Reilly Pozner & Williamson (now Reilly Pozner & Connelly) and Holland & Hart.

The guide singled out Theis and Holme Roberts' Bruce Black, among others, for individual praise.

Meanwhile last week, Cooley Godward LLP, known for representing technology and life sciences companies and handling intellectual property disputes, said it would merge with Kronish Lieb Weiner & Hellman LLP, a premier 110-lawyer New York firm with highly ranked bankruptcy, tax and complex commercial and white collar litigation practices. [Read the full story on Page 5.] The name of the combined 550-attorney firm will be Cooley Godward Kronish LLP.

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illustrated a small child with a Halloween mask trying to scare the partners. The Elizabeth Starrs caricature replies, "If you think that's scary, you should try starting your own firm."

Subsequently, a set of cards was released with the partners playing on four sports teams: basketball, baseball, football and hockey.

Elizabeth Starrs explained her character is particularly funny because "people who know me know I am not the sports type. I was perpetual junior varsity." The baseball postcard has Starrs' legs dangling from the bullpen bench, and Starrs has a difficult time getting over the boards on the hockey card.

It was not only Starrs who was not sports oriented. Weiss said Johnson had to have the marketing team describe scenes in detail to sustain accuracy.

The target audience for the cartoon campaign is law firms because 80 percent of Starrs Mihm & Caschette's clients come from referrals. The sports analogy is used to illustrate the partners as the trustworthy second string sent into the game to save the day.

"We wanted to communicate that when a law firm can't take a case for a valued client because of a conflict of interest, we'll take the case, we'll take care of the client as they would, and we won't steal the client," said Michael Mihm, partner. "The cartoons are an effective way of quickly communicating that message. We're also trying to get a busy lawyer's attention for five or 10 seconds, rather than two, before the announcement hits the trash can."

Proof this campaign is working is that the firm has tripled in size in three years, recently adding its eighth and ninth lawyers. Also, the partners have been complimented through e-mail and stopped at cocktail parties and meetings to discuss the cards.

"People look forward to the cards. They say how *cunute* the cards are," Weiss said.

As for the future of the cartoons, the next step in the campaign may be a full cartoon strip. Weiss liked the cartoons printed in *The New Yorker*. He believes they can make an impact as much as a thousand words.

For the time being, this recently new firm has made a valiant attempt to smite the law firm stereotype.

While maintaining their integrity and growing their firm, Starrs Mihm & Caschette has cultivated comfortable business relationships. The question is whether others will follow suit.



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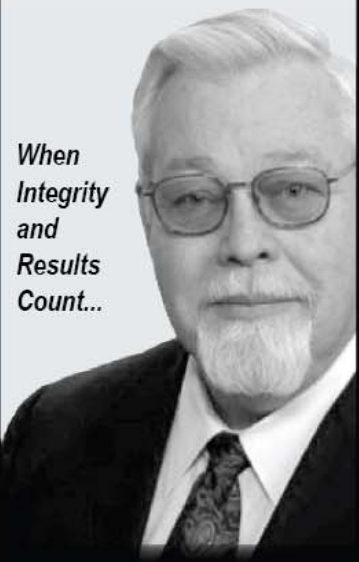
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It's what you recover

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