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## Why I'm Better Than You

By Claude Ducloux, Hill, Ducloux, Carnes & de la Garza

**L**ook, there is no need to argue: I am clearly way more impressive than you are.

Look at my wall. I am a member of so many honorary societies, and I am known as many important things. Just to name a few, I'm a fellow, a master, a barrister, and a charter member. I'm certified, outstanding, super, distinguished, renown, recognized, and licensed. My many plaques are testament to this. Look at 'em. I've been a chair, a president, a director, and a treasurer, for gosh sakes. Add to that my incredible humility. It embarrasses me to have to mention how humble I am.

Sure I might lose all my cases, practice out of mom's house, and have a few unmeritorious grievances to defend. But it's all part of being super. And you can understand why. Look at my letterhead. Now, let me reassure you. I haven't forgotten what it's like to be human. I still put on my thong one leg at a time. See? But if self-adoring credentials tell the story, I'm certainly better than you.

Oh, if obtaining legal respect were only this easy. Wait a minute. It is! The deal is, you, too, can be distinguished, super, and outstanding, for the right fee. The proliferation of bogus credentialing organizations for lawyers knows no limits.

I have already spoofed the "Super Lawyer" nonsense in both story ("What Price Fame?" *Entre Nous*, Feb 2007) and song (Bar & Grill XVI). But the hubris of self-congratulation continues to mount and spread to other professions, and even non-professions. You can't pick up a magazine nowadays without a list of "best dentists" or "best mayonnaise vendors." And nothing beats American

genius for making money victimizing insecurity and narcissism. Buoyed by the almost laughable success of super-this and super-that lists, new dubious credentialing organizations have sprung up. If you can't hack a 3-year graduate degree in psychotherapy, become a "life coach." (See, "International Coach Federation"). Proving, if you don't do anything super, just create your own organization. Now, there are "Academies" to honor every activity from sport fishing (I found 12 organizations) to sock-drawer organizers.

This is a real phenomenon. And what better place than America, where we adore the morons of "Jersey Shore" and can be convinced that the W hotel behind city hall, which has the charm of a bomb shelter, is "stylish?" Sure, we know these fake-o organizations are hokey, but we just can't help ourselves.

It is instructive that a key to Bernie Madoff's success was the exclusivity of his clientele and the difficulty eager investors had "hiring" him to steal their money. Clients would beg Bernie to handle their cash, usually through discreet contacts. He made them feel lucky and relieved when he deigned to handle their investments. Psychologists call this a form of obsessive-compulsive behavior, and it is a part of the American Psyche.

But, if you build it, they will come. Don't we all see letterhead from lawyers we've known for decades, now displaying membership in various dignified-sounding assemblies of professionals? Never heard of these groups. The gold standard of attorney certification is still the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, but why would any lawyer put the time and effort into real

certification when it's way easier to join The American Institute of Self-Importance? (Make it by invitation only, and lawyers will crave it even more.)

But lawyers, like most of the rest of society, fear being considered un-cool. We do horrible things to be cool. Women endure shoes styles that were too cruel for the Spanish Inquisition, we wear stylish tiny glasses with lenses too small to correct a rabbit's myopia, and squander valuable time worrying if we don't have enough friends on Wastebook. But common sense has diminishing returns, so save your breath.

After giving it some thought, I now announce the formation of the International Academy of Super-Distinguished Revered Law Masters (IASDRLM). Here's the deal: The initial application fee is discounted to \$425 if paid by June 30. For an additional \$125 you can be a Charter Member (comes with a key ring, coffee mug, and pez dispenser).

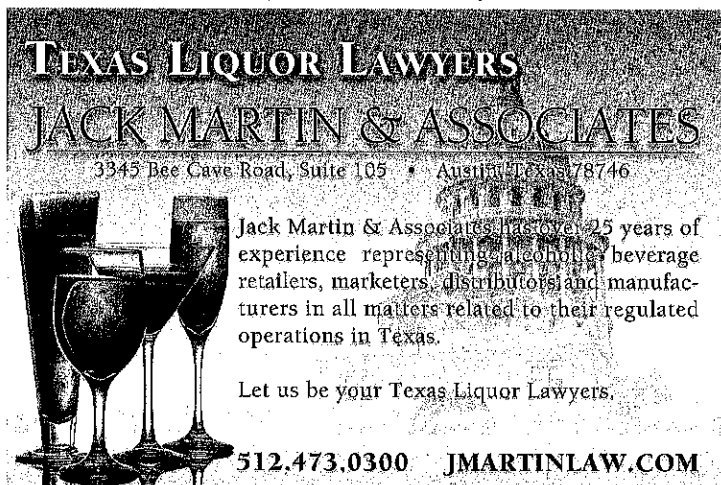
And please consider the following additional options:

Check all that apply:

- I am under age 40 and want to be Rising Star (add \$175)
- I am over 40, and want to be a Revered Fellow (add \$335; plus \$279 for the plaque)
- I want to be Certified in Legal Reverence (must be supported by two letters from anyone. Both may be written by same person. Add \$995.00)
- I want my picture in your newsletter. (Send in glossy 8" x 10" sitting on edge of desk wearing power tie. Tilt head down and look up. Add \$3,500.)
- I want to be on your selection committee to keep out the riff-raff. (Send photo and personal balance sheet.)

There you have it. I'm still pondering some details. I want to keep "the Academy" classy of course. It's "Invitation Only," so consider this yours. And don't tell anyone.

Keep the faith. • AL



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