

P.8

ON THE SPOT

GARY LESSER

LAWYER AND PHILANTHROPIST

When managing partner Gary Lesser's firm gave \$50,000 to Florida Atlantic University's stadium, he was already a familiar face in Boca Raton. This is the third generation of Lessers in the law firm Lesser, Lesser, Landy & Smith, which was founded by his grandfather, Joseph. The firm, which was started 85 years ago in West Palm Beach, has an expanding Boca Raton presence and is a trustee of the Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce.

Do you remember your grandfather?

He lived a mile away, and we saw him two or three times a week. He was larger than life, like a super hero who was warm and generous. He and my grandmother were southern Jews from Rome, Ga. The Flagler boom turned to bust, and he worked for a retired judge first and then started a solo practice. Now we have three locations, and the 11th lawyer just started. The Boca office is growing, and I'm there three times a week.

Talk about your legacy of community involvement and why you're so invested in Boca.

I love Boca. It's a real community, and there's a feeling of ownership and helping people grow and build. I was asked to be on the FAU Foundation board, and I got involved in the new medical school. I found a group of people who are diverse and generous, exceptional people. They're all leaders and givers. Everyone voted to support the stadium. We underwrote a concession stand.

How else are you involved?

I'm on the board of governors and lecture on legal ethics and personal injury all over the state for the Florida Bar. I have a hard time saying "no" to something I'm interested in. I'm also a vice president of the Jewish Federation in West Palm, and I'm starting to get involved with the Metro division in the South County Jewish Federation. We want to reinvigorate the business and professional division.

Talk about yourself and your family.

I'm 44 and a trial lawyer for the injured. I was born and raised in West Palm Beach. I went to George Washington University and the University of Miami, and my dad, Shepard Lesser, who's 76, is a double Gator. We just lost our mother, Staci Brenner of Palm Beach, who was my inspiration. My sister, Tami Baldinger, and her husband, Jim, are lawyers and have three kids. My wife, Jennifer, and I have three daughters.

