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If a tree falls in a forest and there's no one around to hear it, does it make a sound? Forget philosophy—attorneys would begin asking questions: Where was this tree—on public land or on private property? Why did it fall? Was it pushed? Had it been pruned recently? Who was the last to see it standing? They're legitimate questions when it comes to deciding what happened and what happens next, the stuff the American legal system hashes out every day. Attorneys figure out the details, working with clients whose needs vary greatly. Using Martindale-Hubbell, the "bible" of attorneys for nearly a century, we feature five AV-rated attorneys in the Inland Empire. The AV designation is the highest peer review rating possible, indicating that those attorneys are preeminent and highly recommended in their fields.

By Aimee Kelly Rios

PHOTOGRAPHY JIM DORSEY



Douglas F. Welebir

WELEBIR TIERNEY & WECK, PLC, REDLANDS

Plaintiff's personal injury attorney Douglas F. Welebir was destined for medicine, or so his parents thought. Coming from a long line of physicians, Welebir was expected to follow suit. But once his family learned he was going to be a lawyer, they thought he was destined for hell. "Physicians do not like lawyers because lawyers are the only ones who can question what a physician has done in the courtroom and a judge says it's OK," says Welebir, who is married with three children. Eventually Welebir's parents came to accept his profession and believe he is doing exactly what he's supposed to be doing. Welebir, 65, has been practicing for 42 years and showed an interest in justice early on. Originally from Maryland, Welebir grew up going on field trips to Washington, D.C. His father was friends with Senator Joseph McCarthy of the infamous McCarthy hearings of the 1950s, and Welebir had the opportunity to witness the proceedings. "I sat in the Senate hearing rooms and watched Joseph McCarthy eviscerate loyal Americans. So at nine years old I thought, 'This is not right...I'm going to do something so these people have protection,'" he says. A gifted child, Welebir started first grade at age five and graduated

from high school at 15. At 27, he became Loma Linda's first mayor. Since graduating from the University of Southern California School of Law in 1965, Welebir has seen it all. His cases run the gamut from car accidents to dog bites. One recent case that caught the attention of the media was a car accident that Welebir calls "The Case of the Fleeing Nun." The nun made a U-turn in front of Welebir's client, causing a car accident that shattered Welebir's client's forearm. Welebir says, "I ended up suing the nun and her order. [The nun's] insurance offered a total of \$325,000 which was not enough on a million dollar policy. We ended up trying the case for about two weeks. The jury returned a verdict of \$3.2 million, exactly 10 times the offer, plus all the accumulated prejudgement interest. The insurance made a very bad mistake on that case," he says. Whether going up against a big insurance company, a nun, or just your average Joe, Welebir's passion for law is fierce. "I do not like injustice," he says. "I don't care if you're man or woman, black or white, brown or green. You have the same rights that I do and I'm going to do everything, including giving my life, to protect that right."

Douglas F. Welebir
Attorney at Law

The lawyers of Welebir Tierney & Weck pride themselves on providing the highest quality legal representation to those who have sustained brain and spinal cord injuries, burns, wrongful death, loss of limbs or sight, fractures, or internal injuries caused by the wrongful conduct of others, both individual and corporate. As trial lawyers they continue to incorporate the latest courtroom technology with the belief that the people they represent have the right to quality and professionalism.

Mr. Welebir and Mr. Tierney are both members of The American Board of Trial Advocates and along with Mr. Jure are rated AV, Martindale-Hubbell's highest rating for legal ability and adherence to ethical standards. The firm's selection for listing in the Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers continues and Mr. Welebir has again been recognized as one of the Best Lawyers in America and a Southern California Super-Lawyer in the field of Personal Injury.



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