

STAY CONNECTED

alumni news

SheppardMullin

SPRING 2023

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STATS AND FACTS

1,090
Lawyers Globally

16 Offices in
5 Countries

9 Practice Groups

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33 Blogs | **4** Podcasts

1,995
Alumni in our network

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

We are pleased to announce that ten attorneys were promoted in our 2023 partnership class, effective March 1, 2023.

This is an outstanding class, with each partner having a proven track record as a firm leader. They bring to our partnership diverse skill sets, backgrounds and experience, and each of them embodies an unwavering commitment to our clients and to promoting our firm's culture and values.

The newly elevated partners include:

SheppardMullin 2023 PARTNERSHIP CLASS



Congratulations to all!



Luca Salvi
Chair
lsalvi@sheppardmullin.com

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

INTERVIEW: GINA REIF ILARDI



Gina Reif Ilardi

*General Counsel
Vindex
New York, NY*

*Formerly Entertainment Partner,
New York Office, 2007-2016*

We are delighted to profile former Sheppard Mullin partner **Gina Reif Ilardi**, now General Counsel at Vindex in New York City.

Career Path

Gina grew up in Westport, Connecticut, and attended New York University for undergrad and Fordham for law school.

She started at Sheppard Mullin as a second-year associate in the litigation group in the New York office in 2007. She eventually moved to the Entertainment Group as a transactional attorney, and made partner in 2014. Gina remained at the firm until 2016.

After stints at a few other law firms, she joined New York City-based Vindex, the preeminent esports infrastructure platform, as General Counsel in 2020.

Current Roles and Responsibilities

Vindex was founded by Mike Sepso and Sundance DiGiovanni, co-founders of Major League Gaming and early esports pioneers, and Bryan Binder and Jason Garmise, successful fintech entrepreneurs and private investors. Vindex provides technology and services that power the richest experiences in esports and help the world's leading game publishers, esports leagues, and teams deliver engaging experiences to fans around the world.

As General Counsel, Gina oversees all legal operations of the company and works with Vindex' C-suite on formulating and executing on our strategic initiatives. She stated, "On the legal front, I deal with anything and everything, from managing our intellectual property, addressing employee issues, day-to-day corporate activity, real estate, litigation, and all of our contracts."

Vindex was recently acquired by EFG (ESL FaceIT Group) and working through that deal took up the majority of her time over the last several months. She remarked that, "Sheppard Mullin, led by Shon Glusky, represented us in that transaction and it never would have made it across the finish line without their hard work and expertise."

Importance of Outside Counsel

Since Vindex has a lean legal team (Gina, one deputy, and a paralegal), she relayed that, "we couldn't survive without outside counsel. I am not a subject matter expert in all things, so I often need to pull in experts as issues arise. We also simply cannot handle all of the work that is thrown at our legal department, so we often pull in outside counsel to ensure we are meeting the deadlines required to keep our business operating."

Current Industry Trends

Globalization is a major trend in esports. "After our sale, we went from a start up with just over 200 employees in the United States, to being a part of a company with over 1,000 employees in 22 countries. We are seeing this all throughout the industry, as publishers and teams are seeking a more international scale."

Career Advice for Young Lawyers

"Treat every partner and senior associate you work with like your own personal client," Gina recommended. "Someone told me when I was a first year that my office was my own little law firm, and that I need to over deliver on each assignment to ensure that the partner or senior associate came back asking me to do more."

Preparing for Her Role at Vindex

Gina spent the majority of her years as an associate at Sheppard Mullin, and a few as a junior partner. She noted that, "Those years required juggling many different tasks – making sure you delivered good work product (sometimes for partners who have entirely different styles) and learning to develop business, to mention just a few."

"Being a General Counsel is similar in that I often have to juggle the demands of different stakeholders in our business, often at the same time, all while ensuring we are moving towards the broader goals of the business as a whole. Managing the needs of various clients and partners while developing as an attorney definitely helped me learn how to thread the needle quickly and prioritize to ensure everything gets done on time and well. Whether as an associate or a GC, I am trying to solve problems quickly and efficiently for stakeholders who have different needs."

Sheppard Mullin Memories

When asked what she missed most about Sheppard Mullin, Gina exclaimed, "The New York office! When I started there, we only had 20 attorneys in the NY office. There were 100 when I left. Helping to grow and shape that office was one of the things that sold me on Sheppard Mullin. We had a really great group of attorneys and staff who all looked out for each other and liked to work hard and play hard. Leaving those colleagues was a hard decision to make. The fun thing about being in-house is that now I get to work with some of them in a different context."

Life Outside Work

We end each alumni interview by asking what they enjoy doing in their free time. To which Gina remarked, “What free time? Just kidding! I have a 13 year old daughter and an 11 year old son, so when I am not working, I am usually spending time with them. Over the last several years, I have also become an avid golfer, so I also try to get a round in on the weekends when it is nice out.”

• • •

We thank Gina for taking the time to share her insights with us about her post-Sheppard Mullin career and wish her continued success.

Nota Bene Podcast Relaunches with New Host Scott Maberry

Multinational businesses have always been affected by major developments in international trade, global risk, and geopolitical shifts. The importance of these issues is increasing every day in light of events such as the U.S.-China trade war, the global response to the war in Ukraine, and the risks posed by rogue state actors such as Iran and North Korea.



In order to provide actionable insights into global law and policy developments, Sheppard Mullin relaunched our podcast *Nota Bene* on January 18, 2023. *Nota Bene*, a podcast that aired from 2018 to 2021 covering 156 episodes, discusses how international legal headlines affect businesses around the world. *Nota Bene*'s new host is Washington, D.C. partner, **Scott Maberry**, a five-time *Nota Bene* guest, and a member of the World Economic Forum Expert Network.

Upcoming episodes will include the role of futurism in corporate strategy, the global race toward green energy, legal and strategic issues for social media, U.S. economic sanctions, how equity in the workplace can create a better future, among many others. The podcast will continue its economic and policy updates from the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Nota Bene, named after the Latin term meaning “note well, take special notice,” will air every other Wednesday. Access *Nota Bene* and subscribe on your favorite podcatcher ([Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Stitcher](#)) or through Sheppard Mullin's web site at www.notabenepodcast.global. If you'd like to be considered as a guest (including economists, policy makers, and business executives), contact host, Scott Maberry at smaberry@sheppardmullin.com.

ALUMNI MOVES AND NOTABLE NEWS

Below are recent in-house alumni moves and other notable achievements. [Let us know](#) if you've changed jobs so we can feature your move in a future edition.



Alexandra (Alx) Bear is now Chief Innovation & Operating Officer at Melissa Wood Health in New York, NY. She was an entertainment associate in our New York office from 2017–2019.



Kameron Dodge is now Senior Counsel at Triumph Bancorp in Washington, D.C. He was a corporate associate in our Washington, D.C. office from 2021–2022.



Allison Fulton is now Associate General Counsel – Regulatory Compliance for the Danaher Diagnostics Platform in Washington, D.C. She was a FDA/life sciences partner in our Washington, D.C. office from 2019–2023.



Adam Grajewski is now Senior Corporate Counsel, Corporate & Securities at Avidity Biosciences, Inc. in San Diego, CA. He was a corporate associate in our San Diego office from 2018–2020.



Mike Kim is now Patent Counsel at Acushnet in Carlsbad, CA. He was an intellectual property associate in our San Diego office from 2017–2023.



Jeff Rehfeld is now Senior Attorney at NextEra Energy Resources in San Francisco, CA. He was a bankruptcy partner in our San Francisco office from 1998–2008.



Yunlai Zha is now General Counsel at Okcoin in San Jose. He was an IP associate in our Silicon Valley office from 2016 - 2022.

Congrats to all our alumni! We regularly post in-house job opportunities from clients and friends of the firm on the Sheppard Mullin alumni site under “Career Opportunities.” We welcome in-house job postings from you; please send to alumni@sheppardmullin.com.

HELPING CLIENTS SUCCEED

Sheppard Mullin lawyers work on a wide range of litigation and transactions to help our clients succeed. Here are just a few examples of our work over the last quarter:



ChenMed – The firm represented ChenMed, one of the largest senior-focused primary care providers in the U.S., in its new five-year agreement with leading healthcare insurance company Humana Inc. (NYSE: HUM). The new contract further cements the long-standing relationship that has existed between the two companies for decades and provides stability for Humana’s Medicare Advantage members with high-quality, in-network senior-focused primary care at ChenMed locations, including Chen Senior Medical Center, Dedicated Senior Medical Center and CarePlus Medicare Advantage members in the state of Florida. The agreement also covers JenCare Senior Medical Center, the joint venture between Humana and ChenMed. The team that represented ChenMed was led by Century City partner **Eric Klein**, Washington, D.C. partners **Christine Clements** and **Erica Kraus**, and Los Angeles partner **John Tishler**.



County of Los Angeles – The U.S. Supreme Court declined to grant a petition for *certiorari* filed by tobacco manufacturer R.J. Reynolds and others that sought to overturn the County of Los Angeles’ ban on the sale of flavored tobacco products. Sheppard Mullin successfully defended the County against claims by tobacco manufacturer R.J. Reynolds and others that the County’s ordinance banning the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol-flavored products, was preempted by the federal 2009 Tobacco Control Act. Los Angeles partner **Kent Raygor** led the representation of the County.



Inversora Santa Fe – Sheppard Mullin recently closed the sale of three resorts: the 350-room Secrets Wild Orchid Montego Bay, the 350-room Secrets St. James, and the 150-room Breathless Montego Bay Resort & Spa. A team led by Del Mar partner **Jerry Gumpel** represented the seller, Inversora Santa Fe, a private company formed in Uruguay. The buyer was an affiliate of Tortuga Resorts UK. The transaction involved entities in multiple jurisdictions including Jamaica, St Lucia, Uruguay, and the UK. The transaction was very complex and involved a purchase and sale agreement under New York law and financing under New York and UK laws.



Lyft – We secured two summary judgment wins for Lyft in an extremely contentious case involving the assault and battery of a driver by husband-and-wife passengers. The defendants were sued by the driver and then brought Lyft into the case as a cross-defendant seeking indemnification and contribution for damages arising out of their own assault of the driver. They also alleged that Lyft was negligent in hiring, supervising, and training the driver because Lyft failed to train the driver to avoid being punched in the face. After denying our demurrer and motion for judgment on the pleadings, our team filed motions for summary judgment as to all claims. The defendants were convinced they could spin the story and have Lyft act as their financial safety net if they lost. Both motions for summary judgment were granted as to all claims and Lyft was out of the case two months before trial. The matter was led by Silicon Valley partner, **Paul Cowie**.



NFT Gaming Company – Sheppard Mullin advised The NFT Gaming Company, Inc. (“NFT Gaming”) in its initial public offering of common stock. NFT Gaming is believed to be the first non-fungible tokens (“NFT”) company to IPO. NFT Gaming is developing a digital gaming platform and community that will offer users the ability to mint unique avatars playable in all of the games on the platform in the form of NFTs. The deal team was led by New York partner, **Richard Friedman**.



NortonLifeLock

NortonLifeLock – We successfully defended NortonLifeLock (formerly called Symantec), a Fortune 20 cybersecurity company, in a \$1.4 billion False Claims Act *qui tam* matter, in which the U.S. government and California sought in excess of \$1.2 billion in damages and penalties. The matter was one of the largest False Claims Act matters to proceed to trial and the largest involving the GSA Schedule. After 10 years of litigation and a four-week trial in March 2022, the court awarded the government less than \$1.4 million in damages and statutory penalties. The trial team was led by Washington, D.C. partners **David Douglass** and **Anne Perry**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

HELPING CLIENTS SUCCEED (CONTINUED)



Snap Inc.

Snap – We obtained a sweeping victory for our client Snap Inc. (“Snap”), maker of the popular Snapchat mobile app, in proceedings before the Federal Circuit and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Sanderling initially sued Snap in the Northern District of Illinois for infringing patents directed to distributing location-based image processing functions. We then filed four petitions for *Inter Partes* Review asking the PTAB to invalidate the asserted patents and moved to transfer the Illinois lawsuit to the Central District of California. The Central District of California then granted our motion to dismiss Sanderling’s infringement claims and invalidated the asserted patents under 35 U.S.C. § 101. After an oral hearing in the IPRs, the PTAB issued Final Written Decisions invalidating all the claims Snap challenged. The Federal Circuit also upheld the Central District of California’s dismissal in a precedential opinion that issued on April 12. The team was led by partners Dallas partners **Steve Schortgen** and **Jennifer Klein Ayers** and Del Mar partner **Dan Yannuzzi**.



Soylent Nutrition – The firm advised Soylent Nutrition, a pioneer of the plant-based “complete nutrition” and “functional” food categories, in its sale to Starco Brands, Inc., the inventor of consumer products with behavior-changing technologies. The acquisition will allow Starco to continue to invent and acquire behavior-changing technologies and brands, while enabling Soylent to grow its base and expand in adjacent category whitespaces. The deal team was led by Los Angeles partner, **James Thompson**.

Our CLE programs have shifted to mostly hybrid events, including an in-person and webinar component, unless otherwise indicated. Upcoming events where our lawyers are speaking include, among others:

April 26, 2023, 3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. ET

“[Models of Engagement with Medical and Commercial](#)”

Pharmaceutical Compliance Congress 2023 | McLean, Virginia
Washington, D.C. partner **Dominick DiSabatino** will be a speaker

April 26, 2023, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. ET

“[Beware: Private Equity Firms Facing Heightened False Claims Act and Antitrust Risks](#)”

Sheppard Mullin Webinar

New York partner **Greg Smith**, Dallas partner **Phil Kim**, Washington, D.C. partner **Ann O’Brien** and **David Douglass** speaking

April 27, 2023, 8:30 am - 10:30 am ET

“[Past, present, and future of design-build laws for New York public works projects and navigating legislation, procurement, and contracts](#)”

Hosted by Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA)

Held in Sheppard Mullin New York Office

New York partner **Emily Anderson** will be a moderator

May 9, 2023, 3:55 pm GMT

“[How Generative AI \(GAI\) Generates Legal Issues](#)”

GenAI Con | London, UK

Washington, D.C. partner **Jim Gatto** will be speaking

May 16, 2023, 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. ET

“[The Basics of Federal Non-Traditional Contract Vehicles \(Grants, OTAs, and Cooperative Agreements\)](#)”

Association of Corporate Counsel, National Chapter Region

Webinar

Washington, D.C. partners **Ryan Roberts** and **Anne Perry** will be speaking

May 18, 2023, 4:30-7:30 pm ET

“[Health Equity Starts in the C Suite: Examining the Intersection between Diversity, Leadership, and Health Equity](#)”

Hosted by the Women in Healthcare Leadership Collaborative (WHLC)

Held in Sheppard Mullin’s Washington, D.C. Office

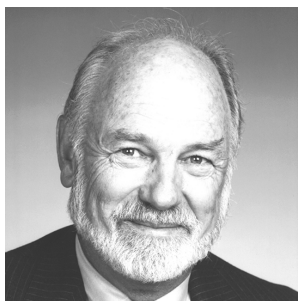
Washington, D.C. partner **Christine Clements** will be a speaker

June 7, 2023, 9:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. ET

“[Is No-Poach a Crime or Not? An Examination of Cartel Enforcement in Labor Markets](#)”

GCR Live: Cartels | Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. partner **Ann O’Brien** will be moderating a panel



Terry Ponsford

With condolences and sympathy, we report that former Finance & Bankruptcy partner, Terry Ponsford, recently passed away. Terry was a partner in Sheppard Mullin's San Francisco office from 1998 until his retirement in 2006, after which he continued to work as Of Counsel for a number of years. Many of our partners who were at Sheppard Mullin at the time have fond memories of Terry and will miss him dearly. He had a big heart and personality, was a fantastic attorney, and was a great mentor and friend to many.

Terry was born in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and grew up in El Paso, Texas. He graduated from Austin High School where he was President of his class and captain of the football team. Terry attended University of Denver and went on to receive his law degree from the University of Texas in Austin. He then served in the U.S. Marine Corp as a lawyer, at the time of the Vietnam war. After finishing his military service, he and family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, where he practiced business law and Chapter 11 bankruptcy law with Bronson, Bronson and McKinnon. After 30 years with Bronson, Terry moved to Sheppard Mullin where he retired.

Terry was a renaissance man with a great sense of wit and humor, he loved life, had many interests, and was always learning. Terry married the love of his life, Pam Ponsford, over 40 years ago. Terry and Pam enjoyed making wine at their home in Calistoga, inviting friends and neighbors to join them in their wine making. For many years, Terry also acted as a voluntarily coach of the Calistoga High School baseball team and represented the City of Calistoga on a *pro bono* basis in projects including the pool and the fairgrounds. Terry is survived by his wife Pam, and his two children, Elizabeth Ponsford and Craig Ponsford, together with Craig's wife Diana.

Donations in Terry's honor may be made to Calistoga Little League, Attn: Brian Fennen, P.O. Box 212, Calistoga CA 94515. The link to his life and remembrance can be found here: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/terrence-ponsford-obituary?id=51372393>.

IN MEMORIAM



Marsh Tanner

We are sad to report that former Sheppard Mullin corporate partner Robert "Marsh" Tanner passed away on January 24, 2023. Marsh was part of the group that joined Sheppard Mullin from the Pettit & Martin law firm in 1995, and the only one to join our Orange County office. He left in 2005 briefly for three years to serve as Area Legal Counsel to his LDS church in Brazil before returning to the firm from 2008 to 2010.

Marsh was born on December 4, 1946 in St. George, Utah. After graduating from Arcadia High School in 1964, he went on to study English at Brigham Young University, where he met and married his sweetheart, Colleen Bonner. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1970 to 1974 as an Air Intelligence Officer, often deployed on the carrier USS Saratoga.

Upon completion of his military service, Marsh attended law school at UCLA, receiving his law degree in 1977. He practiced corporate and real estate transactional law and handled international matters as a partner at several prominent law firms, including Sheppard Mullin. After retiring from his professional practice, Marsh worked for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Office of General Counsel.

Marsh was a corporate partner who lived life to the fullest, always with a smile on his face. As one partner recalled, "Marsh was a man of great character and one of the nicest people that I ever met." Marsh represented so much of what we as lawyers and people aspire to be and was a friend to many of us at Sheppard Mullin.

Marsh and Colleen were married for 53 years, welcoming five sons and two daughters, with 25 grandchildren. Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared with the family at <http://www.pacificviewcalifornia.com>.

CONTACT US

For more information about our alumni program, to notify us of a job change, subscribe to a blog, or register for events, please contact Alumni Program leader Michelle O'Driscoll. We look forward to hearing from you and staying in touch.



Michelle O'Driscoll

Alumni Program Senior Manager,
Sheppard Mullin

modriscoll@sheppardmullin.com
alumni@sheppardmullin.com

PODCASTS



French Insider Podcast: *French Insider* podcast is dedicated to helping French investors and companies growing their companies in the U.S.

www.frenchinsiderpodcast.com



The Legit Ledger: Discusses legal issues resulting from blockchain technologies and business models, and offers practical solutions for keeping their use legit.

www.thelegitletter.com



Nota Bene Podcast: Explore how today's international legal headlines will affect your global business on *Nota Bene*, a weekly podcast for the C-Suite.

www.notabenepodcast.global



Restructure This! Podcast: Discussion of the latest trends and controversies in Chapter 11 bankruptcy, commercial insolvency and distressed investing.

www.restructurethispodcast.com

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We encourage you to follow us on social media to hear the latest legal developments, from daily blog posts to upcoming events to pro bono news.



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