



# Private Eyes of Texas

## A MESSAGE FROM J.J.,



Another year has flown by and I can't believe we have been working with our clients for 18 years. During this period, I have learned two very important fundamentals.

First, surround yourself with competent people, who have the desire to go below the surface and find out all of the facts they can about what ever they are investigating for a client.

Secondly, to never form an opinion about what you are investigating, because things, many times, are not what they appear to be.

I would like to thank each and every client for the support you have given our firm over the years. Best Wishes from everyone on our staff for a blessed holiday season and a healthy and prosperous 2007.

## \*\*IDENTITY THEFT TIP\*\*

Did you know that when you receive a credit card type hotel room key, embedded in the card is your name, room number, partial home address, check in and check out date, your credit card number and expiration date.

When you turn the card into the front desk at check-out, any employee with the proper scanning device can access the information into a laptop computer and go shopping at your expense. Make sure you throw those cards away.

## CAPITAL CASES

Since 2000, Gradoni & Associates has been involved in 101 Capital Cases in Harris County, the Federal System and surrounding counties.

We are involved now in 19 pending cases. Our services have been solicited in every case by attorneys appointed by the courts. We learned quickly that it is imperative that no stone be left unturned since our client is facing life imprisonment and/or death by injection. In many cases, we are fighting an uphill battle against overwhelming evidence put together by the State against our client. The experience has been to say the least, very intense and humbling. A special thanks to those attorneys who allow us to assist them in their efforts to defend the accused.

[www.gradoni.com](http://www.gradoni.com)

Please take a moment to visit our website. You can access us through email from the contact page of the website or [jj@gradoni.com](mailto:jj@gradoni.com).

## NEW ADDITION TO STAFF

Gus Meza

Gus brings 24 years of law enforcement experience to our staff. Gus began his law enforcement career in 1982 as a police officer in Nogales, Arizona. Gus then spent 3 years as a Border Patrol Agent, and 18 years as a Special Agent and Supervisory Special Agent for the Immigration and Nationalization Service, now Homeland Security.

Gus is fluent in the Spanish language and also holds a Commercial Pilot's License.

During his law enforcement career, Gus attended numerous training academies and law enforcement schools. Gus is a skilled investigator, whose work product has proven to be thorough and timely.

I am sure that Gus' addition to our staff will enhance the work product we provide to all our clients.

## NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE DEFENSE AND RESOURCE CENTER

In September of this year, Carey Wellmaker and I attended the National Child Abuse Defense and Resource Center Conference held in Las Vegas. Our firm has a steady case load of sexual offense cases in which we are either hired or appointed to help in the defense of the accused. Many of these cases have no witnesses or physical evidence and basically turn out to be a shouting match between the victim and the Defendant.

Our goal in attending the seminar was to learn more about how to defend cases of this nature. We received training in competent interviewing of children, coerced and false confessions, injuries mistakenly taken for abuse, a primer in understanding head injuries, burns, bruises and abdominal injuries and other related subjects. We both came away with a better understanding of how to prepare a solid defense for our clients.

## OVERRUN BY JUNK MAIL, TELEPHONE SOLICITATION, UNWANTED FAXES?

You can have your name removed from those lists that generate much of the unsolicited mail, faxes and telephone calls you receive.

1. To remove all variations of your name and addresses that have appeared on direct mail, write to:  
Mail Preference Service  
P.O. Box 9008  
Farmingdale, New York 11735
2. To get rid of intrusive telephone solicitors, send your name and address to:  
Telephone Preference Services  
P.O. Box 9014  
Farmingdale, New York 11735
3. Eliminate junk faxes by calling Technologies Solutions International, National No-Call Registry Service at (404) 847-8785.



"We are **dedicated** to producing **factual AND accurate, unbiased documentation for clients in a timely manner.** The **integrity AND confidentiality** of our work is **top priority!**"

We feel that our investigative services help prove that the *"Truth Makes A Difference"*

*Some of our successes over the last few months:*

**SEXUAL ASSAULT ACQUITTAL**

**DAVID CUNNINGHAM** represented a Fort Bend County teacher charged with fondling a student. During our investigation, we developed a number of fellow staff members and students who testified about the Defendant's credibility and professional association with the students. As a result of the testimony, the jury did not believe the Complainant's allegation and acquitted the Defendant.

**DOUBLE HEADER DISMISSAL**

**WINDI AKINS AND PAUL LOONEY** each represented one of two co-defendants charged with criminal mischief and assault as a result of an early morning parking lot altercation. A female accused the pair of cutting in front of her vehicle as they exited the parking lot, smashing her car door and throwing beer bottles at her car. Our interviews of the witnesses produced different versions of what took place. The off-duty police officer, who handled the altercation, told our investigator Mark Dugat, that there was no broken glass at the scene. The attorneys were able to utilize our investigation to get the charges dropped by the prosecution.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT NO BILL**

**STANLEY TOUPEK** represented a maintenance man, who had a sexual relationship with an adult female tenant at the complex where he worked. Seven months after the relationship ended, the female delivered a child and then made a rape allegation against the Defendant. Through our investigation we were able to develop information that other males had been visiting the female's apartment on a regular basis for sexual activity. The package put together by **STANLEY TOUPEK** got a No-Bill from the Grand Jury.

**AGGRAVATED ROBBERY DISMISSAL**

**KAREN BARNEY** represented a male charged with Aggravated Robbery. The police report identified the actor as an individual with a street name, D'West. The Defendant claimed from the very beginning, he was the wrong individual charged (heard that before) Investigators interviewed individuals who identified the correct suspect whose street name is D'West. Investigators obtained a booking photograph of this individual and the charges were subsequently dropped against Karen's client.

**CAPITAL MURDER—GOOD RESULT**

**SKIP CORNELIUS** represented a mother who was charged with starving her child to death. The initial fact situation was not real encouraging because the mother had CPS problems in the past, was living in a motel, had a history of prostitution and already had another child die while in her care. During the course of our investigation, we were able to find witnesses who had observed the Defendant give the child adequate care. Skip did a great job getting the jury to realize that the case was not a capital case. The Defendant was convicted and sentenced to 15 years on a lesser charge.

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**SNEAK-A-PEEK**

An Individual hired Gradoni & Associates to follow her husband because his actions indicated to her that he might be having an affair. Investigators followed the husband on various occasions and found that he liked to visit a certain adult bookstore, joining up with other males in a private room. On one occasion, the surveillance investigator entered the adult book store and was unexpectedly caught off guard by the male who had exposed himself inviting the Investigator to a private showing. Although we take pride in completing every assignment, the Investigator declined the offer. I think our friend will be surprised when he gets served with his divorce papers.

**WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION FRAUD**

We were hired by the Veteran's Administration to surveil an individual who has been out of work for over two years claiming that her injuries will not even let her do light duty office work. When we first started surveillance, we found that the individual was very trim and fit. After a few days of surveillance, we found out why she was so fit. We discovered the claimant strenuously working out at a regular aerobics class.

**AGGRAVATED SEXUAL ASSAULT ACQUITTAL**

**WINDI AKINS** represented a male who was accused of raping his long time live in girlfriend at knifepoint. The Defendant claimed from the beginning he was innocent. Shortly after the charges were filed, the Judge revoked the Defendant's bond. The Defendant sat in jail for seven months and refused an offer of probation. Our investigation centered on the Complainant's reputation for untruthfulness, along with police calls for service and cell phone records that supported the Defendant's story of events. In a very hard fought trial, the Defendant was acquitted.

**DO THE CRIME—GET THE TIME**

One of our corporate clients, a collection agency, noticed some irregularities in two of their checking accounts. Our investigation revealed that the bookkeeper had been making checks payable to himself, showing in the ledger the checks were going to vendors. The total theft exceeded \$170,000 over a year period. Further investigation revealed that the majority of the money was spent at topless clubs, a new car and electronic equipment. The suspect confessed his wrongdoing to J.J. Gradoni after he was fired and promised to pay the money back in installments. The suspect then admitted the theft under oath in a civil suit brought against him by his former employer. The suspect, now the Defendant, decided to plead guilty and allowed the judge to assess his punishment. The former employer brought his daughters to court to testify that they would not be able to go to college because the embezzlement had just about bankrupted their parent's company. The Judge was especially upset about the topless clubs. The Defendant was given the max, 20 years in TDC.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT-NO BILL**

**DANNY EASTERLING** represented an individual charged with sexually assaulting his uncle's ex-wife at his grandmother's apartment while everyone present was consuming lots of alcohol. Our investigation determined that the Complainant did not have a sterling character. The Defendant claimed the sexual encounter was consensual between the pair. Our investigation produced the grandmother as a witness, who denied the assault took place. The Complainant's son said that he heard his mother asking the Defendant to stop. It appeared that the only common factor amongst the parties present was the alcohol consumption. Danny was able to secure a No-Bill for his client.