



## Great Neck firm to investigate, California style

By Jeremy Harrell

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The Los Angeles legal world, particularly the part that involves private investigation, has been in a state of turmoil for the last year.

Anthony Pellicano, P.I. to the stars, was indicted in February, accused of racketeering and illegal wiretapping. This followed a stint in prison after a raid on his office found a cache of explosives in a wall safe. The Pellicano indictment sent shivers through Hollywood, since the P.I. was said to have the dirt on just about every major studio exec and star.

Pellicano's departure from the scene, however, also produced something of a vacuum in the Los Angeles private investigation market. It's a hole that Fortress Global Inc., a Great Neck-based company with offices worldwide, is about to fill.

Fortress Global is opening its first L.A. office Santa Monica Boulevard in Century City today.

Robert Seiden, a former Manhattan prosecutor who's now Fortress Global's chief executive, said the firm has been working in California for two years and already has 30 investigators "on the ground" in L.A.

"The L.A. market is an excellent market, and we've had a lot of business out there," he said. "It just made sense to open an office out there, staff it and meet the needs of our clients out there."

The staff includes the 30 investigators and eight office workers. Eventually, Fortress Global expects to expand to 12 office staff and add a few more investigators.

The firm's business has exploded since February, although Seiden said it's not because all of Pellicano's clients suddenly needed to find a new firm. Rather, the L.A. market started to question the credentials of who they hired.

"We've seen that as a result of [the Pellicano affair] a lot of people who were previously taking it for granted – just hiring a P.I. and not looking into who they were – that it definitely helped our business," Seiden said. "We have a very respected business. I'd say in the last nine months our business had doubled in California."

Clients mainly include law firms and corporations, and Seiden said Fortress Global selected Century City specifically because it's the center of L.A.'s legal world. In fact, the company shares a building with some of the city's top firms, he said.

"As a result of our corporate clients, we've been able to get business from some of the L.A.-Hollywood-type studios that use us for different things like background checks on people," Seiden said.

Some of those L.A.-Hollywood types will be at Fortress Global's grand opening in October, he said.

Despite the glitz of Hollywood, most of the P.I. work out there is the routine stuff of tracking people down and taking statements, Seiden said. Apparently, hiding assets in off-shore locations or in fictitious companies is popular in California, so Seiden said he expects a good deal of work to be done there, too.

Fortress Global also specializes in executive protection and event security, both strong sectors in L.A., Seiden said.

The L.A. office adds to the lineup of regional offices in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai, as well as in London, Montreal and Johannesburg.

### **Battle of the sexes**

First the good news. Male lawyers, on average, make more money than men in any of the 22 occupational categories tracked by the U.S. government, according to newly released Census data. The average man in the "legal occupations" bracket pulls down \$102,272 per year.

Now the bad news, and it's pretty bad. Women in "legal occupations" make less than half of their male counterparts.

Karen Mathis, the president of the American Bar Association, offered an explanation: support staff at law firms, as at most businesses, tends to be more heavily populated by women.

But Mathis, in a statement, said that it doesn't complete the disparity picture to simply say women earn less because they're more likely to be the secretaries and legal assistants. According to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Labor Department, for instance, full-time male lawyers earned more than \$1,700 per week, while full-time female lawyers earned about \$1,350 per week, Mathis said.

That's better than less than half, but it indicates a long way to go, baby.