

RAINMAKERS **Who Always SHINE**

MCCA's Annual List of Rainmakers proves that the profession has talented lawyers who also have valuable business development skills. This list includes attorneys from around the country who practice a wide variety of law. Their success stories offer insight and value to lawyers at every career stage.

By Patrick Folliard





DEBRA BAKER

Partner

Baker Wotring LLP

Houston

Years Practicing: **30**

Practice Area: **Environmental and Litigation**

"Having a unique niche

area of expertise is a way to attract and retain clients,"

says Debra Baker. "We're a

commercial litigation and environmental boutique law firm—it's unusual for a small firm to do both the regulatory side of environmental as well as full-scale environmental litigation—providing representation to companies, governments, ports, railroads and individuals in significant and complex matters."

Prior to establishing Baker Wotring in 2001, Baker was at a big Houston firm handling a complex, ongoing case. But when the firm merged with another even larger firm on the other side of her case, an insurmountable conflict arose. "The client asked me to stay with the case, and it was negotiated that we'd set up a small firm," recalls Baker. "I was flattered, and the large matter went on for several more years. During that time we discovered a real market for a boutique firm. Fourteen years later, we are still here and flourishing and have achieved record-setting results for our clients in a number of diverse and complex cases!"

Born in Washington, D.C., the daughter of a career military man and a Japanese war bride, Baker worked her way through the University of Maryland and Georgetown University Law Center. She left Washington for Houston in search of opportunities. "In the '80s, Houston was an especially dynamic place for law then; there was a lot of work surrounding refining and shipping."

Despite its relative size, Houston has a small town feel, says Baker. "It's really not unusual here for lawyers and clients to become friends. We do CLEs for clients, volunteer at their organizations and team up with them to do charity events. For over 20 years, Baker has also produced, written and/or performed in an all-lawyer musical theater production in Houston, leading her to meet numerous lawyers and judges, while raising an amount approaching \$1 million for law-related charities. "In building a practice here, it really helps to include a social component.

I also speak and publish a lot on environmental law

topics. I have taught environmental law at area law schools, and some of my former students have become clients. But foremost, we strive to provide the highest level of client service and produce an exceptional work product for our clients."