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The Year of Living *Un*-dangerously

In 1995, the spirit of conservatism and compromise prevailed in New Jersey's legal arenas. Tort law was revised, but not drastically. When legal issues threatened to boil over, the courts, the bar and common sense were there to keep things cool.



THE SUPREME COURT YEAR:

HIGHS AND LOWS OF CASH-DRIVEN ARGUMENTS

WINNER

RICHARD WEINER

Five years ago, Weiner was hired by the father of a 10-year-old boy who had been severely burned in a fire in 1982. The father, Alvin Burroughs, had been accused — unjustly, it turned out — of either deliberately or negligently inflicting the burns on his son. After concluding that Burroughs was not a child abuser, a sympathetic investigator steered him to Weiner. Burroughs had always contended that the fire was caused by a clothes iron, which ignited an ironing board even though Burroughs had switched it off. Weiner went looking for the iron and found it at the Newark Fire Department, which inexplicably had kept the iron in a warehouse for more than a decade. With the iron in hand, Weiner was able to identify the appropriate defendant — Proctor-Silex — and make out a products liability case. Rather than go to trial, Proctor-Silex's insurance carrier agreed, 13 years after the fire, to a structured settlement that could be worth as much as \$9 million. For his perseverance, Weiner collected a \$350,000 fee.

