On the afternoon of September 17, 2001, Chandra Hemraj, accompanied by her 4½-year-old grandson, Anil Barran, drove to the Sand and Sea Travel Agency in Boynton Beach, Florida. Mrs. Hemraj was planning to book a fall cruise for herself and her husband, Nerahoo. The travel agency is located in a shopping plaza that includes a large parking lot for the customers of the plaza’s stores and offices. It was a busy afternoon at the travel agency, and it was necessary for Mrs. Hemraj to wait for the next available sales associate. She and Anil took seats just inside the entrance. Suddenly there was a loud crash and Mrs. Hemraj was violently thrown to the floor. The crash was the last thing she heard until she regained consciousness at the Delray Medical Center. Miraculously, Anil was not injured in the accident, and was treated and released from the hospital. Mrs. Hemraj was not as fortunate.

The driver of the car that had crashed into the travel agency was 88-year-old Eleonora Koski. Mrs. Koski had driven to the same shopping plaza for a dental appointment. As she drove through the parking lot searching for a parking space near her dentist’s office, she approached a clearly displayed stop sign. According to an eyewitness, instead of slowing to a stop, Mrs. Koski suddenly accelerated her vehicle and crashed through the wall and glass window, into the travel agency. Mrs. Hemraj and Anil were struck from behind, knocked to the floor and pinned underneath Mrs. Koski’s vehicle. Alan Rosen, president of Sand and Sea Travel, had been seated at his desk when the accident happened. “The sound of the crash was so loud and severe that I thought it was a bombing similar to the 9-11 attack in New York,” he commented. Mr. Rosen ran to the front of his office and saw Mrs. Koski’s vehicle completely inside their offices, with its engine still running. He then saw Mrs. Hemraj and Anil pinned underneath the vehicle, surrounded by broken glass, twisted metal, and shattered concrete. He thought they had been killed. Travel agency employees immediately called the Palm Beach County Police and Fire Rescue for help. Fire Rescue crews had to raise the vehicle onto blocks in order to remove the victims.

Mrs. Hemraj and Anil were taken to the medical center where she was admitted and Anil was released after examination. The initial diagnosis on Mrs. Hemraj revealed a crush injury and a severe burn to her lower left leg. Because of her severe pain and discomfort with even the slightest movement, she remained in the hospital for four days.

Upon release from the hospital, Mrs. Hemraj and her husband sought representation by SDSBS attorneys Chris Searcy and Rosalyn Sia Baker-Barnes. Liability for the crash was clear. Nonetheless, Mrs. Koski’s insurer, relying on Mrs. Hamraj’s initial medical records, insisted that her injuries were superficial. For almost three years, Mrs. Hemraj consulted with numerous physicians in the area, each of whom had difficulty in diagnosing the exact nature and extent of her injuries. Mr. Searcy and Ms. Baker-Barnes worked closely with Mrs. Hemraj’s treating physicians. Finally, a consulting orthopedic physician ordered MRI studies of Mrs. Hemraj’s shoulders. These studies revealed that she had suffered extensive rotator cuff tears in both shoulders, and the injuries were directly related to the accident. It was necessary for Mrs. Hemraj to undergo bilateral surgical procedures in order to obtain relief from her pain. The studies also revealed that she had suffered a nerve injury (Continued on next page.)
(Continued from previous page.)
to her leg, where the weight of the ve-
hicle had caused a crush injury. Her
physicians believe this injury will re-
quire a third surgical procedure in or-
der to obtain relief for Mrs. Hemraj.

Mr. Searcy and Ms. Baker-Barnes
filed suit against Mrs. Koski to re-
cover damages caused by the acci-
dent. However, because three years
had passed before doctors discov-
ered the nature and severity of her
injuries, Mrs. Koski’s insurer chal-
lenged the causation of Mrs.
Hemraj’s injuries. With the help of
expert medical testimony, her attor-
ey’s were able to establish that the
severe and permanent injuries suf-
f ered by Mrs. Hemraj were indeed a
result of the crash. Finally, during
mediation on the eve of trial, the
matter was settled for $1,050,000.
The settlement will provide Mr. and
Mrs. Hemraj the much needed
funds for her continued medical
treatment and care.

Eight SDSBS Attorneys
Selected for 2007
“Best Lawyers
in America”
Chris Searcy, Jack Scarola, Greg
Barnhart, John Shipley, Chris
Speed, David White, Darryl Lewis
and Sean Domnick were selected for
the 2007 edition of The Best Lawyers
in America. This edition marks the 20th year that Chris
Searcy and Chris Speed have been listed in the publi-
cation. Greg Barnhart has been listed for the past 10
years. Attorneys were selected based on an exhaustive
and rigorous peer-review survey that was developed
and refined over the past 25 years. The 2007 edition
is based on 1.8 million confidential evaluations by the
top attorneys in the United States. Because attorneys
are not required or allowed to pay a fee for a basic
listing, Best Lawyers has gained the respect of the legal
profession, the media, and clients as the most reliable,
unbiased source of legal referrals in America.

International Academy of Trial
Lawyers Invites Scarola to Join
Jack Scarola has been invit-
ed to become a fellow of the
International Academy
of Trial Lawyers (IATL). Trial
attorneys are admitted to the
Academy only if they possess, to an ex-
ceptional degree, superior skill and recog-
nized ability in trial and appellate practice, service in promoting the legal profession,
the highest standards of advocacy, excel-
 lent character, and absolute integrity.
Active membership in the Academy is
limited to 500 fellows from the United
States. Membership includes fellows
from over 30 countries throughout the
world. IATL was chartered in 1954 for
the purpose of cultivating the science of
jurisprudence, promoting law reforms,
facilitating justice, promoting the Rule
of Law internationally, and elevating the
standards of integrity, honor, and courtesy
in the legal profession.

Accolades
Chris Searcy has been
appointed Co-Chair of the
Florida Supreme Court His-
torical Society’s Evolution
of Justice Committee.
Harry Shevin was named presi-
dent-elect of the Palm Beach
County Justice Association. He
previously served as treasurer,
and has been on the Board.
Jack Hill is serving his sec-
ond year of a two-year term
as a member of the Board
of the Palm Beach County
Justice Association.
Emilio Diamantis was
reelected for a two-year term
as Paralegal Representative
of the Palm Beach County
Justice Association.