

Moorestown's Hartman named lawyer of the year

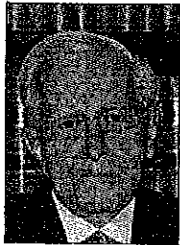
By **JOE GREEN**
STAFF WRITER

MOORESTOWN — Some of Frank Hartman's

colleagues may be surprised that more cases in which he's litigated haven't been made into books and movies.

Many more are shocked that in roughly six decades, he was never named the Burlington County Bar Association's Professional Lawyer of the Year — until now.

Hartman, of the Moorestown firm Attorneys Hartman, will receive the award Thursday during an annual luncheon organized by the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law.



Hartman

The event honors lawyers who work to improve professionalism and responsibility in the legal field.

An attorney from the bar association of each New Jersey county, and those from specialty bar associations in the state, receive the Professional Lawyer of the Year Award.

The luncheon also includes the Daniel J. O'Hern Award — the event's highest honor — and the Charles J. Hollenback Award.

Hartman is well-known in legal circles for the defense that led to the acquittal of Larry N. Thompson, who was accused of being the hitman in a 1984 murder-for-hire case. The actual

mastermind of the murder plot, Toms River insurance broker Robert Marshall, was found guilty of arranging to have his wife, Maria, shot to death to collect on the insurance.

The case inspired the bestselling book "Blind Faith" and a TV movie of the same title. But Hartman is known for much more than his role in a film-inspiring case.

"I couldn't think of a more worthy recipient of this award," said Kevin Walker, deputy public defender and president of the Burlington County Bar Association.

"Frank is a legend. He's one of the best trial lawyers the state of New Jersey has ever produced.

"He's also a wonderful person," Walker said, adding

that Hartman doesn't hesitate to mentor others in the legal profession and share his wealth of experience.

As the bar association considered candidates to be nominated for this year's award, Walker explained, members discovered a glaring omission. It was Hartman himself.

"We were surprised and dismayed to find out he had never been named Professional Lawyer of the Year before," Walker said. "We thought that was a big oversight, and we worked to correct it as soon as we could."

Grateful for the honor, Hartman sees it as a kind of validation that he's become — at least to an extent — the attorney he sought to be from the start.

"I think for all

professionals, and lawyers as professionals, the ultimate personal goal in life is to be thought of as the epitome of the (field) you're in," he said. "That's the aspiration when you get into the field. And when you receive an award, it's kind of a pat on the back."

"It's a satisfying kind of thing, and you say, 'Gee, I've achieved it to a degree.'"

Hartman also praised the Commission on Professionalism in the Law for its stated mission, as he stressed the need to stick to sound social policy and legal principles.

"They started trying to get the (attorneys in) the state to be more professional," Hartman said. "They came up with a creed, if you will, to express that

aspiration. And I think it's a wonderful thing.

"The more professional lawyers are, the better it is for the public," he added. "You're not hiring prize-fighters to settle differences between you and your neighbor."

Hartman began practicing law after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1955. He has since served on many lawyers' organizations over the years. He is now in practice with his daughter, Katherine Hartman, and attorney Michael Mormando.

He also serves on the National Board of Trial Advocacy, of which he is a former president.

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