

Paul Levine '69

Since graduating from Penn State in 1969 with a B.A. in journalism, Paul Levine, of Studio City, Calif., has excelled as a lawyer, teacher, and writer. He is widely known as an authority on the First Amendment, has represented the news media in libel and privacy lawsuits, has tried cases in numerous state and federal courts—and he is also a prize-winning novelist and a screenwriter.

Levine began his career at *The Daily Collegian*, first as sports editor and later as editor-in-chief. He won the first-place national award in the prestigious William Randolph Hearst Foundation's Journalism Awards Program—"the Pulitzer Prize" of college journalism. "Penn State defined my early career path," he has said. "The combination of my degree and the Collegian allowed me to go directly to a major metropolitan newspaper."



Upon graduating, Levine put everything he owned in his rusty Chevrolet and headed for *The Miami Herald*, where he became the paper's youngest reporter on the City Desk. His work reporting on criminal court led Levine to pursue law. He attended the University of Miami School of Law, graduating third in his class in 1973. As a young lawyer, he taught the first class of the Cuban Lawyers' Program, designed to prepare exiled lawyers for the Florida Bar. In 1978, he returned again to teach communications law. Levine pursued a 17-year career as a successful trial lawyer and partner in the Miami office of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, the Philadelphia-based law firm.

But he never abandoned writing—as a law student he had supported himself by reporting for *The Miami News* and *The Los Angeles Times*. Later, he wrote a nationally syndicated newspaper column, "What's Your Verdict?", and created the "You and the Law" segment for a Miami television news program.

In 1990, Levine published his first novel in a series of thrillers featuring Miami trial lawyer Jake Lassiter. *To Speak for the Dead* became a national best-seller and was honored as one of the ten best mysteries of the year by *The Los Angeles Times*. "Levine's writing sparkles," wrote the *London Times*. "Genuinely chilling" was the *Washington Post's* verdict. An adaptation of the book appeared as an NBC World Premiere Movie in 1995.

Of his work as a novelist, he has said, "I believe work should be both personally fulfilling and have social utility. For me there is great satisfaction in creating stories from whole cloth, and I like to believe that popular entertainment does have a social good." Levine's eight novels have been translated into 21 languages, and he has been awarded the John D. MacDonald Award for fiction. He has also written 17 episodes of the CBS television drama *JAG* and cocreated the series *First Monday*, serving as co-executive producer during the show's one-year run on CBS.

An avid volunteer for Penn State, he has served on the Penn State Development Council, on the University Libraries Development Advisory Board, and as chairman of the Florida Development Council. Currently, he serves on the College of Communications Alumni Society board of directors. In 2000, Levine was a member of a distinguished panel event

sponsored by the College of Communications and the Los Angeles Chapter of the Alumni Association. He received the college's Alumni Fellow award in 1993. His philanthropy includes establishing the Paul J. Levine Collections in Communications Law and Journalism Endowment, which funds the purchase of publications related to communications law and journalism.

Levine is married to Renee Braeunig, a deputy city attorney for the City of Los Angeles. He has two children: Michael, a 2003 broadcast journalism graduate of Penn State; and Wendy, a former associate producer at *Dateline NBC*, who is currently working on her first non-fiction book.

*This career summary is excerpted from the 2003 Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony booklet (May 30, 2003, The Pennsylvania State University).