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Fate of Hollywood chamber landmarks placed in new hands

After several weeks honeymooning in Maui and Rome, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher partner **Bill Wegner** now is striving to prevent a formal separation between the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and Tinseltown's landmark, hillside sign and Walk-of-Fame.

The 41-year-old Sherman Oaks resident, along with two other colleagues at L.A.'s consummate old-line law firm, is attending the beleaguered chamber against a \$700,000 lawsuit filed by the State Attorney General. According to the state, the chamber in the mid-1980s illegally withdrew funds, user fees and royalties from trusts designed to maintain the sign and walkway.

"Our role is to try to help the chamber resolve this case while protecting its interests and those of the City of Los Angeles," said Wegner, an army brat and law school graduate from Tacoma's University of Puget Sound. "From our perspective, the state suit, though troublesome, is not a momentous event. The allegations are about accounting procedures and trust administration. It's not the stuff of a TV miniseries."

For a while, it looked as though Sacramento might agree. After Attorney General **Dan Lungren** pow-wowed with Chamber President **Brooke Knapp** and Honorary Hollywood Mayor **Johnny Grant** last summer, there was speculation the state would cut the chamber a settlement that would avoid legal action and perhaps allow



Wegner: 'Not the stuff of TV miniseries'

it to keep control of the sign trust and the prestige and money it generates. But pressure by Mayor Tom Bradley office and other California pols led the state to make a U-turn and file the suit.

While refusing to spell out legal strategy Wegner echoed chamber stalwarts when he said, "If it weren't for private individual at the chamber, there would be no sign on the hill."

Wegner, who has been with Gibson & Dunn since 1979 after a decade in the U.S. Army's medical corps, replaced well known Hollywood attorney **Marshall Caskey**, who abruptly quit as chamber counsel months back. A commercial litigation and antitrust lawyer, Wegner is also representing the family and licensing agents of late actor James Dean. Warner Bros. want Dean's publicity and likeness rights.

Wegner married **Mary Lee Rehrauer** an associate Gibson, Dunn attorney.

— Chip Jacob