

Skoufalos on his own

One partner is staying put despite the split-up of his maritime law firm.

Joe Brady

Stamford

When the partners of Stamford law firm Skoufalos, Llorca & Ziccardi decided to dissolve the company after six years last December, one of them never needed to call the moving man.

Stephan Skoufalos chose to stay put at the firm's offices at Clearwater House, the building whose owners include partners in tanker brokerage Mallory Jones Lynch Flynn & Associates (MJLF).

While New York law firm Healy & Baillie has taken one of the offices left by the departed Richard Ziccardi and Manny Llorca, Skoufalos is running his new solo practice in the same place — literally, if not necessarily figuratively.

"It didn't take too much thinking about to realise that I really wanted to stay here," Skoufalos said.

"I'm very close to the landlords and to others in this building, which has such a great shipping flavour. Several are my clients," he added.

The new Skoufalos LLC is using affiliate offices in Washington and Athens, where the Karelis law firm has been approved for referrals by the US embassy, he notes.

Although he was raised in Brooklyn, Skoufalos can trace his roots to a shipping family on the island of Chios.

He was born in Argentina, where his father was working in the family shipping business also run by his uncles, who were captains.

Skoufalos's mother was born in Brooklyn of parents from the same village in Chios.

He is also the cousin of the late Mark Scufalos, whose Union Commercial Steamship Co operated as many as 30 tankers and cargoships from Piraeus in the 1970s.

Skoufalos's ties to Greece also extend to his representation of Antenna Television, one of the country's largest stations.

Skoufalos makes regular visits to the family's native village on Chios but says he feels at home wherever he travels in the country.

"No one has to ask how to pronounce or spell my name," he said. "They are more likely to ask, 'so, which Skoufalos are you?'"

Skoufalos, 48, is the youngest of three brothers working in the maritime industry. George is a

shipbroker with MJ Costalas in New York, while Peter is a partner in the law firm Brown, Gavalas & Fromm.

Skoufalos's forte is as a litigator in admiralty, insurance and commercial work. He has also developed a niche business representing shipbrokers on issues of error and omission and in collection work.

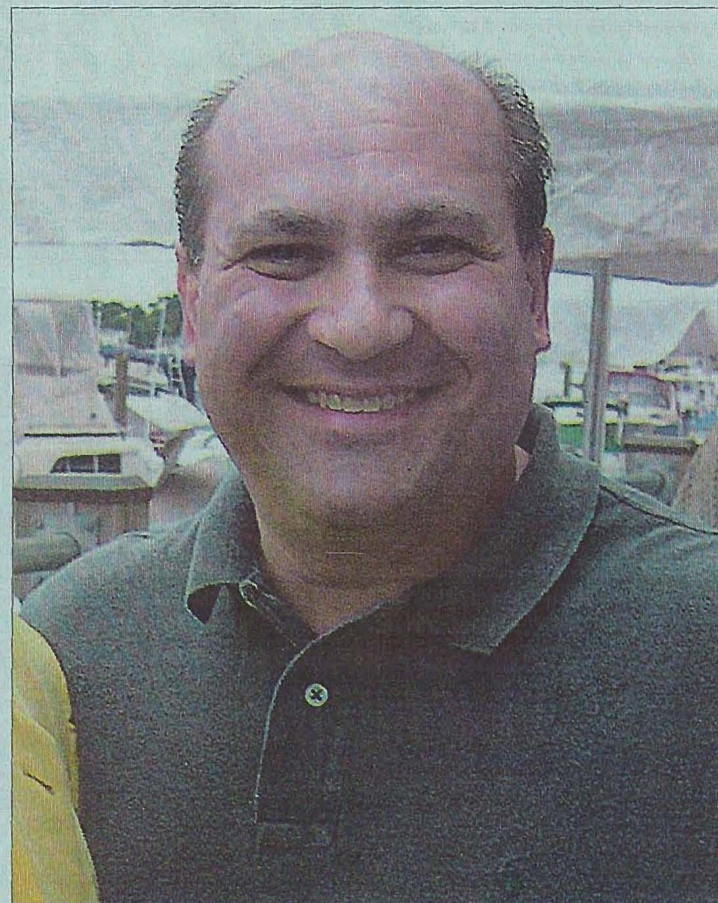
High-profile cases have included representation of the vessel operator in the Brazilian *Trade Daring* casualty and, with Ziccardi, the recovery of a \$1m jury award against Celebrity Cruises on behalf of a Connecticut woman who accused a ship's waiter of raping her during a port call in Bermuda.

The nature of his legal focus will not change with the firm's breakup, Skoufalos says, but his freedom to run the legal practice as he sees fit will.

"I'll have a lot more flexibility as the sole decision-maker," he said. "I'll have more freedom to evaluate a case on my own, more creative control and more financial control."

As to the breakup of his former partnership, Skoufalos maintains that it remains viable as the rare Connecticut-based maritime law firm from a business standpoint, saying that internal factors led to the split.

"It wasn't a question of viability," he said. "It had ebbs and flows like any business but we were handling them nicely. Naturally, it was disappointing to see it end because we were not only partners but personal friends."



OWN SHOW: Lawyer Stephan Skoufalos says he will continue to focus on maritime issues as in the past but now he will have more flexibility running his own show.

Photo: Joe Brady