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TRAILBLAZERS

PLAINTIFFS' LAWYERS

JAMES R. MURRAY

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PIONEER SPIRIT Jim Murray started at a big, full-service firm. "As a junior associate, I was approached to handle an insurance matter for Boeing. I became interested because insurance companies fight hard and these cases get court time."

TRAILS BLAZED The Boeing case ended up being the first successful environmental coverage case to be tried to jury and led to millions in damages. "It made a lot of new laws in Washington. It involved insurance policies from the 1950s and '60s before the EPA existed when dangers were not known." Murray has handled insurance coverage matters ever since. "We are a little plaintiffs' group representing big companies within a full-service firm." Murray spends about a third of his time on matters where the underlying issues involve sexual abuse. "In these cases, the victims' lawyers make claims against the institutions (such as dioceses where a priest worked) for negligence. When a diocese goes to the insurance company and the insurance company balks at the claim, the diocese hires me to represent it as a policyholder. These are groundbreaking cases because we focus on the same legal issues as others, such as what the word 'expected' means in context."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS When money is at stake, insurance companies will fight claims. "There are new areas, such as sports policies and college players." D&O insurance is another risk area. "Good men and women of business will not join boards without good coverage."