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2006

## The Top ATTORNEYS IN Michigan

### Judge, Mayor, ABA President

The many hats  
of Dennis Archer

### Atticus Lives!

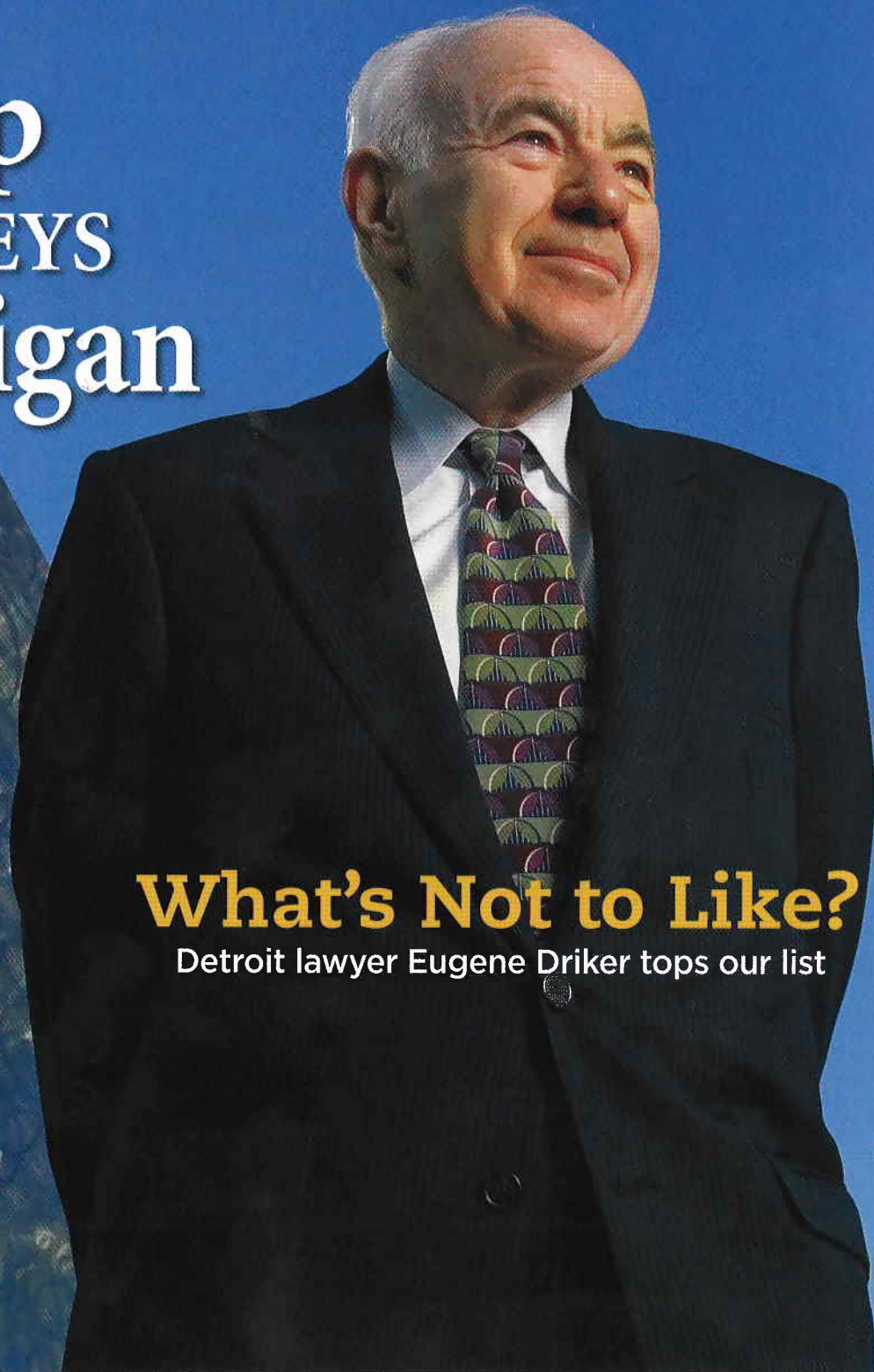
Jon March plays  
the world's most  
beloved lawyer

### Our Prisoners, Ourselves

Deborah LaBelle on  
reforming U.S. prisons

### What's Not to Like?

Detroit lawyer Eugene Driker tops our list



Eugene Driker on preparation, inspiration and the essence of the case

# The Storyteller

by NEIL VERSEL

PORTRAIT BY DWIGHT CENDROWSKI

**G**eneral Motors was none too happy when global purchasing chief Jose Ignacio Lopez de Arriortua bolted for Volkswagen AG in 1993, allegedly taking other top employees and confidential documents with him. Naturally GM sued.

The world's largest automaker successfully blocked Volkswagen's attempt to transfer the case to a German court, and in early 1997 achieved a settlement in which VW paid GM \$100 million and agreed to purchase \$1 billion worth of parts from GM.

The reason why VW settled, according to GM general counsel Thomas A. Gottschalk, was the intense preparation and well-crafted arguments of Detroit lawyer Eugene Driker, a specialist in complex, big-dollar legal disputes.

"Gene is my go-to person for the high-stakes cases," Gottschalk says. "He has a great capacity to cut to the jugular and make winning arguments. He has an unusually effective argument style."

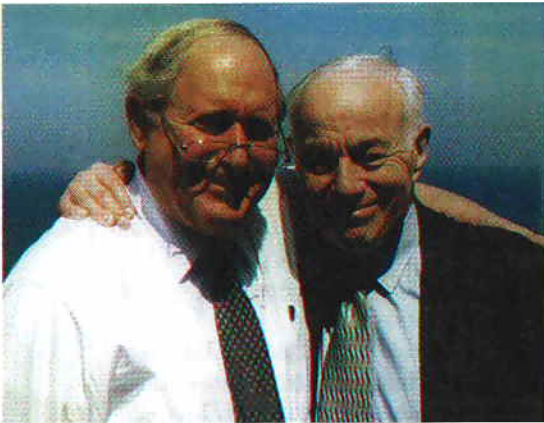
Driker, a founding member of the Detroit law firm Barris, Sott, Denn &

Driker, has a simple explanation for his courtroom style. "You try and tell a simple and direct story. You try and tell a human story, even in a complicated business dispute," he says.

"It's not just what was done, it's why things were done. Judges and jurors are often curious, not simply what's happened, but why has it happened. What's the motivation behind it? People want to fill in the blanks, whether it's a judge or a jury, they want to understand how this all fits together."

Explaining how this all fits together is where Driker shines. "Our firm was involved in probably the longest civil trial in Michigan history, the *Dow Chemical v. Consumers Power* lawsuit," Driker says. The trial lasted 23 months, before the case was settled in 1986.

Driker defended the utility — now known as CMS Energy Corp. — against Dow's \$500 million lawsuit for problems related to construction of a nuclear power plant in Midland, in a case involving some 6 million documents. "We had probably 100 staff people helping us out with that. It was very complicated," Driker recalls.



Driker and longtime friend U.S. Sen. Carl Levin on a Mideast tour last year.

