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PUTTIN' ON THE WRITS

Irving just loves serving

By **SHAUN ASSAEL**

Irving Botwinick spends his working hours rubbing elbows with VIPs. Thing is, he usually rubs them the wrong way. Botwinick, you see, owns Serving By Irving, a firm that serves legal papers on the rich and hard-to-find. Think of him of him as the James Bond of process servers. He does.

Now, take the time he had to serve a reclusive priest being sued by a parishioner. Botwinick could find him only in church, on Sundays, the one day of the week a person cannot be served by the law.

"Fuggedaboutit, this priest wasn't taking these papers for anything," recalls Irving, who was stymied until he got the idea of dressing up his 22-year-old son as a nun. The priest fell for it. He also, reports Irving, "went crazy. People go nuts all the time."

Botwinick has turned process serving — usually thought of as ranking right up there with sewer inspecting — into a fine art. So fine that he and a friend have written a sitcom pilot. So unusual that "20/20" will profile him next month.

Just ask Julio Iglesias how good Irving is. Last fall, Serving By Irving got the call to pin a deposition notice on the singer. With three aides — a wheelchair-bound MBA, a college student and an ex-bartender — Botwin-

ick staked out Carnegie Hall, where Iglesias was expected at a benefit.

"Some lawyers say, 'Jump on stage and serve the bum,' but I won't do that," he says. Instead, Botwinick waited until the singer's limo pulled up to deposit him for a pre-performance nosh at the adjacent Russian Tea Room. "All these flashbulbs were going off and we just slapped it on him," beams Irving.

Members of Botwinick's staff of 20 have served a surgeon by scrubbing up next to him, socked a gynecologist by posing as a patient, and gained access to the boardroom of a major corporation by pretending to deliver a Strip-O-Gram. After 13 years in the business, Botwinick — who grew up on welfare in East New York — has done well enough to be driving a gold Jaguar with a license plate that reads "Server."

But Botwinick is not satisfied. He's about to launch Serving By Irving franchises. For a mere \$85,000, he's providing a three-week training course, a fax machine, letterheads and unlimited use of his motto: "If they're alive, we'll serve them. If they're dead, I'll tell you where they're buried."

He might even throw in his secret of thinness. At 6-feet-1 and 135 pounds, he claims to have been born to serve: "When I turn sideways, I disappear. That's why I can serve so many people."

(Shaun Assael is a freelance writer.)