



### \$1.8M for Train Injuries

*Sharpe v. New Jersey Transit Rail Corp.*: A Hudson County jury awarded \$1.6 million on June 21 to a train passenger who claimed he suffered spinal injuries in a crash in Secaucus.

Michael Sharpe, now 57, of Billerica, Mass., grossly aggravated a prior spinal condition, cervical stenosis, when his New York-bound New Jersey Transit train from Trenton derailed on July 14, 2003, according to the suit filed by Bruce Nagel and Adam Slater of



PHOTO BY CARMEN NATALE

**CAREER-ALTERING SPINAL PROBLEMS:** Bruce Nagel argued that his client had to take a lower-paying job because of his train-crash injuries.

Roseland's Nagel Rice & Mazie.

NJ Transit said at the time that a wheel malfunction caused the wreck and that 25 passengers sought treatment for minor injuries.

Sharpe was an executive in a shoe manufacturing company but post-traumatic stress and the injuries, which required surgery, forced him to take a lower-paying sales job with fewer responsibilities, according to the plaintiff's evidence. The defense stipulated to liability.

After a seven-day trial before Judge Barry Sarkisian, the jury awarded \$1.2 million for pain and suffering, \$400,000 for past and future lost wages and \$4,635 for medical bills, Slater says.

The defense lawyer, Deputy Attorney General Paul Nieves, was not available for comment last week. Leland Moore, a spokesman for the attorney general, confirms the amount of the verdict. Moore says the defense evidence showed that the accident slightly aggravated a pre-existing condition.

— By Henry Gottlieb