

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

Volume 33, Number 22

THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS

May 30 • June 5, 2011 • \$3.00

UP FRONT

A Big Star For Those Behind Bars

Bail bond expert built her career on working with celeb clientele.

Your average L.A. crime suspect has all manner of gritty bail bond companies to call. But who do celebrities and other high-income types call?

It may well be Chickie Leventhal of **Chickie's Bail Bonds** in Manhattan Beach. If she bails you out, she'll probably be wearing her trademark rose-tinted glasses. Just don't tell her she looks like your mom's bridge partner.

"I don't believe I give the image of being a grandmother," said Leventhal.

She has bailed out rapper Snoop Dogg, *Girls Gone Wild* creator Joe Francis and actor Tom Sizemore. Leventhal's clients are referred by the 75 or so high-profile lawyers who have come to know her. That was the case



RINGO H.W. CHIU/LA81

Reclining Type: Leventhal at Manhattan Beach home.

when she bailed out Phil Spector, who was eventually convicted of killing model Lana Clarkson.

"I had no idea who he was," she said. "But I said, 'Of course,' because Robert Shapiro was asking."

After Leventhal climbed the ranks in an insurance firm in the 1980s, where the company wrote policies for bail-bond businesses, she decided to start her own shop for bail bonds.

She knows to take money

and other valuables to ensure the bailee shows up at court. For example, when one client wanted to post bail for his mistress, Leventhal knew what to take: his wife's phone number.

She's now considered an authority on bail. She recently gave a lecture to the Los Angeles Superior Court Bail Bond Committee, comprising Los Angeles County judges, about the workings of her practice.

— Jonathan Polakoff