



## Yaron Helmer

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## Overview

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I was born in Israel and moved to the U.S. when I was 6. When my father arrived here in 1962, he had \$10 left in his pocket; he borrowed \$1000.00 (the cost of the ship fare for my mother, my sister, and me from a relative) to bring us here. That was the beginning.

My story is that of many immigrants- close family, hard working parents, frequent moves as we found our way in our new home and country and a strong work ethic that started when I was a child.

My school experience was varied. I went to many different schools when I was young, and was often part of the minority in my classes. When I went to college, in SUNY at Buffalo, I really wanted to be a gym teacher, as I loved sports and teaching. Things changed when I spent time in a courtroom as part of a class. That is when I realized that going to law school and becoming an attorney were a great fit for my interests and talents.

I spent most of my law school years at Rutgers- Camden. (I spent my last semester at Rutgers-Newark as I had just gotten married and my wife was in school in North Jersey). While finishing school, I worked in the evening as a waiter in Manhattan to support us. I have warm memories of my time in Rutgers – Camden. I met many of the close friends with whom I now practice law there. Volunteering as an adjunct professor of law in the trial advocacy class now gives me great pleasure; I am happy to be able to give something back to the school that really did change my life.

After law school, I spent one year clerking for a Superior Court Judge, Judge Egan in Moorestown. I subsequently spent 10 years in 2 different prosecutor's office, eventually ending my prosecutorial career as trial chief and then as first assistant prosecutor in Cumberland County. During that time period, I often looked for different ways to address problems within the criminal justice system and was very proud of a grant that I authored while in Camden to enhance the services provided to juveniles in the system. During my time in Cumberland, we made significant and well documented strides in the efficiency of that office.

Spending time with colleagues and honing my legal skills on an ongoing basis have always been part of my professional identity. I am a member of several County bar associations and chair, or have chaired, the criminal trial section in several of them over the years. As of 2-17, I remain a board member of NJAJ and continue to support their CLE programming. I have been the co-chair of the criminal

practice committee of NJAJ for the past two years. I also teach frequently with many of my colleagues at CLE seminars sponsored by other providers including DRD.

I have been a teacher to hundreds of police officers and groups and was a certified instructor to the New Jersey State police. I have also trained many assistant prosecutors. My firm and I have been PBA attorneys for many years and have helped many officers in trouble. My understanding of what prosecutors consider, value, and how they assess a case and defendants, as well as my knowledge and familiarity with police practices and strategy, has helped me develop an excellent ability to help both police clients and those charged with crimes or misconduct. I have handled and or supervised thousands of cases over the past years. Many of my former colleagues have joined our firm; I greatly value being part of a team whose collective wisdom garnered over 400 years of combined law enforcement, enables me to get fresh perspectives and new ideas to better assist my clients.

New Jersey ethics rules limit the discussion of many awards so, by policy, our firm does not discuss the many awards that I and others have won over the years. I am proud to have been certified by the Supreme Court of NJ as a Criminal Trial attorney since 1985 and to have encouraged many of my colleagues to attain the same distinction, which we see as a marker of excellence and commitment to the practice of law.

I have been very lucky, and part of what is important to me is to provide opportunities to others. Many criminal defendants are good people who have had a lapse in judgment. Most of my clients have supportive family and friends. Helping all of these people to the best possible resolution of a difficult situation is very important to me.

Some of you who are reading this have seen the growth of our law firm over the last several years. One of the driving forces behind our growth has been a desire to provide new opportunities for individuals and families from many backgrounds. Our diverse firm family includes longtime friends and new friends, native born citizens and immigrants, police and defendants, people from privileged backgrounds and most of us who have had to work very hard to get where we are, people who are newly in their law related jobs and people who have worked in the law for more than 50 years. It has always been important to me and to my partners that we look out for each other and the rest of the firm. For example- we have always provided healthcare, pension plans, educational support for years-and always lots of parties.

It is true that law practice is a large and valued part of my life, but there are other things that I admit are more important. My first love is and always has been for my family, my wife, my children and their spouses, my grandchildren, our siblings, extended family and my pets. Friends are a close second. Most people don't know that I enjoy ball room dancing and that I like to sing (but generally when no one can hear me). Reading and travel round out my favorite things when I'm not working.