

ASKED & ANSWERED



Laurence (Larry) H. Margolis

I was born and raised in Ann Arbor, and am the son of a prominent psychiatrist father and well-known social worker mother. The youngest of four, I was raised in the 70's, a Jewish kid in an upper middle-class home along the Huron River. I went to the same local schools my children now go to: Angell/Tappan/Huron. I might have been Iggy Pop or Bob Seger (if they were Jewish and I had talent).

I obtained degrees from Miami (Ohio) University (BA, 1990 Political Science) and Emory University (JD, 1995). After practicing law in Atlanta for 12 years, I moved my young family back to Ann Arbor in 2007.

Did you always know you wanted to be an attorney? About what age did you decide to pursue law school?

I am only half joking when I tell people that growing up as a Jewish kid in Ann Arbor, I only had two career choices: doctor or lawyer. I once volunteered at U of M hospitals, but working with health issues all day was not my cup of tea. I simply couldn't be a doctor (like my dad).

My most formative memory that I attribute to my career choice was when I went to court in Detroit with my dad. I was probably 9 or 10 years old, and my dad was testifying as an expert witness in a criminal case. My dad was first sitting at a table in the courtroom talking to these seemingly important people (the defense lawyers/prosecutors). I remember one of the lawyers had a gun on his belt, in a small holster, in the courtroom! I was so impressed and even scared a bit. My dad was called up to answer questions and speak to the jury. I had never seen him in that role, so deferential. Here was the man I respected most, working for and showing great respect to this group of professionals, the lawyers primarily. It had an impact on me for sure.

Also, I am a social worker at heart. Being an attorney was a way for me to combine that philosophy with my desire to be a member of a distinguished profession.

What jobs did you have before you became an attorney?

I literally have had more jobs than any other person on the face of this earth. Ok, that's probably an exaggeration. I worked on a farm, as a paper boy, cut lawns, baby sat, as a pizza delivery driver (Domino's and Papa Romano's), moving furniture (Godfrey Moving Co., Susan Bay Design), landscaping (McKinley), and paving roads. My mom had me work on campaigns for Ed Pierce and Lana Pollack, and coaching kids at the JCC (Jewish Community Center). After college, but before law school, I worked on Sen. Carl Levin's '92 campaign as a Trip Coordinator; I was a restaurant manager at the Lord Fox, and a youth care worker for Huron Services for Youth (now Ozone House), working with adolescent wards of the state in residential transitional housing. Huron Services for Youth was, by far, the most difficult job I have ever had! After that I knew I was going to go to grad school (law or public policy) and I graduated from Emory University School of Law (in Atlanta) in December of 1995.

What area of the law do you like the best and why?

As the old biblical saying goes: An injustice anywhere is an injustice

everywhere. I became a lawyer to try to do my part in leveling the playing field for others, if possible; to fight for the rights of the oppressed, the accused, and the one whose actual physical liberty is at stake. I am horrified by the way we treat our fellow humans, how we lock people up, and 'throw away the key;' how we separate people from their families; and the manner and conditions of their imprisonment.

I naturally gravitated towards criminal defense, civil rights and plaintiff's cases. I also represent non-citizens in post-conviction matters. Today, with my younger and smarter partner, Ian Cross, my practice has been taking on §1983 claims related to prisoners (8th Amendment claims and Deliberate Indifference claims) and the mentally ill (due process for "not guilty by reason of insanity" (NGRI) patients involuntarily committed).

Tell us a little about your family.

I am married with 3 children, ages 19, 16 and 11. We live in town, by the river, and my kids go to the same schools I went to, except my oldest two chose Community High over the perfectly good high school (Huron) practically across the street from our house. We belong to Temple Beth Emeth, and the Racquet Club. My oldest is in college at Colorado University. My kids enjoy or have enjoyed all the major Rec & Ed leagues in town and two presently play travel soccer. I am now coaching 15 (way too many) eleven-year olds in their first season of "kid pitch." Go Angell Angels!

What is the biggest challenge facing you as an attorney today?

Taking fewer cases and working the best I can on the ones I do have; having the time and support necessary to do my work well, hopefully. It is always easy to take on a new case, but much harder to finish it. Running a business requires a regular income. There is a balance between the business side and the professional side that can be challenging to maintain at the desired level.

How are you coping during COVID-19? Working from home? Adapting to Zoom, Teams?

I had a prelim via Zoom recently and refuse to do that again. I have had varying experiences with Zoom depositions. However, most of what we do in the courtroom today can be done via Zoom, and more efficiently. Hopefully some benefit will come from this ordeal we have all been through. Because I have a small firm, during COVID I still went into



the office every day and saw clients when necessary, though masked until recently. I do miss seeing everyone, the lawyers and judges, clerks and court staff, being in court and around the courtrooms. Hopefully, we can get back to a new normal, and soon!

What would your second career choice have been if you had not become a lawyer?

Hollywood actor.

Any words of wisdom to pass on to new lawyers?

Learn who you are, and be yourself. Be a serious person but for G_d's sake, don't take yourself too seriously. Always be ethical and courteous. Dress professionally.

What is your favorite movie or book?

I just re-read the original "Lassie" with one of my children. I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to read a story of great courage, love, and commitment. Otherwise, when I have the time and/or mindset to read, I read non-fiction mostly (biographies, etc.). For civil war buffs looking for a quick read I offer "April 1865: The Month that Saved America" by Jay Winik.

For movies, I love the Godfather movies, I and II, Rocky (all of them), Rambo (all of them), Taken (all of them). I love foreign films, comedies and sappy romcoms. Given that movies are an easy and great distraction, and an escape from what we should be doing, I can pretty much enjoy almost any movie if the time/setting is right.

Describe a perfect day off.

Up north in a cabin on the dune-shores of Lake Michigan, spending the day at the beach, swimming and playing with my children, and perhaps a sunset boat ride. Maybe I have also had time to rollerblade or go on a solo kayak trip down some quiet river, deep in the National Forest. Come back and make a big dinner, or better yet, go out for dinner. We then watch a family movie (e.g., new Vacation or some other comedy), the kids stay up late and we go to bed, read or do whatever it is two consenting adults may do.

What are some of your favorite places that you have visited?

Greece, Morocco, England/Scotland, Spain, Jamaica, West/Northern Michigan.

What are your favorite local hangouts?

I am 52, and married with 3 children. I don't really hang out anywhere other than my downtown office, or on my deck/patio at my house. I work, play tennis and do kid stuff and house stuff. I like to hang out some with the barbershop guys downtown (Varsity Barbershop), and talk with my friends on the corners of Liberty/Main selling newspapers. I love the Farmers Market and try to make that an "every Saturday morning" affair from July thru October.

When you have a little extra money, where do you like to spend it?

Nordstrom Rack, Himalayan Bazaar (for my wife), Best Buy, Warby Parker (new addition but I love that place), and Sam's (on Liberty).

What do you like to do in your spare time? Hobbies?

Tennis, biking, blading, kayaking, cooking, cleaning, house chores, dog park, reading, marital stuff.

What's the greatest gift we can give ourselves?

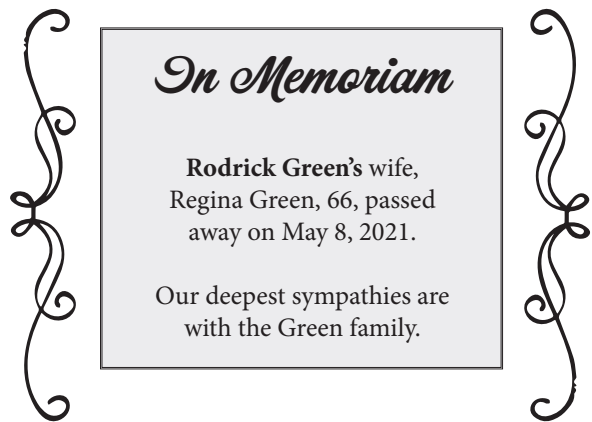
To be who you are, who you were crafted to be, all the time. And to be nice, compassionate, ethical and open to others and their views while doing so. If we give to others, we give to ourselves.

If you were creating a time capsule to be opened in 100 years, what would you put inside?

I love time capsules. I would start with the obvious things, like a newspaper, family photos, etc. Then I would leave an item that could be hard for the finder to discern what it is, like a nicotine pouch or my dog's shock collar.

Why do you choose to be a member of the WCBA? What is the greatest benefit you have enjoyed as a member?

We are all stronger when working together, or when acting as a group. It is also good for us, the practice and profession, to see one another outside the courtroom or office, to work together, and do non-law activities together. It fosters greater collegiality and respect among people who often are in roles designed to make us adversarial. I will always try to join any group or organization of like-minded or similarly situated people. I enjoy the yearly parties and think we need more "fun" or active bar events for all of us to attend, as opposed to a particular section event that may not readily appeal to more than the section members.



In Memoriam

Rodrick Green's wife,
Regina Green, 66, passed
away on May 8, 2021.

Our deepest sympathies are
with the Green family.