

Raymond Brown, Longtime Judge Ellen Koblitz Among Lateral Adds for Pashman Stein

The firm's partners "are some of my oldest comrades in the field," Brown said. "I've been a trial lawyer for 46 years and I feel like I may have hit my stride."

By Suzette Parmley

Pashman Stein Walder Hayden in Hackensack is making moves to bolster its reputation as an "elite" litigation firm and to expand multiple practice areas, welcoming five new laterals, including Ellen Koblitz and Raymond M. Brown.

Koblitz, who spent nearly three decades on the bench, including as presiding Appellate Division judge, joins the firm as special counsel.

Brown joins as a partner in the litigation practice, bringing along Rachel Simon, an associate, from Scarinci Hollenbeck in Lyndhurst.

Gregg Hilzer, a partner, also joined from Scarinci.

Pashman Stein also added partner Lana Ros from Norris McLaughlin. Ros will chair the firm's health care practice.

"I am thrilled to welcome these exceptional attorneys to our firm," managing partner Michael Stein said in an email Tuesday. "That



(l-r) Ellen Koblitz, Raymond Brown, Gregg Hilzer, Rachel Simon and Lana Ros, five new hires who joined Pashman Stein Walder Hayden this month. Courtesy photos

Raymond Brown and Judge Koblitz, two luminaries of the bar, together with Lana, Gregg and Rachel, have sought out our firm is very gratifying.

"The addition of these attorneys will further strengthen our Commercial Litigation, Criminal Defense, Appellate Advocacy, ADR, Family Law, Health Care, and Cannabis and Hemp practices and brings our roster to over 60 attorneys across our New Jersey and New York offices," said Stein.

Brown, a well-known and highly respected civil and criminal litigator, described Pashman Stein as an "elite litigation firm in the state."

"The *crème de la crème*. It's great to have this opportunity at this stage of my career," Brown

said in a phone interview Tuesday. "Pashman Stein is full of social engineers with a social consciousness and of the highest order. The lawyers here are the absolute finest in the world."

Brown, who turned 74 recently, said he goes back decades with Pashman Stein partners and criminal defense attorneys Joseph Hayden Jr., Alan Silber and Justin P. Walder (who is also co-chair of the firm's litigation practice).

"These are some of my oldest comrades in the field, and having the chance to join them and work with the smartest lawyers in the state," was too good to pass up, Brown said. "I've been a trial lawyer for 46 years and I feel like I may have hit my stride."

Brown, a 1974 University of California, Berkeley School of Law graduate, said he hopes to contribute to Pashman's litigation, criminal defense, governmental investigations and cannabis practice groups.

Koblitz, who started Sept. 21, said she is looking forward to the next chapter of her legal career, joining Pashman as special counsel in the ADR, appellate and family practices.

"I feel a little bit like I'm leaving a monastery to go out into the world," Koblitz said of leaving the judiciary after so many years.

She said among her newfound freedoms is being able to talk to the media.

"Judges by and large do not talk to reporters—you only get yourself in trouble," Koblitz quipped during the phone interview Tuesday. "Now, I have a lot more freedom and ... I am able to speak to people and go out and socialize with lawyers and be more friendly and frank."

As for joining Pashman, Koblitz attributed the move largely to fate and timing: she turns 70 in October, reaching the mandatory retirement age for judges in New Jersey under the state constitution.

"I feel like it's sort of 'kismet'—fate. I've known the lawyers, certainly the name partners, for many, many years, and they've appeared before me in trial court and the

Appellate Division," she said of Pashman's lawyers.

"I know the quality of work the firm does and what professionals they are, and the research and papers they produce," Koblitz said. "As a judge you really know that stuff."

Koblitz also cited the personal connection she has to former Justices Morris Pashman and Gary Stein.

"They were very powerful people to me as a lawyer, and so I have very fond feelings about them and the firm," she said, adding that when the firm "started the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center, it was just really fabulous."

"During my whole career, I had an interest in helping people who don't have the [resources] to attain what they are entitled to," Koblitz said.

"For a law firm to serve that group was very impressive and very much in line with how I feel," said Koblitz, who began her career as a public defender.

A Yale Law School graduate, she was first appointed to the New Jersey Superior Court in 1993, sitting in the Special Civil Part and Criminal Part in Bergen County, before becoming the presiding judge of the Family Part from 1998 to 2008. Then she was tapped to serve as presiding chancery judge in Bergen County.

In 2010, Koblitz was elevated to the Appellate Division, where she served for 10 years, including two years as presiding judge, until her recent retirement.

"I know what happens when people go to court," Koblitz said, and at Pashman, "I would like to help parties resolve their issues through mediation and arbitration and make a positive contribution."

Brown brought along Simon, who will be an associate at Pashman as she enters her seventh year as an attorney.

"I am very excited about contributing to a top-flight team," Simon said in a phone interview. "Pashman's litigation and appellate practice are among the best, if not the best in the state, and I look forward to burnishing my skills.

"Moving into my seventh year, I feel this is the right time to make the move and exactly the kind of place I hope to find myself: a firm with a top-flight litigation bench," Simon said. "Everyone is at the top of their game."

Simon pointed to the benefits of having the continuing tutelage of Brown, which she'd had at Scarinci Hollenbeck the last two years.

Another big draw to the firm for Simon was CJ Griffin, executive director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center that launched a year ago (and who is a current finalist for the Law Journal's Attorney of the Year award).

“CJ was a big influence for me to come here,” Simon said. “Pashman walks the walk on social justice.”

Simon, 35, said she wants to contribute her best skill set, emergency and crisis management, to her new firm, and push to expand that department. The 2014 Seton Hall School of Law graduate, who attended The Juilliard School as a professional trumpet player, sees a correlation between her former musical career and her current one. “You are preparing for that high-impact, high-pressure performance,” Simon said. “Being a musician is just like being a litigator: you have one shot at that five-minute performance.”

Ros, at 39, currently serves as general counsel to numerous medical societies in New Jersey, is vice chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association’s Health Law Section, and a trustee of the Somerset County Bar Association.

Her focus at Pashman: Grow the health care department.

“It has a really well-established department in the health care field,” Ros said. “I can expand services for my clients as well as help Pashman provide a full service to the health care industry.”

Ros, a 13-year veteran of the health care space, said the white-collar and health care practices can really work well together.

“Pashman’s reputation is well established, just as the firm overall

is very well respected in the litigation group,” said Ros, a 2007 Seton Hall Law graduate, who started Sept. 21. “The firm is really invested in growing all of their attorneys, and I found that very welcoming.”

Ros, who also practices in the cannabis space, specifically medical cannabis from the physician’s standpoint, said she wants to expand further into the industry.

Another of the new hires eyeing contribution to the firm’s cannabis and hemp practice is Hilzer, who also praised the firm’s culture as drawing him there.

“Pashman Stein is a very different type of law firm,” Hilzer said. “Every lawyer here is very strong at what they do. It’s the right type of collaborative culture. That is something that stood out to me ... and what really drew me.”

He added, “It’s a law firm focused on doing well for its clients and focused on doing good and that’s what really sets it apart for me. ... Pashman really tries to fight the good fight and be on the forefront of a lot of leading public interest issues.”

Hilzer worked with Brown for the last dozen years, though his joining Pashman was under different circumstances and separate from Brown’s and Simon’s arrivals. All three started Sept. 28.

Hilzer said he’s interested in representing clients in other departments, leveraging his experience in litigation, regulatory, and white collar criminal investigations.

Hilzer, 42, received his J.D. from Penn State University Dickinson School of Law and an L.L.M. from Fordham University in banking, corporate and finance law.

“I worked with Ray on dozens and dozens of cases over the past dozen years,” Hilzer said. “Ray is the best mentor ever. He’s a great lawyer and an even better person.

“I definitely saw that as a positive factor—Ray coming here ... at the same time,” Hilzer added. “Ray and I will continue to work together.”

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