

Mix of 'Perry Mason,' Baseball Blends Into IP Lawyer

By Carlos Harrison, Daily Business Review

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Elio F. Martinez of Espinosa Trueba Martinez by J. Albert Diaz

Elio Martinez found the lure of law on TV, his love of baseball in a part-time job and his passion for intellectual property in a law school classroom that spoke to his core.

"I took a copyright course in law school, and I really fell in love with the concept," he said. "The whole concept of writing was always very important to me. So the whole concept of creating and the concept of protecting your creation is something that I guess emanated from that and evolved from that."

It was a defining moment on a path he planned on since childhood.

The Havana native moved to the Hell's Kitchen section of New York when he was 8. That's where he found the TV show with the iconic fictional attorney he grew up wanting to emulate.

"Like many others of my generation I was really caught up in the old 'Perry Mason' reruns," he said. "I found it very attractive. So fairly early on I decided that's what I wanted to do. Even to the point where when I went to Fordham (University) undergrad with a communications major, really what I was doing was honing my writing skills in order to utilize them in law school and in the practice of law."

He found his other great passion — baseball — on his way there. He landed a job with the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statisticians for most major league sports in the United States, and stuck with it through college and law school.

"I got this job out of high school, and I spent my summers working there full time and then while I was going to school working there part time," he said. "In seven years you develop an affinity and a love for the sport. I don't know why, but I fell in love with the sport from the moment that I started following it and the more I got into the statistics."

He left the job after law school, but his love of baseball stuck. It merged with his love of travel and turned into a singular hobby with a goal — visiting the major league ballparks in every city that hosts a team. He has visited 24 of the 30 Major League Baseball stadiums so far.

"I love baseball stadiums," he said. "I think that each baseball stadium has a personality of its very own, just like every city has a personality of its very own. And I've really enjoyed becoming absorbed in what every stadium has to offer and learning about the personality that every stadium brings."

Career Spin

The stadium hobby began on business trips after he graduated, moved to Miami and began moving into his primary area of practice. He briefly tried criminal law, like his fictional idol, while he was in law school and clerked at the Manhattan district attorney's office.

But he also did an internship with a large Miami firm. When it offered him a job after he graduated, he took it. He moved to a small firm a year later, where one of the partners was transitioning away from his trademark law practice.

"Sometimes things sort of happen, and in some ways that happened here as well," Martinez said. "Making that move and falling into that situation is what helped spin my career further into that direction."

He stayed for seven years until a friend decided to open a firm and invited Martinez to join as a partner. They later merged into another firm, and several years later Martinez reunited with one of his former colleagues to launch Concepcion Martinez & Puente. After his two partners joined Jones Day in 2015, Martinez reformed a firm with two new partners. This year, Martinez combined his firm in with Jorge Espinosa and William Trueba to form what is now the intellectual property boutique Espinosa Trueba Martinez.

Martinez's practice evolved over time, too. His clients have included a variety of top national and international brands — Polo Ralph Lauren, Panasonic, Levi Strauss and Hunter Fan, among others.

"In a lot of these cases these are counterfeiting actions that were filed down here because we're a port city," he said. "We have a lot of counterfeit merchandise that comes into Florida, particularly South Florida."

All involve his passion for protecting intellectual property.

"You are protecting society because you are encouraging others to go out there and be creative. You're encouraging others to go out there and take risks. If those risks are taken and somebody else steps in and takes advantage, then you're basically creating a disincentive for people to do that. So from my perspective, IP is so important, and trademark and copyright protection are so important."

He keeps his thing for baseball on display in his office in the form of a birthday present from his wife: "the back of a seat from the old Shea Stadium autographed by my childhood idol, Tom Seaver."