

**TEN
LEADERS**

Criminal Defense Law

NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

2009

JACK VENTURI



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EDUCATION

University of Connecticut, B.A., 1972
New York University of Law, J.D.,
1975

AFFILIATIONS

- Member, New Jersey State and Middlesex County Bar Associations
- Life Member, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- New Jersey Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Graduate, National College of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Certified, National Board of Trial Advocacy
- Lecturer, The Institute for Continuing Legal Education, New Jersey State Bar, Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and other venues
- Selected, Ten Leaders of Criminal Defense Law, Northern New Jersey
- Selected, Superlawyers of New Jersey 2008, Criminal Defense
- Selected, American Trial Lawyers Association, Top 100 Criminal Defense Lawyers in the US

Concealed somewhat behind Jack Venturi's pleasantly off-beat manner is an enviable reputation: The 58-year-old Newark native is regarded as one of the best criminal-defense attorneys in New Jersey. Experienced and with a string of trial accomplishments spanning over 3 decades, Venturi has built a practice truly for "The People" - that is, for virtually anyone who comes to his downtown New Brunswick office facing serious criminal charges, including the very rich and the not-so-rich. That has made for a remarkably diverse and interesting client base. Further, Venturi's outspoken style is a fresh contrast to the conservative, uptight ways of most of his colleagues in the law.

Growing up in Newark and Irvington, Venturi said it was a fourth-grade teacher - whose husband was a lawyer - who inspired him to pursue a law career. "She introduced to me Clarence Darrow and the other historic names of trial law, and of course I was already watching Perry Mason and 'The Defenders' on television. And I always had strong feelings about fighting for liberty and our rights."

He excelled at the University of Connecticut, and later at NYU Law School, which encouraged real-world training. While still in law school in the Criminal Defense Clinic, Venturi won a motion to suppress evidence and won a trial in the NYC Criminal Court. (Venturi watched many trials as well: "I saw great trial lawyers at work in the Manhattan Criminal and U.S. District Courts.") So it was early on that Venturi began developing his courtroom skills, which he took with him to his first

job - in the public defender's office in Elizabeth, N.J. "It was 12 hours a day and \$17,000 a year - and it was the most valuable experience I ever had," he says. Three years later, after trying almost 50 cases with the Public Defender's Office, Venturi joined the prominent Woodbridge-based firm of Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, where "I was the whole criminal-defense department. I did everything. Municipal, State and Federal Courts."

Two years later, Venturi started his own practice. For the last 25 years Venturi has led small teams of attorneys. Over years of constant trial work Venturi has handled over 25 murder cases. One of his most memorable was defending 21-year-old Kelsey Kirk, a clergyman's son charged with shooting to death a woman at a 1999 party. Kirk was acquitted, aided by Venturi's skillful representation.

Today Venturi heads a practice of 3 lawyers with an expanding "white-collar" clientele. He lives in Plainsboro Township with his wife and 8-year-old daughter, Jenna.

Observations & Perspectives

from Jack Venturi

You know that phrase in The Pledge of Allegiance? "With Liberty and Justice for All"? Well, you know what? I actually believe in that.

I've been at this for a while, and I've seen first-hand the affects that false accusations can have on people. And I've come to understand how the government can turn against its citizens - by leveling charges that aren't based on facts. Most people don't understand that until it happens to them.

So criminal-defense work has always appealed to me. There's an adventure to the process - we defense attorneys have to be a gladiator, a gunfighter for justice in the courtroom.

When clients see me for the first time, I simply listen. I'm a good listener and I've always been able to relate well to all types of people. There's a street term for that: "I Feel You."

That doesn't mean I always agree with

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what everyone is saying. Sure, I'll acknowledge where they are coming from. I may even agree with it. But later, down the road, I may try to show them how to see things differently from how they are describing things to me initially. This approach works well with all types of people: rich and white-collar, or middle-class and blue-collar.

When a client of mine is wrongly accused, I think the only absolute success is an acquittal - when the client is able to walk out of the courtroom on his own. That to me is an outright win.

Even in my training as a lawyer I took a practical, real-world approach to the law. I wasn't always bookish about it - it was the "doing" and "being" of a lawyer that counted to me.

Every year of my 33 years in this profession I have become a better lawyer. I've become more perceptive and sensitive of people. I never dismiss what someone has to say. How you relate to others is important - especially when you are representing someone charged with a crime. You've got to feel them, and feel everything that's going on with them. Then, you're representing a flesh-and-blood human being, and not just a client.

