

Spring 2026

Paradigm™

Return trip

Former journalist made most
of a second chance in the law

P PRIMERUS™

The World's Finest Law Firms™

Return trip

Former journalist made most of a second chance in the law

By Tom Kirvan

Downtown Milwaukee is bounded by Lake Michigan to the east and also features the Milwaukee River, a 104-mile waterway that runs south from Fond du Lac County before it empties into Lake Michigan.

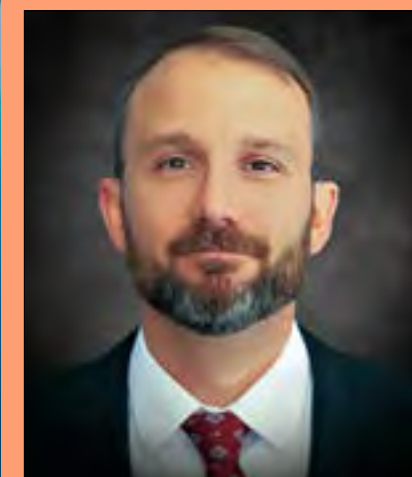
A former member of the Fourth Estate, Milwaukee attorney Lance Duroi admits he took a somewhat circuitous route to a career in law, a profession in which his father excelled as the longtime general counsel for The Hershey Company.

“It was almost by accident that I got into law, where I spent many years in courtrooms reporting on trials, first in Delaware in the Chancery Court and the Bankruptcy Court and later in Chicago covering the federal courts,” Duroi explained. “I observed and wrote about many trials and legal disputes as a reporter before I ever set foot in law school. I was fascinated by the legal profession and ultimately decided to try my hand at it.”

But his first rung on the career ladder was as a journalist for Law360, a legal news website that lived up to its name, churning out stories at such a rate that it became a veritable 24/7 operation that eventually was merged into the news division of LexisNexis.

“Working for an internet-based website comes with certain demands, as there is a real aggressive push to create content,” said Duroi, a University of Wisconsin alum who holds his master’s degree in journalism from Temple University in Philadelphia. “Because of that expectation, I sometimes felt I was leaving some meat on the bone with certain stories. I wanted to dig deeper and write more in-depth pieces but simply didn’t have the time for it. Everyone understood that it was imperative to get the story, get it accurate, and get it up on the site as soon as possible.”

The demands of the job, coupled with the uncertainty surrounding the world of journalism, eventually gave Duroi pause, prompting him to reconsider an opportunity to attend law school.



Lance E. Duroi
Associate: Business Litigation
Kohner, Mann & Kailas, S.C.



Honored as a “Rising Young Lawyer” in 2022, Duroni posed for a photo with his wife, Jillian Rouleau, a psychiatric nurse practitioner who earned her doctorate degree in nursing practice from the University of Wisconsin. She also has a 20-year-old son, Aiden.

“I contemplated going to law school in the first couple of years after graduating from the University of Wisconsin, but I was kind of restless then and decided to move out west to Jackson Hole [Wyoming], where I spent my time skiing and working in hotels,” Duroni said. “I just wasn’t ready to get on a solid career path at the time, so the idea of going to law school just fell by the wayside.”

Nearly 15 years after obtaining his bachelor’s degree, Duroni had a change

of heart and enrolled in law school at Marquette University in Milwaukee, where he graduated with honors in 2019.

With his strong writing background, Duroni was a natural choice to serve as associate editor of the Marquette Law Review, earning further recognition as a published author. He also won a CALI Award for achieving the highest grade in Constitutional Law, Legal Analysis Research, and Writing II. In addition, Duroni landed coveted internships during

law school with Justice Rebecca Bradley of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and the Federal Defender Services in Madison.

“I know that my father (Chuck) was happy when I decided to go to law school,” Duroni related. “He had encouraged me to give it a try and was convinced that I had the talents to succeed. Going to law school was a mid-life career change for me. The law was a fortuitous second option after legacy media took a turn for the worse.”

In 2022, as he approached his fifth year as an attorney and as an associate with Kohner, Mann & Kailas, S.C. (KMK) in Milwaukee, Duroni was recognized by the Wisconsin Law Journal as a “Rising Young Lawyer” for his work in the firm’s litigation department.

“While I’m still relatively early in my career, I was proud that my colleagues at the firm saw fit to nominate me and that the publication recognized me,” Duroni said of the honor. “It’s been an interesting dynamic for me to be recognized as a ‘young lawyer,’ when I’m a middle-aged person. Even though I’m in that age group, I willingly acknowledge that I’m young in terms of my overall legal experience.”

Duroni credits two of KMK’s managing partners, Ryan Billings and Melinda Bialzik, with serving as valued mentors, saying that the wisdom and support they have shared has been instrumental to his growth as an attorney.

Their mentorship, according to Duroni, was particularly helpful during the early stages of his career which coincided with the outbreak of COVID.

“It was six months into my legal career when all of a sudden we were cooped up inside and not doing any hearings in person,” recalled Duroni. “It was such an uncertain time, not only for those of us in the legal profession but also everyone

else in the business world. Fortunately, the firm was able to navigate it well without laying off anyone and keeping our client base intact.”

As a litigator, Duroni represents a cross-section of clients in civil litigation, mediation, arbitration, and appellate matters.

“I’ve been involved in a pretty broad swath of commercial litigation, especially in the construction industry related to breach of contract and construction lien cases,” he said. “I’m starting to take on more complex cases with a greater variety of claims. I’m also hoping to become more involved in appellate work given my background in writing.”

One of four children, Duroni grew up in Lancaster, a South-Central Pennsylvania community known for its historic charm, Amish culture, and vibrant arts scene. His father, who earned his juris doctor from the University of Wisconsin Law School, had a distinguished legal career that included key roles with Rockwell International, H.J. Heinz Company, and The Hershey Company. Duroni’s late mother, Charlene, was a reporter for The Lancaster Intelligence Journal, covering the lifestyle beat.

Duroni, who enjoys skiing and live music, has three children – Henry (18), Isabella (16), and Charlie (14).

“I have three high-schoolers and two of them go to different schools than the other, which can make it challenging at times,” Duroni noted. “They’re all terrific kids, and I do my best to be as supportive and involved with them as I can.

“And they’re all good skiers,” he said. “I work out during the off-season to stave off the day where I have to catch up to them on the slopes. That day is coming as my back and knees slowly give out, but we’re not quite there yet.” 

Skiing out west is a fun-filled activity for Duroni and his family.



