

# Stage presence

## Creative roots run deep in mind of entertainment law attorney



By Brian Cox

When attorney Carrie Ward’s husband built her a “she-shed” in the summer of 2019, the idea was that it would be a place where she could go to have some time to herself. A quiet retreat — complete with electricity — where she could meditate, read, or practice yoga. A special hideaway where she could regroup, reenergize, and refocus.

“It’s my little haven,” she says. “It’s my chill place. I even decorate it for the seasons so it’s a very festive she-shed.”

And when the pandemic shut down the world a year later just as Ward was joining the Philadelphia law firm Earp Cohn P.C. as a partner, the “she-shed” proved to also be an ideal home office.

While the outset of the pandemic could have been a difficult and uncertain time to start with a new firm, Ward says Earp Cohn was well positioned to transition smoothly into working remotely.



Carrie Ward with her husband, Damian, and their two young sons, Bobby and Grayson, enjoy a day of sledding in the snow.

“My first day, I rolled into the parking lot. Our office manager came out with my laptop and monitor, loaded it up in my trunk and that was my on-boarding experience,” she says with a laugh. “Fortunately, it was seamless. Everyone was very welcoming.”

With more than 20 years of experience in business law, Ward’s practice has a particular focus on entertainment, communications and media law. She describes her practice as “creative law.”

“I see myself as a creative person with a legal skill set,” she says. “I can see what the client needs to be successful.”

Ward especially enjoys connecting with young creatives who are just breaking into the industry and offering them not only legal guidance, but an education.

“I love being able to advocate for them and set them on a good path,” she says. “That’s what really excites me. That’s where I thrive and shine. I’m able to explain things to them in a clear, simple way. Nothing makes me happier than being able to protect someone at the beginning of their career so that they’re not going to have heartbreak later on.”

Ward’s creative roots reach back to her days growing up in Bordentown, New Jersey, where she enjoyed dancing, art, and singing. A choir kid, she took voice lessons for a time and dreamed of being a professional singer.

Her interest in the law reaches just as far back. An only child, she spent many summers with her grandparents, Blanche and Alphonse. Blanche was passionate about politics and Ward remembers watching the Republican and Democratic Conventions at her grandparents’ home.

“My interest in how our government works and how to make change started there,” says Ward.

The summer Ward turned 10, her grandparents took her with them on an unforgettable cross-country trip that led down the East Coast and then west to California before heading home through the Northwest and across the Midwest. Ward saw the vastness of America, including stops at the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Mount Rushmore. Her grandmother insisted Ward document the trip in a journal, which she still has and cherishes.

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**Carrie Ward and her family recently vacationed in Hilton Head, spending time where she says they were on a “quest to find the most magnificent sandcastle, the tastiest ice cream cone, and perhaps a dolphin or two.”**

“My grandparents were the gold standard,” says Ward fondly. “They were amazing.”

Her grandparents also took Ward often to visit Washington, D.C., which strongly influenced her decision to attend American University. An internship with New Jersey Congressman Chris Smith deepened her understanding of government and heightened her interest in studying law.

“I was always interested in a position where I could make change and help people,” she says.

After graduating in 1999, Ward stayed on in D.C. and took a job at a communications law firm as a paralegal. Less than two years later, she came across a posting on a bulletin board at the Federal Communications Commission advertising a paralegal position at ABC in New York.

Ready to move back to New Jersey, Ward arranged for an interview and was hired the same day in the network’s media regulatory division. It was a life-changing decision that introduced Ward to Dvora Rabino, chief counsel at ABC who had a tremendous influence on the direction of her future career.

“She handled herself with such grace,” says Ward. “She treated her staff with respect and decency. She was a smart, amazing attorney who did great work for her clients but also was an amazing mom at the same time.”

Ward’s decision to go to law school was accelerated by the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. She was fortuitously in New Jersey at the time of the attack, but the

national tragedy convinced her that she should act on her goals and ambitions.

While at Rutgers School of Law, Ward secured a summer associate position at a commercial litigation firm in Philadelphia. She joined the firm after graduation and stayed about two years before being recruited for a position at Entercom Communications Corp., the second largest radio company in the United States now called Audacy.

“I was able to use some of my FCC experience and my media background and was able to expand on those skills,” says Ward, who loved the work.

After 10 years – and two kids – Ward began feeling the drain of the daily commute and needed more flexibility in her life. After talking it over with her husband, Damian, she decided to make the leap and start her own firm.

“Working for myself was the only thing lighting me up,” she says. “It was scary, but it’s one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. I love having control of who I get to work with.”

To build her practice, Ward became well versed in marketing. She immediately created a website and was active on social media. She read every book she could get her hands on and listened to any podcast she could find about how to market yourself as a lawyer.

“And then I just worked my butt off. I just kept putting the work in. I just wasn’t giving up,” she says. “I forced myself to be uncomfortable. I made myself well known. I went anywhere and talked with anyone I could.”



**Ward began teaching Media and Entertainment Law and the Business of Recorded Music at Saint Joseph’s University in 2021. She took her children, Bobby and Grayson, to the school on “take your children to work day.”**

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The hard, persistent work paid off and now Ward has a client list that ranges from media group owners, small broadcasters, and podcasters to actors, filmmakers, musicians, and start-up entrepreneurs.

Now at Earp Cohn, Ward welcomes the collaborative nature of the firm.

“The firm is amazing. I work with great people,” she says. “There are no airs. These are truly down-to-earth people who are good people and want to do their jobs and work well with each other.”

In addition to serving as the firm’s marketing chair, Ward also teaches classes at Saint Joseph’s University. She teaches Media and Entertainment Law in the fall and the Business of Recorded Music in the spring.

“I absolutely love it,” she says. “Both classes are fun to teach. There’s always so much happening in media and entertainment law. It brings me joy. It keeps me on my toes to stay current with things that are happening in the Music and Entertainment Law.”

Ward and her husband have two boys and she proudly proclaims herself a soccer and lacrosse mom who spends hours behind the wheel ferrying her sons to sporting events and summer camps. Bobby is 12 and Grayson is 8.

“Being a mom makes me a better lawyer and a better person,” she says. “They’re my world.”

She is passionate about acting as a role model and mentor for younger women attorneys, the way Rabino was for her. She knows what it is like to be overlooked for career opportunities because as a mother it was assumed she wouldn’t have the time. She calls it the “mother tax.”



Carrie Ward discovered her love of travel as a young child during a family vacation that included stops at Old Faithful, Bryce Canyon, Utah, and the Four Corners, where Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah meet.



Carrie Ward with her husband, Damian, and their two young sons, Bobby and Grayson, dress as Pirates at Disney

She is on the executive committee of the Primerus Women Lawyers Section, which is working to develop a mentorship program that would pair partners with associates at different firms. She hopes the program will help women lawyers reach for their full potential.

“I want to work with people to change that mindset and to let younger women know that they are not in a silo. You can do all this stuff. You don’t have to turn down a promotion or a coveted assignment because you have kids. You can do it,” she says. “You can be a multi-dimensional person. You can be multiple things at the same time. You don’t have to put yourself in certain buckets.”