

## She Has A Point: Dechert's Kassie Helm

By **Dani Kass**

*Law360 (February 19, 2026, 6:36 PM EST)* -- Kassie Helm, co-chair of Dechert LLP's global intellectual property group and head of its IP litigation group, is "unquestionably one of the leading lights of her generation," according to Morrison Foerster LLP partner Daralyn Durie, who praised Helm for her work as opposing counsel in a new series celebrating women litigators.

Law360 will be profiling female IP litigators chosen by someone who has worked opposite them to highlight their work in often male-dominated cases. Durie, a recent Law360 MVP, selected Helm, and Helm has chosen the next attorney to be profiled.

When Durie and Helm first worked opposite each other, Helm was an associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP. Durie said she was particularly impressed during depositions.

"Sometimes you can tell when someone is driving strategy on the other side, and I could tell she was really driving strategy," Durie said.

The attorneys have become close friends, but the mutual respect came from that opposing counsel relationship.

"[Daralyn] really stood out to me," Helm said. "She was senior to me. I really admired her presence and the way she dealt with things."

Helm joined Dechert in 2018 after seven years at Simpson Thacher. Earlier in her career, she spent five years as a technical adviser and associate at Fish & Neave LLP, which turned into Ropes & Gray LLP during her tenure.

She clerked for Federal Circuit Judge Alvin Anthony Schall and for U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel in the Northern District of California.

Helm has an undergraduate degree from Princeton University, a master's degree and Ph.D. in neurobiology and neurosciences from The Johns Hopkins University and a law degree from Fordham University School of Law.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*



Kassie Helm

### **How did you get into patent law?**

An amazing woman named Michela Gallagher was my Ph.D. adviser at Johns Hopkins. She was head of the Department of Psychological and Brain Science, but she also had a very commercial sense. She started her own company, AgeneBio, while I was in graduate school, and she wanted me to learn alongside her, help her learn about patents and how to protect your inventions and the commercial side of science. She had a vision where she wanted to bring a drug to market based on the research in her lab, and she had never done anything like that before.

At the time, many law firms would go and recruit Ph.D. graduates for patent agent programs. They promised you would still think about the science every day and all the topics that you liked, but you'd get to learn law. They'd send you to law school at night and pay for it.

### **How did you come to specialize in litigation?**

I came into this patent agent program at Fish & Neave doing primarily patent prosecution, but on day one I was put on a trial.

I wasn't even an agent. I was a technical adviser. I hadn't even applied to law school yet, but they were in the middle of a big biotech trial on remand. It was a very heavy technical science case, so they needed people right off the bat.

Some of the very first things I did was help draft cross-examination questions and look at science articles and see how we could impeach expert witnesses and what we could say for our experts.

### **What types of gender dynamics did you face early on?**

When I was at a different law firm, female partners gave a talk to female associates, and they said, "You will never see gender parity at this law firm or any law firm." And then they said, "But hopefully one day, perhaps in your career, you will see a woman be a head of a litigation group," but that had not yet happened. They said, "We hope it's going to get there, but even if we had every partner class at 50-50 going forward, we would not achieve gender parity amongst the partnership in anyone in this room's lifetime."

Coming full circle, I'm now the chair of our group. I don't feel like I've been impeded from getting this role because I've been a woman, but I do reflect on the fact that I'm the chair of a group and I am a woman because it is still notable in our culture.

### **What's a specific case that has stood out to you?**

We represented Dana-Farber in some of the PD-1, PDL-1 [immunotherapy] disputes. There was an inventorship dispute between Bristol-Myers Squibb and Dana-Farber on some of the seminal patents that underlie the PD-1 estate that had been widely licensed to all drugmakers that have PD-1 products, which is a billion-dollar-plus industry.

We came in after the inventorship decision in the midst of a case that involved patent adjacent claims.

How to benefit from an inventorship decision as a matter of patent law can be very difficult, especially when you have global assets. Inventorship law is very different across countries, and who has standing to sue to enforce patents as an inventor differs by jurisdiction as well.

That involved some really creative lawyering with state law claims like unjust enrichment. We got our client exactly what they needed and more. We felt like we were on the right side of everything moral.

### **What's a way for women to make sure other women get opportunities?**

I'm involved with the ChIPs network, which is now a huge global organization that supports women in IP. I try to not only meet women and make friends, but give business to them. If I need to hire either for local counsel or co-counsel, the first thing I think of is the ChIPs Network.

We've also launched the Lead Counsel Summit, which is a confluence of lead trial counsel from all different competitor firms as well as competitor companies. We select from the shockingly small pool of what we view as female partners at firms who are on the cusp of being lead counsel and could benefit from a little collective help to get there.

We want to have 25% of each graduating class serve in the lead counsel role within two years of graduation. We're just starting to track those statistics and so far they seem to be doing really well. I think this is a huge step, given the size and, quite frankly, lack of women in lead counsel roles still today that we see in IP litigation.

### **What other role models have you had?**

When I finished this patent agent program, I clerked for the former chief judge of the Northern District of California, Marilyn Hall Patel, who is an incredible female legend figurehead.

She was kind of like my Ph.D. adviser, a very pragmatic, successful woman. She achieved so much in part because of how clear her vision was on how to be her own immutable self that was not a mirror of some former male or other mentor she had.

### **Who do you nominate for our next piece in the series?**

Cora Holt of Finnegan Henderson Farabow Garrett & Dunner LLP.

### **Cases mentioned:**

Helm's litigation with Durie was Human Genome Sciences Inc. v. Genentech Inc., case numbers 2:11-cv-06546 and 2:11-cv-06519, in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Her first trial was Amgen Inc. v. Hoechst Marion et al., case no. 1:97-cv-10814, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

The Dana-Farber case is Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Inc. v. Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. et al., case number 1:19-cv-11380, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Her litigation with Holt is Genzyme Corp. et al. v. Novartis Gene Therapies Inc. et al., case number 1:23-cv-00554, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.

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