

Profiles

Jimmie Reyna PROSPERS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE CAREER

Jimmie Reyna knows all about how challenging situations can yield unexpected opportunities. Take, for example, how the discovery of his oldest son's autism sent him down a path he otherwise never would have traveled.

Reyna had grown up in New Mexico, mostly in Clovis, where his academic achievement equaled his popularity: He was president of his high school class, played football and graduated as class valedictorian.

With hair below his shoulders, ready for a change of scenery and a chance to become involved in Civil Rights activism, Reyna headed East for college, graduating from the University of Rochester in 1975.

He returned to New Mexico to attend law school at UNM because he and his wife, Dolores Ramirez, whom he had met and married as a freshman at Rochester, knew they wanted to live in Bernalillo and he would practice in the Albuquerque area.

"As long as I can remember, I wanted to be a lawyer," he says. "I participated in debate in high school, was a thespian, involved in public speaking and was a member of the forensic society."

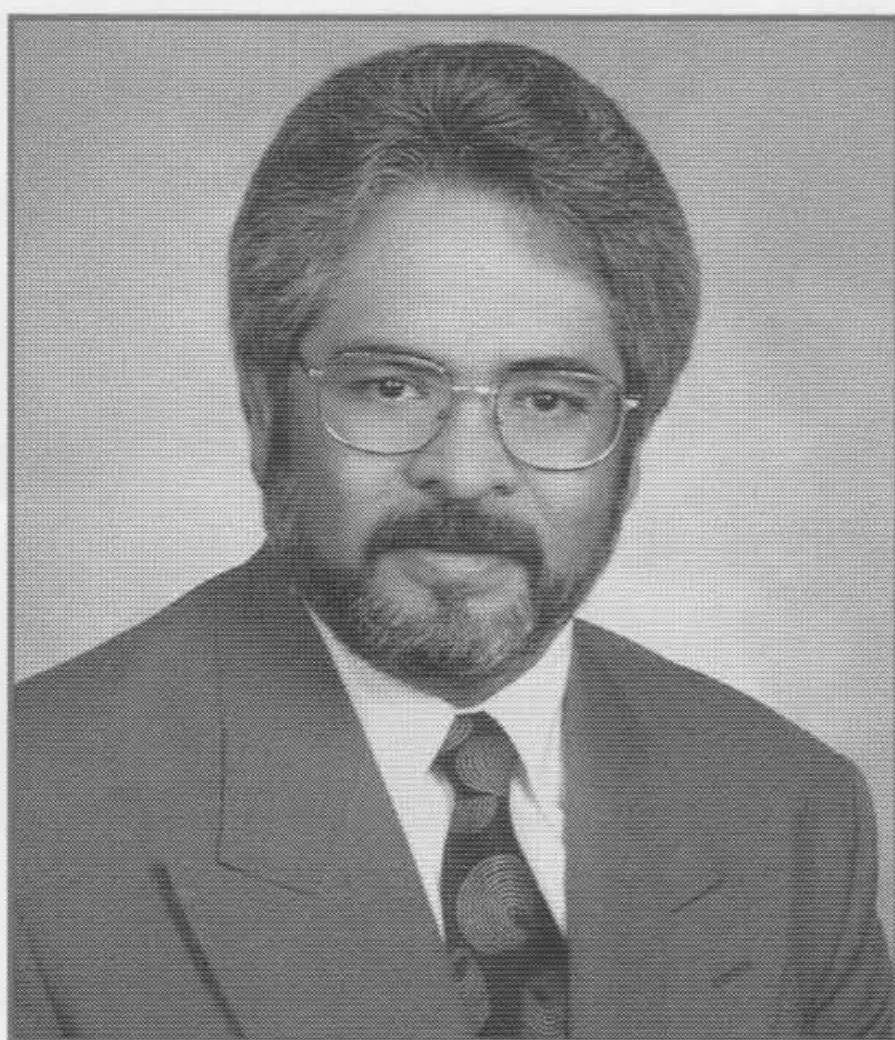
Reyna had just completed his first year of law school at UNM, when his son was diagnosed with autism. Following graduation in 1978, he worked as an associate with Shaffer, Butt, Thornton & Baehr before going into solo practice for five years.

When his son entered adolescence, it became clear he would need highly specialized treatment and care, something the Albuquerque Public Schools couldn't handle. He would have to be institutionalized outside the state.

"We researched places for him around the country and decided that we would stay together as a family and all go wherever he needed to go," says Reyna.

In Rockville, Md., they found an impressive program with nonaversive techniques. Within five months, they had moved. Reyna, his wife and a younger son arrived in Maryland with no place to stay, no jobs.

With the opportunity of a fresh start, Reyna joined Stewart & Stewart, a Washington, D.C. firm that specializes in international trade issues. He always had been interested in Mexico and other parts of the world, and international law interested him. For the next 12 years, he rose through the ranks in the firm, developing a practice that focused on all forms of international trade law. Eventually, he expanded into trade policy work, advising corporations, U.S. trade associations and some non-governmental



organizations on trade policy issues in the context of international trade negotiations. He also works with trade regulators in other countries on problems that impede the cross-border flow of goods and services. The job requires lots of international travel, which Reyna especially enjoys.

"It's very interesting and exciting work," he says. "It requires me to be on the cutting edge, it keeps me on my toes."

In 1998, he joined the Washington D.C. office of Williams, Mullen, Clark & Dobbins, where he is a shareholder and directs its trade and customs practice group. Reyna has written two books about international trade, numerous articles and is a frequent speaker on the subject. He was appointed by the U.S. government to the U.S. roster of dispute settlement panelists for trade dispute under NAFTA, and the U.S. roster for World Trade Organization disputes that involve both trade in goods and trade in services.

"It turns out my son's disability was a big blessing to us all," he says. "My office is a block from the White House and I'm doing things a lot of lawyers would like to be doing. Following my son gave me the opportunity to start a whole new career and do things I really enjoy. We've all done well and our son is the one who's done the best."

Now an adult, Reyna's oldest son remains a part of the program that brought them to Maryland. He lives in a group home with another autistic man and works in the community.

"He does things and lives a life we never dared to dream possible," says Reyna. "And it was all done through behavioral management."

During an ABA-sponsored trip to Mexico in 1992, Reyna and 10 other U.S. lawyers studied Mexico's new foreign investment laws and later they founded the U.S.-Mexico Law Institute, which is designed to encourage the exchange of information and understanding on legal issues affecting the U.S. and Mexico. He has remained on the board of directors of the institute, which is headquartered at the UNM law school. Reyna also is active in the UNM law school's Washington, D.C. alumni chapter.

"Even though I'm practicing in an area of law that wasn't taught at the law school when I was there, the education I received provides the legal foundation I depend on every day," he says.

This summer, Reyna's travels will take him to Pamplona, Spain, and an adventure he has longed for his entire life: to run with the bulls in the annual ritual during which people run in front of a herd of stampeding bulls through town. He will be accompanied by six family members.

"As a kid in Clovis, we'd ride the cows and I read all of Hemingway's books. I became enthralled with that type of stuff," he says. "I believe that as we grow older, we should fulfill our childhood dreams to the extent practical. I figure that if I don't run with the bulls soon, it will be less practical later."