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NEW YORK'S RISING STARS

Ariel Deckelbaum, 38

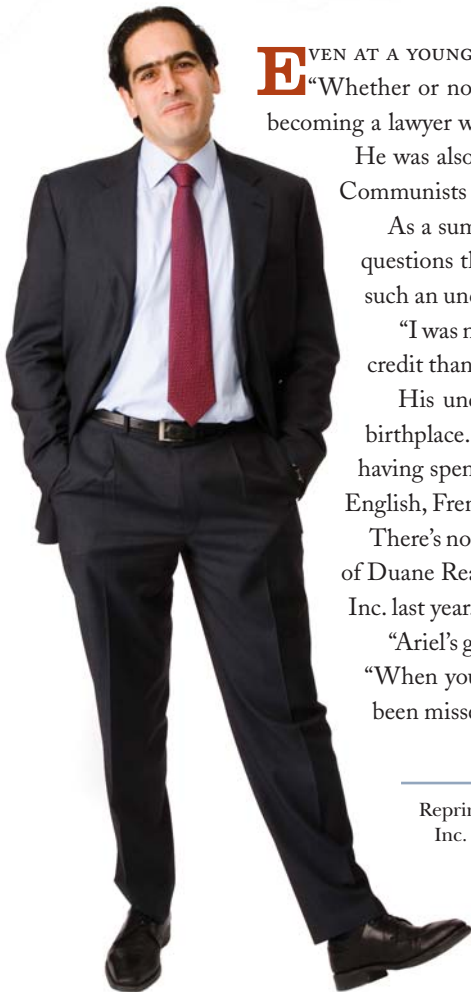
Partner, deputy chair of corporate department

PAUL, WEISS, RIFKIND, WHARTON & GARRISON LLP



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Photography by Buck Ennis



EVEN AT A YOUNG AGE, Ariel Deckelbaum liked to dispense advice. “Whether or not people took it was another story,” he jokes. So becoming a lawyer was a natural fit.

He was also following a course set by his Bulgarian grandmother, whose law career came to an abrupt end when Communists took over her country following World War II and she fled to Israel.

As a summer associate at Paul, Weiss, he recalls one meeting with a client company where he piped up, asking questions that the chief executive had a hard time answering. Normally, partners would rein in an intern causing such an uncomfortable scene—but they didn’t, because his questions were right on.

“I was nothing at the time. I hadn’t even passed the bar,” marvels Mr. Deckelbaum. “People tend to give me more credit than maybe they should.”

His understated demeanor, rare in a big-time M&A lawyer, probably comes from his roots in Canada, his birthplace. His father’s career as a doctor with university research departments kept the family on the move; in fact, having spent much of his childhood in Jerusalem and his teenage years in New York, Mr. Deckelbaum is fluent in English, French, Hebrew and Chinese. But his summers and his college years were spent back home in Montreal.

There’s no downplaying his role as lead counsel to private equity firm Oak Hill Capital in its recent \$1.1 billion sale of Duane Reade pharmacies to Walgreens, or to Time Warner Cable in its \$10.9 billion spinoff from Time Warner Inc. last year.

“Ariel’s got great judgment, and he gets all the way down into the details,” says John Monsky, an Oak Hill partner. “When you walk into a [negotiating] meeting with him by your side, you can be 200% confident that nothing’s been missed.”

—HILARY POTKEWITZ

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