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Lawyer Mark Goodall is perhaps St. Vincent dePaul's Thrift Shop's best customer. He once ordered 1,000 books – “anything but law books” – to fill the bookcases in his conference room.

Mark Goodall: Lawyer, Artist and Then Some ...

By Dan McCann
The Daily Record

Omaha's Mark Goodall is a multifaceted man, a 61-year-old mix of “...ers,” “...ors” and “...ans”: father, grandfather, lawyer, sculptor, recreational sailor, retired U.S. airman, decorated Vietnam combat veteran, amateur videographer and volunteer.

“I'm just ending yet another stint as president of the Benson Business Association,” said Goodall.

A man of many pursuits, Goodall's business is the law, a career that led him on a “yuppie path to partner in a large firm” but veered from there. An entrepreneurial spirit, a desire to be “closer to the street,” and a calling to “deliver crisp, efficient legal

services in an environment where professionals are approachable” ultimately led to the launch of Goodfirm, Goodall’s Benson-based, general practice law office.

“I was at the large firm, and then I went off after the micro-computer came along and ran a one-guy shop. Then, I got picked up by a small firm, later took my crew out of there and formed this shop. It was a little bit of the Goldilocks process,” explained Goodall.

Founded in 1995, Goodfirm specializes in start-up businesses, divorce, probate, estate planning, and general conflict work.

“I’m convinced most legal tasks are very simple – or, at the very least, understandable – and I like to communicate that to people,” said Goodall who has been a member of the Omaha Estate Planning Council for over 25 years.

The firm also specializes in accessibility and non-polarizing communication, what Goodall believes are two of the bigger challenges facing the legal profession today.

“A core value, for me, is accessibility. When I say that, I don’t mean to suggest that bigger firms aren’t accessible, but it seems like they tend to be a little off-putting,” he said.

Goodall’s Goodfirm staff consists of legal assistant Sue Green who has been with him since 1988 and administrative assistant Bret Harbin.

“My son Chris provides technical assistance. Barb, a mannequin, serves as receptionist,” said the good-humored Goodall.

The actual Goodfirm office near 61st and Maple St. is, like its founder, an interesting mix of elements. Goodall described it as “very unusual.”

“It’s very open and art deco in terms of the workspace. In the client meeting area, we have a fireplace. It’s like a library, but unlike a ‘lawyer’s library’ which has a lot of boxes sitting around,” said Goodall.

Upon entering the office, clients and visitors can expect a warm greeting from both the staff and Nigel, the office cat. “He rides to work with me everyday,” laughed Goodall.

They can also expect an eyeful of art, one of Goodall’s other passions. The office includes a display of his assemblage sculpture made from classic components – from a Universal vacuum cleaner rocket to a locomotive that used to be an Electrolux.

“I grew up in a body shop and salvage yard. We didn’t have a lot of money, but we had a lot of good junk,” he said. (For an online tour of Goodall’s virtual gallery, check out www.goodfirm.com. While you’re there, visit his online movie theater which includes such self-produced titles as “Greetings from Space” and “Robot Birth.”)

Goodall said he would like to explore new avenues in art in the future, perhaps by opening a stand-alone gallery or by launching a public art project, a title for which he

already has: “The Great American Blue Collar Public Art Project – No Artists Allowed.”

“I’d like to bring that out, but I’m waiting for the economy to settle down,” he said.

As for the art of being an attorney, Goodall said the most rewarding part is “having people find that it wasn’t as bad as they thought it would be.”

Goodall received his law degree from the University of California’s Hastings College of Law in San Francisco in 1977 after graduating from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

“After the Vietnam experience, I vowed to use every dime of G.I. Bill available to me. While completing undergraduate school at UNO, I was a waiter. Another waiter was a Creighton student who was taking the law boards. It made sense to me,” he said.

In addition to his legal work, art projects and volunteerism for the betterment of Benson, Goodall enjoys sailing [you can see a video of him doing that, too] and figuring out “how to assist my wife [a former teacher] in the enjoyment of her retirement.” He said he also muses that he should invite another attorney into his office so he can spend more time away.

The Goodalls have two grown children and two grandsons.

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