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A CLOSER LOOK: A local leader you should know

MARK WEINHARDT

Co-founder, Weinhardt & Logan P.C.

BY KENT DARR

It has been nearly four years to the day since Holly Logan followed a vacuum cleaner trail to find Mark Weinhardt sweeping the carpet in preparation for the arrival of the first client at a boutique law firm the two had just opened in Des Moines. By September 2011, Weinhardt had spent nearly 20 years at Belin McCormick P.C. Logan had been with the storied firm for a decade. Both had a keen interest in complex business litigation and white-collar criminal defense. As a result, Weinhardt & Logan P.C. was formed. Weinhardt has left a trail in Des Moines and elsewhere. He was a state high school debate champion in Cedar Rapids. While with the Winnebago County State's Attorney Office in Rockford, Ill., he tried the first case in Illinois that relied on DNA evidence for identification. He has turned heads for taking on controversial cases. He won an acquittal on two counts and a retrial on a third for John Hoyman, the former Indianola city attorney who was charged with theft in office. He won another acquittal in a high-profile case involving an Iowa City pharmacist and he is representing Mo Hailong, the Chinese national who federal authorities claim was engaged in high-stakes seed corn espionage. As special counsel assigned to investigate a public corruption case involving former State Sen. Kent Sorenson, Weinhardt uncovered a money trail that led to recent indictments against three staffers of Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul. Sorenson resigned his Senate seat within hours of the release of Weinhardt's report. By the way, Weinhardt also is a devotee of dime-store detective novels and film noir.

How large has your office and practice become over the past four years?

We are one lawyer bigger than we were before. We have grown in terms of the complexity and challenge of the cases we are handling, which is nice. We have always had interesting cases, but each year has been busier and each year has brought cases of greater interest, greater public profile. It's not our strategic choice to make the law firm as large as the traffic will bear, but rather we are happy to be a small operation of extremely talented people who all like each other. By doing that, we are able to be selective in the cases that we take, and only take the cases that are the most interesting, challenging. We have worked on a lot of really fascinating cases. There isn't anything that is boring. We are blessed in

that we are referred a lot of very good work and we turn work away because we can't do everything that comes to us, and that allows us to be selective not only in the sense of what is big, but also interesting for other reasons. We recently took on a matter in a very small county in north-central Iowa. We really haven't tried a case in a really small county away from central Iowa in a while. I really like trying cases in other parts of the state. I really like trying cases in small counties, so that's part of the attraction for us in saying "yes" to one like that.

Based on the firm's areas of focus, is the firm acquisition bait?

We have been approached by out-of-state firms more than once, but we have never thought about it for 30 seconds. We really prize our independence, both legally and from a business standpoint.

How large would you like the firm to become?

Well, this is a very comfortable size. Our office space is built for six full-time lawyers, and we have eight years left on the lease. There are imaginative ways that we could go beyond this space if we needed to, but this gives you some idea of how we envision the practice. We want to be a boutique that is at the very top of the practice in this part of the country for the two areas that we specialize in: business litigation and white-collar criminal defense. And, we want to maintain quality and collegiality while we do that. A small, intimate group seems to work well for that model. We do, when the size of the cases requires it, partner with other larger law firms, increasingly so, so that gives us the bandwidth to handle extremely large matters without having to hire a small army of young lawyers.

You aren't the only prominent Des Moines lawyer who has sported a bow tie, but still I have to ask, why?

They started my two summers in law school when I clerked at law firms in Chicago, and they have persisted to this day. I have not tried to psychoanalyze myself too much, but I guess they spring from a subtle desire to be different from the pack, and to have a recognizable trademark. I also thought it was really cool that my dad, who only wore them occasionally, knew how to tie one blindfolded. I wanted to emulate that. n



PHOTO SUBMITTED

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