



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN HARNACK

BUSINESS IS SOMMERHAUSER'S BUSINESS

LAWYER FINDS NO TWO DAYS THE SAME IN HIS PRACTICE

By **MaryBeth Matzek**

Special to the Wisconsin Law Journal

When Peter Sommerhauser walks into his Godfrey & Kahn office, he knows every day will be different.

"In business law, every business is different and every problem is different," he said. "I am challenged every day. I enjoy that."

Sommerhauser, a shareholder in the firm's corporate practice group in its Milwaukee office, handles a variety of cases, including mergers and acquisitions, leveraged buyouts, business succession and the structure of business financing.

"I like being able to solve problems creatively for my clients," he said.

Some of Sommerhauser's clients have been with him for decades while others are new. He likes that mix. "With clients you have had for awhile, there is a lot of history there, but working with new clients is enjoyable too since you have the chance to learn more about a new business and what they do," Sommerhauser said.

Besides his casework, Sommerhauser provides business and financial advice and planning to corporations, executives and owners. He also serves on the boards of di-

rectors of several publicly held and closely held entities.

After earning bachelor's and master's degrees in economics, Sommerhauser entered law school and soon discovered he was most interested in classes in business law. Once he started working for a law firm specializing in business law, Sommerhauser knew he had found his match.

"Everything just fueled my interest in business law more," he said. "Even now, I will come across something I haven't done before and that's exciting."

Wisconsin Law Journal: What makes your work important to you?

Peter Sommerhauser: Playing a role in helping our clients achieve their goals makes my work important to me. Attorneys are fortunate, since we are not conflicted, we are not selling anything. Our only obligation is to our client so we can focus completely on helping them meet their objective.

WLJ: Who is your hero in the legal field?

Sommerhauser: There are three people in the legal field that have been critical to my career that are heroes to me. Dudley Godfrey and Jerry Kahn taught me that the quality of our work is the key to success. Following

Asked & Answered

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Peter Sommerhauser,

a shareholder in the corporate practice group of Godfrey & Kahn in Milwaukee

right behind is providing great client service to complement our quality work. One of my professors at Northwestern Law School, David Ruder was a great teacher. He went on to become the dean, followed by Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. When I was a student, he encouraged me to break with the norm for a Northwestern Law School graduate and leave Chicago for a small Milwaukee firm that he predicted would do extremely well.

WLJ: What do you do outside of work to deal with stress from the office?

Sommerhauser: Summer will likely find me at my lake cottage every weekend. It is a great escape and very low-key. During the year, I enjoy spending time with my grandsons and watching them compete, succeed and grow into fine young boys.

WLJ: What's one thing many people get wrong about what you do?

Sommerhauser: Because I am generally a low intensity person, one might assume (incorrectly) that would carry over in representation of my clients. People also assume that my years of experience would be enough to bring to meetings or negotiating sessions. They are generally surprised when they learn the time I spend in preparation for any meeting.

WLJ: What's your favorite memory from law school?

Sommerhauser: While I have many fond memories of law school, I remember participating in a voluntary second-year moot court competition. It was extremely competitive, and we did very well. The competition panel complimented my partner on his litigation skills; however, was silent on my litigation skills. My partner later became U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. I did not become a litigator.