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MARK HAUSER

Real Estate, Deals and Noble Causes Among His Favorite Things

by Dustin J. Seibert

SOUTHFIELD—Quite a few of Mark R. Hauser's loved ones expected he might grow up to become a doctor.

The Detroit native was born to two optometrists and was the nephew of two well-known physicians, whom the rest of his family figured would motivate him to follow in their footsteps. His parents didn't push him toward any profession. Another family member inspired Hauser's career trajectory.

"My uncle, Victor J. Baum, was a Wayne County circuit judge. I enjoyed going to watch him in court," Hauser recalls. "I appreciated law and politics, so that's the direction I went in."

Hauser is a founder and managing director of Maddin Hauser Roth & Heller PC, a multi-specialty law firm that has served the Detroit metropolitan area for nearly half a century. Though his firm handles many types of cases and transactions, Hauser's caseload is exclusively real estate and business transactions—something he knew would be a significant part of his practice when he graduated from University of Michigan and enrolled in Wayne State University Law School.

"My grandfather owned a jewelry store, but he didn't enjoy that. He enjoyed doing real estate," Hauser says. "He bought and sold and taught me a lot about real estate when I was still in high school. Even when he had his own lawyers, he used to pretend like he was one."

When he graduated law school in 1967, Hauser joined Friedman Meyers & Keys, then considered one of the three major Jewish law firms in Detroit. He was there for one year, leaving at the end of 1968.

"In those days, it was very difficult for a Jewish guy to get a job at any of the large firms, though that certainly has changed," Hauser says. The day Hauser received his bar results, Friedman split in two and became what is now Barris Sott Denn & Driker. He worked under the tutelage of partner Donald E. Barris, whom he calls a "great litigator."

At Barris Sott, he worked on significant litigation cases, including one in which the

firm represented Motown Records over the ownership rights of The Supremes' classic song "Baby Love." His experiences with the firm motivated Hauser to get his own practice off the ground.

"I always wanted to be my own boss, and my mother encouraged that," Hauser says. "We didn't make much those days. I was making \$9,000 a year when I left, and my wife Jan said, 'Honey, do you think you can make a living with that?' I told her I could easily make \$20,000 doing my own thing."

Hauser says he was "lucky enough" to join a group of high-ranking lawyers who shared space together in a suite. One of them, Herman Kass, was a "very astute" real estate lawyer who taught Hauser a great deal about the practice of real estate law. At the time, Hauser was still doing quite a bit of litigation. His docket was almost divided down the middle between transactions and litigation until about 25 years ago. A tax case he argued in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was the last time he was in a courtroom.

Hauser was influenced by his most significant client at the time to put down litigation for good.

"I was working on a big case out of town and was gone for a week," he says. "My biggest business client said, 'I know that stuff is fun, and maybe you can make money on it, but you gotta decide whether you want to do that or be my lawyer.' That was when I made my decision: no more litigation, just stick to real estate and business deals."

GOOD WITH NUMBERS

Hauser enjoyed his time as a litigator, but he doesn't miss it. "I enjoy a lot more working in the office and on deals, buying and selling real estate, and doing financing and refinancing," he says.

In 1972, Hauser formed Weiner & Hauser—the earliest iteration of the current Maddin Hauser—with Jerry Weiner, a good friend from law school. Hauser has been at the forefront of various mergers throughout the years, but

decades of balancing his practice with running a firm have been pretty easy for him.

"I was never good at math in high school, but from the time I started practicing, anytime someone had a question concerning numbers, they always came to me," he says. "I've never had a problem running every aspect of the firm, from the finances to the basic stuff."

Hauser has always spent time away from his practice engaged in volunteer and nonprofit work, especially benefiting his Jewish community. He's a former president of United Jewish Foundation, the financial arm of the Detroit Jewish Federation, as well as a former national officer of United Jewish Communities (now Jewish Federations of North America).

"I think it's important to give back to the community, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. It's something everyone in my family always stressed," he says.

Hauser was motivated to dedicate his life toward Jewish causes following a trip he took to Israel with his family in 1960.

"I was very moved by that trip. When I was a young lawyer at Friedman Meyers & Keys, that firm represented the Jewish Federation, and I got to see some of the inner workings of a nonprofit.

"One of our wealthiest clients found his way into my office one day after seeing my name and told me I was in a time and place where I could really make a difference for the Jewish people if I wanted to. It was a bit of an overstatement, but I took him up on the offer."

He still spends a good amount of his free time dedicated to noble causes, and at age 76, he hasn't applied any brakes to his caseload—nor does he have any plans to.

"My friend David Page (senior partner at Honigman LLP who passed away in 2014) used to say his retirement party would be his funeral, and hopefully I can say the same thing," Hauser relates.

"As long as I can keep practicing, I will. It's my favorite thing to do." ■

