

Breaking the Ice: Appellate advocate brings 'new eyes' to every subject

By Todd Nelson

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Name: Kay Nord Hunt

Title: Shareholder, Lommen Abdo

Education: B.A., political science and history, Gustavus Adolphus College; J.D., Marquette University

Kay Nord Hunt began working as an appellate advocate for Lommen Abdo before there was a Minnesota Court of Appeals.

Hunt clerked at the Wisconsin Court of Appeals for a year before joining the firm. Minnesota's appellate court got its start the following year, in 1983.

"I started arguing cases right when the [Minnesota] Court of Appeals came into existence," Hunt said. "Nothing could be more valuable than that."

Hunt since has handled more than 600 appeals in Minnesota and Wisconsin appellate courts and the 7th and 8th U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal.

Hunt handles the appellate briefing and argument and advises trial attorneys on preserving the record for appeal, often on cases from outside the firm. Subjects include family law, commercial litigation and legal and medical malpractice.

Analyzing cases with a "new set of eyes" is important.

"I'm reading the record as the appellate would read it," Hunt said. "The appellate court is a generalist and so am I. What I have found in some circumstances is when it's an area of law I've never touched I think I do a better job of explaining it."

Q: What's the best way to start a conversation with you?

A: Ask a question about the appellate courts, Minnesota, Wisconsin, 7th Circuit or 8th Circuit. Or ask about the Minnesota Vikings.

Q: What prompted you to study law and pursue it professionally?

A: At Gustavus I took business law class from a professor who was also a professor at a law school in Minnesota. He encouraged me to go to law school. I guess he decided that what he saw was the analytical skills, that the profession would suit me.

Q: What books are on your bedside table or e-reader?



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A: I love murder mysteries. There's a Shetland Island series and I'm taking a cruise this summer and going to stop at the Shetland Islands. I enjoy "Bel Canto" and a recent book by Lorna Landvik, "The Chronicles of a Radical Hag."

Q: What is a pet peeve of yours?

A: Meetings set for the sole sake of meeting.

Q: What are your favorite aspects of being an attorney?

A: Working through the legal challenges to find a solution for my clients. I like looking at a case anew, putting it together in a way that is understandable by the court as to my client's position and how the law applies and that hopefully will reach the results that my client needs or wants.

Q: Least favorite?

A: Filling out time sheets.

Q: What's a favorite activity outside your job?

A: I love to travel. I enjoy Viking football, Gopher football and basketball, and I have rescue greyhounds and rescue cats.

Q: If someone visits you in your hometown, what would you take them to see or do?

A: Since I grew up in the metro area and live in St. Paul and I'm a big sports fan I would take them to a Vikings or a Gophers

game. I'd probably take them to Minnehaha Falls because it's beautiful and has easy hiking trails.

Q: Is there an attorney or judge, past or present, whom you admire most?

A: Justice [Mary Jeanne] Coyne and Justice [John] Simonet. Both were on the Minnesota Supreme Court when I started arguing cases. By how they approached a case at oral argument and their questioning, they helped me learn to focus a case for the appellate court.

Q: What's a misconception people have about working as an attorney?

A: They don't understand the lack of control you have over your schedule. My practice is all about deadlines. When the transcript comes in, you've got 30 days to file your brief. The oral argument schedule comes out, you argue the case. You have very little control over your calendar.

Q: What is your favorite depiction of the legal professional in popular culture?

A: The original "Law and Order." I like watching the closing arguments because they were so incredibly concise and powerful. But I also loved "Allie McBeal" and "Boston Legal," which weren't the best portrayal of the legal profession but were funny.