



## Profile: A quiet fighter

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Although Leonard C. Goodman has been a criminal defense attorney for 19 years, representing such famous — and some might say infamous — defendants as Kenneth Hansen; Betty Loren-Maltese, Cicero's former town president; and Noah Robinson, Jesse Jackson's half-brother; few people outside of the criminal bar have likely heard of him. Unlike some Chicago criminal defense attorneys, whose names are as familiar to the public as their high-profile clients, Goodman has never sought to capitalize on his clients' notoriety, choosing instead to work tirelessly on behalf of his clients. There's nothing outwardly showy about Goodman, whose closely cropped haircut, boyishly crooked smile and reserved manner may be calculated not to draw unwanted attention. For Goodman, showy is wearing a red tie in court.

### Putting his name to good use

Goodman's discomfort with seeking the spotlight may have something to do with his family lineage: He is a member of the Crown family, one of Chicago's wealthiest families, whose philanthropic generosity extends far beyond the city's borders.

It is a facet of his life Goodman, 47, would rather not discuss. Although he readily admitted that he is proud of his family, Goodman matter-of-factly pointed out that his family's name is not likely to "impress a judge or a jury." Goodman's law clerk, Melissa Matuzak, a recent graduate of DePaul University College of Law, offered another explanation for Goodman's reticence to talk about his family: "He wants his services to be valued," she said. "He doesn't want to be seen as someone who only has recognition because of his family."

That said, Goodman readily conceded that his family's largesse has permitted him to practice law in a way that most criminal defense attorneys could only dream of doing. That is, Goodman can - and does - represent clients who would not otherwise be able to afford a private attorney. And he continues to represent clients whose financial resources have been exhausted due to the staggering costs associated with maintaining one's innocence.

Goodman, who began his legal career at Jenner & Block, acknowledged as much. "I probably would have ended up staying at Jenner for the security. I certainly wouldn't be able to practice the way I am practicing now," he said. That practice, which Goodman has built up over more than 16 years, includes representing between 15 percent and 30 percent of his clients on a pro bono basis. Among his current pro bono clients is a Guantanamo Bay detainee, Shawali Khan, an Afghan man in his 40s whom Goodman has represented for more than two years.

Goodman's "paying" clients come from either referrals or federal court appointments (about 50-50). According to Goodman, most people facing criminal charges in federal court "qualify as indigent" and are entitled to free legal representation.

Goodman's friend Martin Herman, a neurosurgeon, used to wonder why Goodman, who first distinguished himself as an appellate criminal defense attorney, wanted to represent clients on appeal. From his vantage point (as a non-attorney), the client has been found guilty, he said, "So aren't you already behind the eight ball?"

As Herman recalled, Goodman told him: "In a democratic country people need representation.' In other words, it's a question of fairness. These people have no hope unless there's somebody willing to advocate for them. [Goodman] was in a position where he was able to do it financially, which is a big plus."

Goodman, who is a sole practitioner, prides himself on running a "lean and mean" operation. "I try to keep my expenses down so that I can basically have a business that's in the black," he said. It is important to Goodman, given his family's success in business, that his law practice be profitable.

He accomplishes this by keeping his overhead low. Goodman rents a three-room space (no corner office or private bathroom) in the Monadnock building, rents out one of his two offices (the bigger of the two), and does not employ any full-time support (secretarial or administrative) staff, save for Matuzak, who will become his first associate after she passes the bar. The most interesting piece of memorabilia in Goodman's office is a signed circa 1970 poster from counterculture journalist Hunter S. Thompson's campaign for sheriff of Aspen, Colo. The framed poster hangs above his computer. Goodman noted that he was a fan of Thompson's "Gonzo" style of journalism, which entailed the reporter inserting himself into the story being covered.

If he weren't so concerned about running a profitable business, Goodman readily conceded that he'd love to be able to employ at least three associates. Asked whether he envisions having a larger firm, Goodman said that he hopes one day he can "build a more substantial practice."

## **Making his way to the law**

Although his path to the law was not a straight trajectory, Goodman, who is the youngest of three children, never considered going to work for the family business or its charitable foundation. "I never really had an interest in business. I don't think I'd be very good at it," he explained. His father, who married into the Crown family, and his brother work for the family business, and his sister works for the family's foundation.

Instead, Goodman, who grew up in Lincoln Park/Wrigleyville - and now lives in Lincoln Park with his two mixed-breed "pound mutts," Lola, a Hurricane Katrina survivor, and Otto (rumor has it both dogs have free run of the place, despite

Goodman's investment in obedience classes) - attended the Francis W. Parker School and was first drawn to mathematics.

Aside from math, the only other subject that held Goodman's interest was sports. He played tennis, soccer and basketball at school. To this day, Goodman continues to be an avid tennis player. Among his regular sparing partners on the tennis court are James Zagel, a federal district court judge, and his friend Herman.

Goodman claimed he got through high school reading few literary works, relying instead on CliffsNotes and his older sister's English class notes. The only books he said he read from cover-to-cover were "Jaws" and "The Hardy Boys." Goodman never considered a law career until he was nearing completion of his undergraduate days. When he graduated from college in 1985, with a degree in physics from Carleton College and a degree in electrical engineering from Columbia University, Goodman recalled that the only employers hiring physics or engineering graduates were defense contractors, which "I knew I didn't want to do."

"I was sort of like a pinball just bouncing around," he said. He explained that he was "looking for some purpose in life" that the sciences wouldn't fulfill. "I wanted to do something important, and law school just seemed like it would be a good tool to have."

Once he decided to go to law school, however, Goodman knew from the get-go that he wanted to be a criminal defense attorney - a path from which he has never strayed, except for a brief stint at Jenner & Block, where he worked as a litigation associate after graduating from Northwestern University School of Law.

Impatient to get inside a courtroom and recognizing that a career at Jenner would give him few chances to practice criminal law, Goodman decided to look for a job with a criminal defense firm. Goodman was hired by the firm then headed by Ed Genson, Jeffrey Steinback and Terry Gillespie. It was there that he began to learn the tools of his trade.

## **Learning by trial and error**

Goodman learned several crucial lessons while working for Genson and Steinback, but admitted with some regret that it took him a while before he fully appreciated what he'd learned at the firm. He faults himself for being a poor student.

Steinback disagreed with Goodman's harsh self-assessment. Without hesitation, Steinback recalled that Goodman was a good student who was "very demanding of himself." Steinback added: "Goodman has a quiet determination that is based on an understated confidence, but he is confident. He follows his own convictions, his own judgment, and he's got the work ethic to be able to execute on them."

In 1993, Goodman left to set up his solo practice, a decision that did not come as a surprise to Steinback. Asked what lessons he learned from Genson and Steinback, Goodman said he learned the importance of working hard and being well-prepared from Genson. From Steinback, with whom Goodman worked with most, he learned: 1) to be a better writer, 2) to pick your fights because "you can't fight every battle," and 3) that "your credibility is your most important asset as a lawyer; once you lose that you can still practice law but you never get it back."

Goodman's oldest friend, Bob Mamet, is not surprised that he chose to practice criminal defense law. Mamet, a composer and recording artist based in Los Angeles, has known Goodman since age 3.

When asked why Goodman's chosen career path did not surprise him, Mamet said: "Len's always wanted to do something meaningful with his life." What really would have surprised Mamet is if Goodman had gone to work as a corporate attorney.

Mamet's father, Bernie Mamet, now deceased, was a pro-union labor law attorney and the only attorney Goodman knew before going to law school. The elder Mamet was someone whom Goodman greatly admired. When they were in high school, Mamet recounted how Goodman was among several friends he hung out with who regularly got into trouble. Somehow, Mamet said, his father always managed to catch them red-handed.

Goodman said that as a youth he was rebellious and behaved in ways that could have gotten him arrested. Despite Goodman's reckless behavior, Mamet recalled his father telling him in high school: "Len is going to do something special with his life." Asked what prompted his father to make such a remark, Mamet said his father thought that Len had a certain sense of "integrity."

Were it not for his privileged upbringing, Goodman recognizes that his youthful indiscretions could have led him down a much different path - not unlike the paths taken by many of his clients. In this way, Goodman said he does not see himself as being all that different from his clients. He said his ability to see his younger self reflected in the lives of some of his clients enables him to gain their trust.

"I know that if I grew up in Cabrini-Green, where Brian Wilbourn [a client he's representing in a federal drug case] grew up, I don't know necessarily that I would be any different [from him]," Goodman said. "The one good thing about having made a lot of mistakes in my life, being irresponsible and immature, is that it's given me some empathy."

Lawrence Marshall, who met and worked with Goodman on several criminal cases during his tenure as a law professor at Northwestern and legal director of the university's Center on Wrongful Convictions, described Goodman as having a "Kennedyesque attitude" toward those who have not had the same good fortune and opportunities he has had in life.

"He has a huge passion for the underdog. He has a real capacity for feeling the pain of those in need," said Marshall, now a law professor at Stanford University.

## Setting boundaries

One of the lessons criminal defense attorneys need to learn early on, according to Goodman, is that you can't befriend your clients, because you risk becoming too emotionally involved with their lives. Goodman recalled that he was devastated the first time he lost a criminal case. His client received a jail sentence of 12 years.

When Goodman returned to the office after sentencing looking noticeably upset, Gillespie took Goodman aside and asked him: "How much of those 12 years you going to do?" (Goodman appealed the case and the state appellate court reversed the judge's guilty verdict based on a lack of sufficient evidence.)

Goodman, owing in part to the length of time he has represented some clients, continuously strives to maintain healthy boundaries with his clients. He freely acknowledges that he has not always been successful. A case in point was Goodman's representation of Kenneth Hansen, who was convicted of the 1955 strangulation murders of three boys in Chicago - crimes Goodman does not believe Hansen committed.

Goodman first got involved in Hansen's case in 1997, two years after his initial conviction. Evidence had come to light after that first trial that another person (who was deceased) may have committed the crime. At the urging of the

Center on Wrongful Convictions, Goodman agreed to join Hansen's legal team on a pro bono basis. Goodman investigated the allegations that someone else had committed the crime and drafted a post-conviction petition. He also assisted with the appeals filed in the case. Through these efforts, Hansen was granted a new trial. Goodman served as Hansen's lead counsel when he was retried in August 2002.

Due to a critical evidentiary ruling, Goodman was unable to present key witness testimony supporting the defense's argument that someone else had been responsible for the murders. Barred from hearing this evidence, a jury once again found Hansen guilty. Hansen, who was ineligible for the death penalty, died in prison in 2007.

The verdict devastated Goodman, who described the case as his single biggest defeat. Immediately after the trial, Goodman began second-guessing his trial strategy. He couldn't help feeling that he'd "failed" Hansen. Goodman remained in contact with Hansen following the trial. "I went to visit him [in jail] even at the end when he was completely demented and didn't know where he was," he said.

While the case was a significant professional loss for Goodman, a month before he tried the Hansen case he was dealt a personal loss - the death of his mother.

When he was asked what his family thought of his work, Goodman, who has never been married, spoke of his parents' reactions. He said that his father was "quite proud" of him. And his mother?

"She was very proud of me. She was the only one that ever came to court to watch me. Trial or appeal, she was just always there if she could be," he said. He smiled, recalling how his mother used to stick out like a "sore thumb" when she came to watch him try criminal cases at 26th Street and California. She would be "dressed in a Chanel outfit with all her jewelry and sit there in the front row," he explained.

Goodman remembered once trying a bench trial in one of the "bubble" courtrooms at 26th Street (a bulletproof glass separates the spectator's section from where the judge and jury sit) when the judge, on the second day of trial, asked him: "Who is that woman?" When Goodman told him that she was his mother, the judge responded, "Well, tell her to come in." He then had her sit in the jury box for the rest of the trial.

## Seeking a change of scenery

Following his losses in 2002, Goodman decided to take some time off. In early 2003, he gave up his office and moved to southern California, where he enrolled in a fiction writing course and taught a few classes at Pepperdine University. While there, Goodman started work on a novel, something he hopes to finish one day.

Asked whether he thought about leaving the law during this time, Goodman said no. He readily admits that he "was burned out" when he departed for California. While away, Goodman did not accept any new clients but continued to work on the cases he had at the time he left Chicago.

One case Goodman continued to work on was Christopher Raygoza's. Goodman has represented Raygoza since 1999, soon after he was found guilty of murder. He was recommended to Raygoza's family by his trial attorney, whom Goodman would later argue poorly represented Raygoza because he refused to build a case around Raygoza's alibi - he was in Highland Park, at his mother's residence, when the murder victim was shot at a Southwest side restaurant.

While his client sat in jail, Goodman filed one brief after another, eventually appealing rulings in both state and federal court. The 7th Circuit granted Goodman's habeas corpus petition, ordered that Raygoza, after serving 10 years of a 45-year prison sentence, be retried and released from prison pending his new trial, which is scheduled to take place sometime this year.

Although Raygoza admitted he's apprehensive about his upcoming trial, he is confident that Goodman will do "an awesome job." "He's done a lot for me," Raygoza said. "I don't see him as just an attorney. I see him as my friend, so does my family."

Goodman is not one to toot his own horn, but those who have watched him labor over his cases speak of his unfailing commitment to his clients. His colleague and friend, Marshall, may have put it best when he said of Goodman: "He's a real fighter. He can be quite relentless, which is emblematic of him being a bulldog. He bites on a case and doesn't let it go."