

VOL. 67/NO. 5 • February 2019

Virginia Lawyer

VIRGINIA LAWYER REGISTER

The Official Publication of the Virginia State Bar

Margaret F. Hardy
President of Sands Anderson

The Health Law Issue

Mental Health Specialty Dockets
Opioid Regulations
The Legality of Marijuana Derivatives
Autism and the Law

Plus, a View on Virginia's Eviction Problem



Getting the Goats: A Yarn About a Health Lawyer

by Jackie Kruszewski

Margaret Hardy can't quite say how she ended up with a 45-acre farm and eight Angora goats whose coats she sheers twice a year to spin into yarn. But, like the unique and layered career path that led to her leadership at Sands Anderson, it all seems to have converged in the right spot.

"It was a kind of a natural progression," Hardy says. "I learned to knit when I was nine. I was always intrigued by spinning." Classes at Richmond's Visual Arts Center eventually satisfied that interest and then: a Caroline County homestead with curly-haired goats, three dogs, five chickens, three geese, and two cats.

Similarly, her career began with a nursing program that led to management and then a law degree, where her knowledge of healthcare is fundamental. From curiosity to proficiency — Hardy's enjoyment of learning is evident. The result is complementary expertise in her career and, in the case of the farm, a satisfying vertical monopoly: she can see a knitted project all the way through — from goat to scarf.

'Spinning. Because knitting isn't weird enough,' reads a pin that Hardy keeps at her creamy yellow farmhouse that sits close to the road, three miles north of the Hanover courthouse. One room is given over to contraptions for spinning and weaving, the walls stocked with yarn and knitting materials. A clawfoot bathtub in the first-floor bathroom is filled with colorful bundles of yarn — each ball representing hours and hours of work.

"Processing the fiber is labor intensive, very physical," Hardy says. "You wash [the shorn mohair] and then

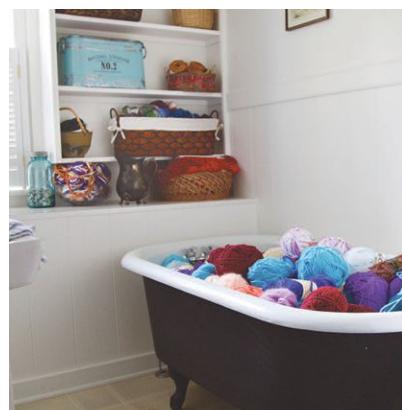
typically you do something to get all the fibers going in the same direction. That's called carding. Then you spin it, and you ply two or three threads together to make the yarn."

The spinning is sort of mindless, Hardy adds. "It's not like reading, but you have to be sort of in tune with what you're doing." While she spins, she listens to music, or watches *Law & Order* reruns or a movie.

Knitting is what she spends the most time doing, though, and the meditative quality provides a relaxing break from the law career that splits her between Richmond and Fredericksburg. "Practicing law can be all consuming," says Hardy. "You have to be able to set limits for yourself because no one else does.... You see all the time attorneys who don't retire, because they don't have other interests."

Hardy went into nursing school right out of high school — a diploma program at Johnston Willis in Chesterfield County. "It was a differ-

ent time then," says Hardy, 60. "I still remember my high school guidance counselor asking me if I wanted to be a nurse or a secretary."



At top, Sands Anderson President Margaret Hardy greets some of the curly-haired residents of her 45-acre farm. Hardy sheers their mohair twice a year and turns it into knittable yarn at her 1740-built home in Caroline County.



Hardy says she loved nursing, which she did for 15 years, working in surgical and in psych departments. But during that time, she was still taking classes—gaining an undergraduate degree from the University of Richmond in finance and an MBA from Old Dominion University.

“I really just like going to school—that’s the real answer,” she says, particularly subjects heavy on reading and writing. “And working in Tidewater as the nurse manager, I had some exposure to the attorneys for the hospital. I was interested in risk management.”

So, after a break from tuition bills for a while, Hardy decided to go back to school again, graduating in 1995 from William & Mary Law School. Working in psych particularly had given Hardy

insight into the risks of working with certain patients. Now she’s passionate about representing healthcare providers before licensing boards.

“I like the engagement with the client. I like the personal nature of it,” she says. “I think we’re fortunate in Virginia to have a very good system that is generally pretty fair. And I think it’s particularly helpful to have a nursing license myself. It probably gives me a different perspective on what it means to be before the board.”

Hardy’s practice also includes an interesting niche she inherited from a retired colleague: representing municipalities in collections. “The [municipal] treasurers are typically the clients, and I really love those clients,” she says. “I’ve learned a lot about real estate and local government law and all kinds of things that I didn’t know before.” Hardy estimates she’s helped collect many millions in real estate taxes for Virginia municipalities over the years.

Hardy started at Sands Anderson after graduation from law school and

Hardy a natural home for the expansion of her spinning and weaving hobby. The previous owners, who lived there for 50 years, named it “The Grove,” and a family known as the Worthams owned the house the longest. There’s an easement for their cemetery in Hardy’s back yard. “Dr. Wortham practiced medicine in my library—before, during and after the Civil War,” she says.

The home (with its matching water tower and pumphouse) took a year of work—“it didn’t have central heat or air, or a functional septic system”—before she could move in.

Outside, two Maremma sheepdogs, the chickens, and the goats greet Hardy from their enclosure. She can’t really explain why goats instead of sheep, but the mohair on Angora goats makes particularly nice yarn. “They are the most gentle, wonderful creatures,” she says of animals, as they crowd around her for treats. One goat is pregnant with twins (at least) and due in mid-March.

At Sands Anderson, Hardy says, they encourage employees to be in-

“Practicing law can be all consuming,” says Hardy. “You have to be able to set limits for yourself because no one else does....”

has spent 21 years there. She became president two years ago and is the managing shareholder for the Fredericksburg office. As she began to spend more time in the Fredericksburg office, Hardy found the commute from Richmond tiring, and she needed a closer base to the greater Fredericksburg area.

“So literally I googled ‘farms for sale in Caroline County,’ and my house was the first one that showed up, and it was the only one I looked at,” she says. “It was very scientific,” she adds wryly.

The 1740-built house is halfway between the two offices, and it gave

volved in the community—volunteer, serve on boards—to find balance with the demanding practice of law. A literacy initiative at Sands Anderson currently provides lawyers with an outlet for community involvement. And Hardy’s own development of her passion provides one of the best examples of a committed balance between work, outside interests, and lawyer well-being.

“[It’s about] looking outside ourselves and what we do for a living,” she says.

And, for at least one lawyer, that means goats. □