

Geary, Shea, O'Donnell, Grattan & Mitchell, P.C.

By Karen Hart

Geary, Shea, O'Donnell, Grattan & Mitchell, a first-time winner in this category, has been practicing law in the Empire Building in Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square for the last 50 years. Nevertheless, the firm's roots date back to 1872, and there's always been at least one Geary practicing law in Sonoma County for more than 140 years.

In 1872, Thomas J. Geary passed the bar and opened his practice in Petaluma. Four years later, he moved his practice to Santa Rosa. In 1890, Geary was elected to Congress and served two terms. Following his time in Congress, Geary's sons, Finlaw and Donald, carried on the family tradition and practiced law with their father. At the age of 31, Donald Geary was appointed Superior Court Judge of Sonoma County (his bench is still on display and in use in a conference room on the fourth floor). Over the years, the firm's name has changed a few times, but the one constant has been its commitment to clients and the practice of law.

What's its key to success? The numbers tell part of the story. Today, the firm has 11 attorneys on staff and seven of them are partners. Collectively, they bring about 200 years of experience to their practice. The firm serves local families and businesses as well as governmental entities and practices actively in 11 counties in California.

What's more, the firm has a broad variety of practice areas, which mostly fall into the categories of litigation and transactional work. These include: business law, construction law, estate planning and administration, family law and marital dissolution, personal injury, real estate and a full range of services for the vineyard and wine industry. The firm represents clients in both state and

federal courts, and in front of administrative agencies.

According to the partners, there are a number of reasons that keep their firm operating successfully. First, clients and support staff are a priority. "We're extremely devoted to our clients and our secretarial staff," says Patrick Grattan, a partner at the firm.

"That comes from the people who started the firm and it's embedded in us," adds Steven Mitchell, also a partner.

Second, it's remained steady as an organization. "A lot of firms form and splinter off, but we've fortunately remained consistent. We've been in the same building for 50 years. Our perspective is long term and our clients are faithful," says Grattan. Case in point: The firm has never advertised for

business. Its client base is grown solely from existing clients and referrals from those clients and other attorneys.

And finally, the partners and associate attorneys make it a point to share lunch together every day at the firm. "We are close friends and have lunch every day. We like each other and we value each other's opinions. But of course, it's not all law," Grattan admits. "We do talk about the Giants and the 49ers."

What's on the horizon for the firm in the coming years? "We continue to evolve," says Grattan. "It's so important to be cutting edge in the technology we use, stay abreast of business trends and continue to hire smart, young lawyers and skilled staff. We have wonderful clients and appreciate the fact that so many of them took the time to vote for us." ■

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—Patrick Grattan

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Partners (front row, L to R): Patrick Grattan and John Geary; and (back row, L to R): Robert Henkels, Leo Bartolotta, Glenda Carvalho-Sell, Jenna Coffey, Ray Fullerton, Matthew Good, John Holdredge, Michael Carlson and Steven Mitchell [Duncan Garrett Photography]