

# “It’s All About Reputation”

## Local detective emphasizes privacy with investigations



By TARAH THORNE

BARRINGTON – David Hertog, a local private investigator, enjoys a good stakeout – minus the donuts.

Celebrating 17 years of business, Hertog and Associates Inc. continues to grow in the area. The Fremd High School alum, U.S. Army veteran, and FBI-trained businessman attributes his company's success to the skills possessed by both himself and his part-time staff.

"It's all about reputation," Hertog said. "There's no real oath of privacy for investigators, but I decided I wanted my profession to be considered reputable in all areas. My clients know they aren't going to see their name being discussed in the news 10 years from now."

Hertog is the only full-time employee in his agency. His experience ranges from special weapons training and hostage rescue, to being the former vice president of the national Special Agents Association, founded 75 years ago.

The private investigator hires help – retired federal agents and former or current law enforcement officers – to assist when needed with research, surveillance, or reinforcement in special operations.

"I like to work with SWAT team members in cases such as workplace violence," Hertog said.

Hertog has crafted what he calls the art of surveillance, explaining that he always stays ahead about his subjects.

From taking late-night phone calls to waking up at dawn for a workout, Hertog said he was born to do private investigation and therefore, has dedicated his life to "taking the high road." The U.S. Army was a steppingstone for the patriot who was born on the Fourth of July.

After the military and the FBI Academy's Special Tactical Firearms School, Hertog received his master's degree in business at Lindenwood University in St. Louis and his bachelor's degree in law enforcement and criminal justice from Western Illinois University before being recruited for investigations by a major military defense contractor – McDonnell Aircraft (now Boeing).

Hertog then chose to continue his education with an international terrorism course at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School in Florida. The detective now has FBI agents on speed dial, which works in his favor, he said.

Establishing his own company, first in Arlington Heights in 1997 and later in Barrington in 2003, Hertog's first client was Harpo Studios, founded by Oprah Winfrey. Hertog said many of his clients are companies, but the most rewarding work is done with individuals.

"Every case is unique, but this is a people business," Hertog said. "People come to me thinking they're the only ones experiencing certain problems. They think they should be embarrassed and are sometimes scared to investigate the matter because they don't want me to know about it, and that's sad. I'm here to help."

Hertog offers a Background Investigations 101 class as a service to his clients where he teaches people how to screen their potential significant other, he said, adding that this can be crucial in the realm of online dating.

Cases last from hours to months, Hertog said, explaining he works on a couple of cases each day and is careful about where he talks to clients.

With such privacy, Hertog said business can sometimes be challenging.

"I don't advertise and I'm not in the phone book," Hertog said. "I rely on word-of-mouth and respect."

Barrington resident and lawyer Edward Scott has known Hertog about six years now. Scott said his business relationship with Hertog is one of his most trusted.

"I trust him as a professional and as a person," Scott said. "His work is thorough, prompt and accurate. He's quick and if there's bad news, he's not afraid to sit down and tell you the truth."

Sipping a mocha frappuccino and wearing red Adidas sneakers, Hertog admits he's not Superman.

"Many agencies have no experience or training," Hertog said. "I just wanted to start something different and make it real impactful. There's a need for a discreet, elite, practical and capable agency in the area – people who can protect, investigate and advise. I'm always grateful for those who have helped me."

Hertog said he performs a background check on every new client to prevent himself from working for criminals. He travels occasionally, within the United States or as far as Europe.

"Some places are a lot of fun," Hertog said. "Others – not so much."

The agency has received calls for everything from UFO sightings to birth parents and threats in the home or workplace. Nation Pizza and Foods of Schaumburg, which ships millions of frozen pizzas each year, has used Hertog as its "pizza pi (private investigator)" for employee background checks for the past 10 years, Hertog said.

Pointing to his night video camera, Hertog said the future of his business is wide open and he hopes to expand further in to the Chicago market.

"Technology has made things faster, which has increased the expectations of clients," Hertog said. "Business is rewarding, but when I look at myself in the mirror, I'm satisfied knowing I may have helped someone have a better life. It's about reputation. It's about the guy who calls you for help in the middle of the night and knows you'll answer the phone."

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