



# Vacuum cleaner salesman-turned-lawyer Michael S. Gaarder on outdoor adventures, ill-advised courtroom shirts and his other odd jobs

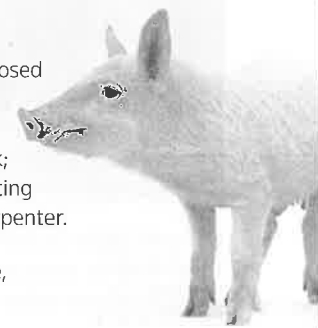


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**I can't go a day without ...** several cups of coffee. I used to think I drank it for the taste or to wake up, now I think it's purely out of habit or muscle memory.

**If you were in my office, you'd ...** see that we are professional, but relaxed and comfortable in our own skins. We take our clients and their situations very seriously, but in doing so, we don't take ourselves seriously and often use humor to relax everyone.

**My colleagues would be surprised to know that ...** only after being exposed to the law in the JAG offices in Yokosuka, Japan, and then working many different jobs in the private sector, did I decide to attend law school. Among the more obscure jobs I worked are: farmhand cleaning manure from pigsties six days a week; building cardboard boxes for shipping and affixing graphite legs to golf bags; injecting donuts with jelly/cream for a bakery; selling vacuum cleaners; and working as a carpenter.



**When I started, I wish I knew ...** that even though clients pay you for advice, a large percentage of them don't really want to hear your advice.

**My real-life hero is ...** my late grandfather, Hoyt Gaarder. He was a distinguished WWII veteran and POW; he was one of my best childhood friends; he was an excellent role model as a family man and patriarch, and just one of the most entertaining individuals to spend time with.

**On weekends I ...** try to stay as far away from legal work as I can. I can be found at home with my family, training my Labradors, mountain biking, golfing, canoeing, hunting, fishing or any number of adventures.

**The craziest thing I've witnessed in a courtroom is ...** a young troubadour who tried appearing at his sentencing hearing while wearing a white t-shirt with the words "F--- You" emblazoned on the front in about eight-inch block letters.

**My pre-trial routine is ...** to make sure I polish my shoes, have a freshly pressed suit and shirt, pick out a power tie and grudgingly forego that morning java.

**The most fascinating person I ever met is ...** my fiancée. Talk about the joys of exploring and learning about "an enigma wrapped in a paradox and shrouded in a conundrum!"

**The SCOTUS justices I would like to meet are ...** the late Justice Antonin Scalia and Chief Justice Roberts.

**Different practice areas that intrigue me are ...** national security law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, most likely because of my experience as a proud U.S. Navy sailor and my studies in international relations.

**The talent I wish I had is ...** the ability to play the piano well. "Chopsticks" just isn't very entertaining to anyone.

**My least favorite word is ...** often uttered by our children: "Whatever!" The word, in their context, tells me nothing and stands my hackles on end.

