



Superlatives

PEOPLE, CULTURE, STYLE

CORNER OFFICE

bob clifford

WHEN NOT TACKLING CASES,
THIS TOP ATTORNEY
PERSUADES OENOPHILES
TO BID BIG FOR CHARITY.
BY THOMAS CONNORS

A renowned leader in personal injury aviation litigation, Robert A. Clifford has helmed some of the country's most high-profile: He won a \$29.6 million verdict against Metra (when a train closed its doors on violinist Rachel Barton Pine and dragged her 300 feet), and a \$110 million settlement in the crash of American Eagle flight 4184 in Indiana. At 60, Clifford is in his prime, and he knows it. "In my world, maturity and experience are assets. This is a great time in my career. I don't want to give it up"

When not maintaining a fierce reputation (cltmag.com, an online corporate legal magazine, dubbed him "the best of the bad"), Clifford hits the phone hard as trustee for the Naples (Florida) Children & Education Foundation and as a cochair for its major fundraiser, the Naples Winter Wine Festival, which takes place January 27-29.

The event is considered the top charity wine auction in the country (as ranked by *Wine Spectator*) and, since 2001, has raised nearly \$100 million for underprivileged children in the area. He and his wife, Joan, who have had a second in Naples for nearly 30 years, are chairing the event this year, and Clifford has been busy putting the bite on donors from behind his custom-made, inlaid writing table.

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"It's the first thing I do every morning and the last thing I do every night," says Clifford. "I've become the biggest mooch. I call people up and tell them I'm trawling for treasure."

From the 31st floor of 120 North LaSalle, Clifford's base of operations enjoys clear city views that make his aerie seem larger than he is. "We only needed one floor when we moved into this building, and since the footprint is only about 13,000 square feet,



A collection of vintage golf clubs is part of the décor at Clifford Law Offices.

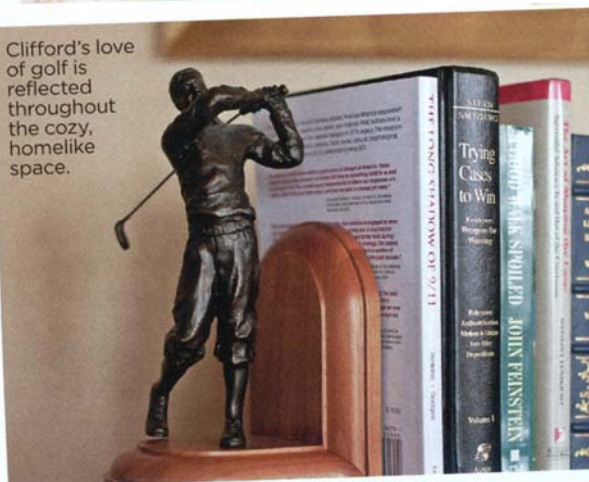


I didn't go over the top, but gave myself the space that would leave a client reasonably impressed and feeling at home," says Clifford.

The command center of Clifford Law Offices projects an unmistakable air of success. Dark wood and neutral fabrics are highlighted with a Tiffany & Co. lamp, a pair of Louis XVI bedside cabinets, and paintings by Early American modernists Houghton Cranford Smith and Walt Kuhn. But with family photos, a collection of vintage golf clubs, and a Waterford Crystal candy dish filled with gumdrops atop a coffee table in the sitting area, the space also feels like a commodious home office (in a very nice home).

Raised on the South Side, Clifford went to work in a lumberyard at age 13 and remained there through his first year of law school at DePaul College of Law. "I consider myself reasonably strong in verbal skills and I saw that as an asset in the practice of law. But I was also doing sales at the lumberyard, and there's not much difference between trying to sell someone on building a garage and trying to sell somebody to find your client on a case. It's persuasion. I like persuasion."

Clifford's love of golf is reflected throughout the cozy, homelike space.



Floor-to-ceiling windows make Clifford's 31st-floor office appear larger than its 13,000 square feet.



VIEW FROM THE TOP

morning musts

MSNBC, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*; *The New York Times*; *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*; *Wine Spectator*; and erobertparker.com, Robert Parker's guide to fine wine.

personal motto

"I try to work as hard at the end of the task as I do at the beginning."

hands-on decorator

While Bob's wife Joan helped with the look of his office, he also made his own mark with a pair of Louis XVI bedside cabinets he found in an antiques shop in Carmel, California.

lovely to look at

A collection of crystal objets d'art, including a Waterford Crystal violin, which was a gift from Corboy & Demetrio's Tom Demetrio as a memento of Clifford's \$29.6 million verdict in the Rachel Barton Pine trial.