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Mediation moves to the 'Net

Philip Mulford hosts radio show every Thursday

BY GEORGE ROWAND
Times-Democrat Staff Writer

People with family problems around the country have the opportunity to gain some insight into what mediation can do for them by listening to an Internet radio show hosted by Warrenton's own Philip Mulford.

The show, "Divorce Mediation: Myths & Facts," is broadcast live every Thursday afternoon online and repeated numerous times the rest of the week. It airs on VoiceAmerica.com.

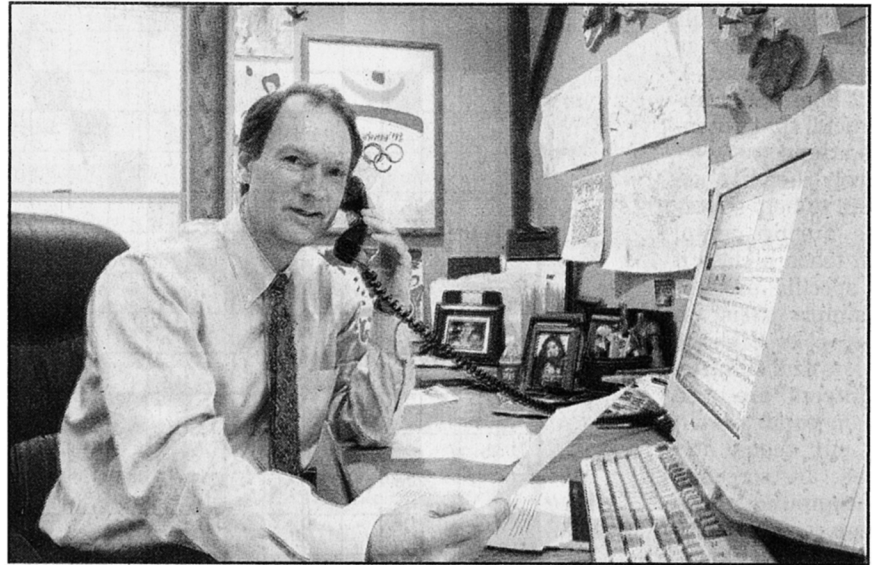
"I do the show from our home office by telephone," Mulford said. "It's great, no distractions. I'm sitting in front of my computer, I have an IM (instant message) connection, I'm in contact with the producer, and I get calls and e-mails from everywhere. The IM connection tells me when a call comes in ... 'You have a caller named Sally from New York ...' so it makes for an interesting time."

Mulford said that he gets e-mails throughout the week and selects some to use on the show. Or not.

"Sometimes I'll have a topic that needs a lot of time, and I'll go on without e-mails or call-ins," he explained. "Sometimes it's more of a content, information-type show that I don't need audience participation."

Divorced from litigation

Mulford, a practicing attorney, has been a mediator since 1990. He said that people often confuse



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Yayoi Ayukawa

MEDIATING: Philip Mulford of Warrenton has been a mediator for more than 10 years. He now has a weekly Internet radio program about using mediation in divorce situations.

exactly what it is that he does.

"Divorce mediation is a very underused process," Mulford stated. "It's 20 years old, and a lot of people don't know about it. They say, 'I know what that is. It's arbitration. You're making the decision for them,' and that's not what it is. Mediation is getting the parties together and they have to agree. And it works even when people can't sit in the same room together."

"What we're trying to do is to say, 'Here's a process that is less expensive, that is customized to the family.' The spouses create it and therefore, it's theirs."

Lisa Mulford, Philip's wife and assistant in the business, said that the anonymity that the show affords people who are going through the divorce process or contemplating a divorce is one of the most attractive features of the show.

"We've had a couple of shows that were so personal, so emotional that the people who are calling in can't talk about it," she said. "They get too upset."

As with anyone who has talked about what it takes to make a marriage work, Philip said that communication is the key.

"I think that some people have surprised themselves," he said. "Mediation sometimes changes

their whole attitude."

"He incorporates a lot of his communications approaches into the radio show," said Lisa. "People are so hungry to communicate better and what Philip is bringing to the show is experience. He's done over 1,000 mediations, and he's seen how couples go through the process. In the show, he walks you through where a couple started and how he helped them reach a new understanding."

Lawyer or not, Philip said that he thinks that mediation is better for all concerned in a divorce.

"The nature of litigation is adversarial," he explained. "Both parties go into it thinking that they are going to win, and only one is going to win, and often neither wins. Mediation can help you plan for the future, especially when there are kids involved."

"Kids get it when the parents are angry and hurt and fighting," he continued. "But if they are working it out, they can see that as well. Parents who do that are honoring their children."

Philip Mulford can be reached at (540) 341-4615. The radio show is broadcast at www.voice.voiceamerica.com at 2 p.m. Thursday afternoon. All shows, from the Nov. 30 premiere onward, are archived on the site.