

ST. LOUIS CHARACTER

A private look at professional people

BY RICK DESLOGE
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Catch trial attorney Ed Dowd Jr. down on the family farm near St. Clair, Mo., and he's known as "Slim" and one of the finer horsemen in the Dowd clan.

He greets everyone with "partner." "Slim" is embroidered on his chaps.

"He insisted when we were at the farm we all have cowboy names," said his brother James "Kid Shelleen" Dowd, a former Missouri Court of Appeals justice now in private practice.

Ed Dowd, 60, comes from a long line of attorneys, including his late father who was once the Democratic candidate for Missouri governor. Four of his brothers and perhaps a dozen other relatives also are lawyers, and his oldest son, Edward Dowd III, just passed the Bar Exam.

Ed Dowd, a lifelong Democrat, served a stint as U.S. attorney for the eastern district of Missouri during the Clinton Administration. He left that job when former U.S. Sen. Jack Danforth called him to be his deputy on a special federal investigation of the FBI's handling of the 1993 Waco siege of the Branch Davidian compound.

Dowd also is active with Citizens for Missouri Courts, a political action committee where he's a trustee that backs Missouri's non-partisan court plan. He's president of the National Association of former U.S. Attorneys and helped found St. Louis Bank in 2005 where he's a director.

Three years ago he and Jim Bennett left the silk stocking practice of Bryan Cave to start their own boutique law firm — Dowd Bennett LLP. Their firm has grown to 10 lawyers, nearly all recruited from Bryan Cave.

While he works hard, Dowd also knows how to have a good time, said brother Doug "Blue" Dowd, a partner at Dowd & Dowd. "He's the one who gets us to do things like swim in the Bourbeuse River on New Year's Eve day."

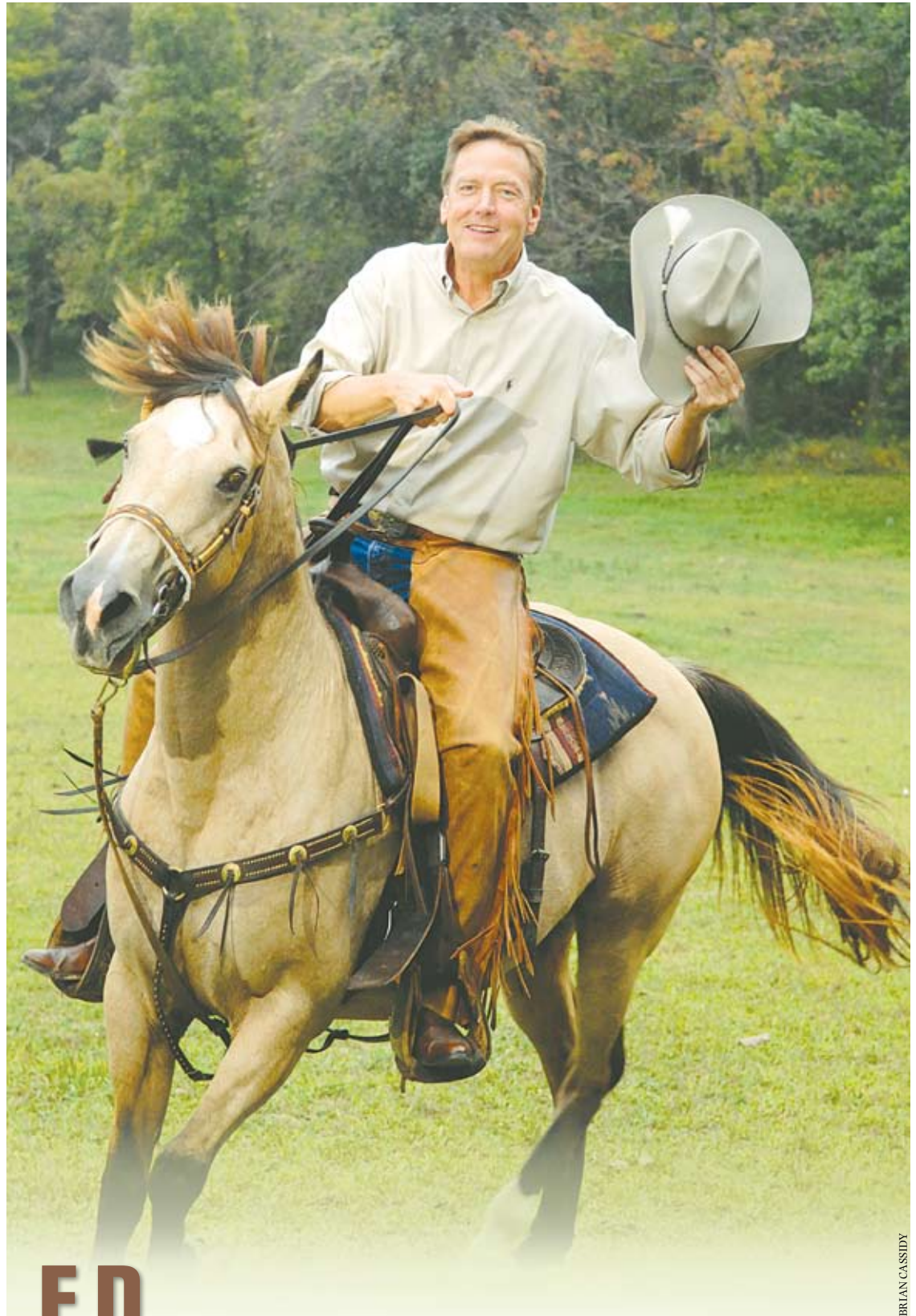
Ed Dowd and his wife, Jill, live in Ladue. The couple has three grown sons.

Did you ever consider any other career?

Not really. I wanted to be a prosecutor when I was a little kid. My dad was a St. Louis circuit attorney and had been an assistant in the FBI. I idolized him, and that's what I wanted to do. There was a time in the '70s when it was considered poor form to go to work with your dad and be part of the establishment. Once I got over that, I went to law school and became a prosecutor. I was an assistant U.S. attorney for five years, worked with Dad for nine years, and then was U.S. attorney for six.

You were at Dowd & Dowd early in your career, where your brothers Doug, Richard, Bill and four other relatives now work?

Exactly. At one point the firm became



BRIAN CASSIDY

ED DOWD JR.

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Dowd, Dowd & Dowd. We decided that was redundant. It went back to Dowd & Dowd. The firm was started by my Dad and Uncle Bob.

Did you consider going back with the family firm?

A large percentage of our clients at Dowd Bennett are large corporations. Dowd & Dowd are a great bunch of plaintiff's lawyers, and they sue all the big corporations around here on a regular basis. That could not have worked because of the conflicts.

What's your relationship with Bryan Cave now?

Very good. Don Lents is the managing partner, and when Jim and I told him we were going to leave, he could not have been more gracious. We still have great friends there, and we refer cases to them and they refer cases to us.

What's your hourly rate?

I'm generally \$525 an hour. The others in the firm are between \$150 and \$350. We try not waste our clients' money on discovery disputes if we can help it. That's frequently dictated by the other side of the case.

What's the hardest part about running your own practice?

We have a tremendous volume of work. About two-thirds is civil litigation, a third are white-collar cases. On the white-collar side, it's the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and the aggressive approaches the government has taken toward business. That's driven our clients to have compliance programs and operate them in a way that keeps them out

of trouble. The litigation goes on and on whether the economy goes up or down. My dad always told me that.

What's your strategy for helping people charged with white-collar crimes?

We've been successful for one main reason: We are proactive early on. We don't sit back while government does an investigation then come in at the end and have a plea. We're very actively engaged with the government, giving them information and explaining our position early on so they don't end up with a lot of misconceptions that you're trying to turn around and change their mind. The most important cases we've handled, nobody ever knew they were under investigation because of the way we handled the cases.

Have you ever thought about running for political office?

I thought about running for Missouri Attorney General when I was an assistant U.S. attorney. I've been contacted over the years by Democratic leaders in Washington and here. I wouldn't do it for a number of reasons. One is Jill does not want to be in public life, and two is the lifestyle that would take me away from everything that I love — my family and children and my extended family and the farms, golf and all the things I like to do when I'm not working. The overriding reason is I've never felt like I have all the answers.

You were called to the Waco investigation by Jack Danforth, a Republican.

That was a bipartisan investigation. Jack Danforth called me and said he was with (Attorney General) Janet Reno and he

wanted me to be at a press conference the next day in Washington. Jack wanted no leaks, he wanted things 100 percent accurate and he wanted us to get it done fast. We were on the job about a week and he came into my office and asked, "Are we done yet?"

You still get away to the family farm in St. Clair?

Yes. My great-grandfather, the real Edward Dowd, was a mounted policeman in the city, and my dad grew up loving horses. The first thing he would do, even when he was in the FBI, was find a stable, get a horse and ride around that city. Dad bought the farm about the time I was born. We all grew up on horses, training them, and getting bucked off, and we broke our own horses. At one time we had 18 horses, now we're at 12. My wife Jill's family had a farm on the same road. That's where we met.

What are you reading?

History mainly. I read a lot on golf. I just finished "The Gamble," by Thomas Ricks, a book on Gen. David Patraeus and the war in Iraq, and "The Horse Soldiers," a book on the early days of the Afghan war. Abraham Lincoln is one of my role models, for his intelligence, tenacity and humor. "Team of Rivals" about Lincoln is fascinating. It takes a tremendous amount of self confidence and courage to hire the people you just ran against for president.

What do you listen to?

I like music of all kinds. I can do a little Roy Orbison for you; "Crying" is my favorite.

WHAT THEY SAY

"He's got a toughness to him. At one point (during the Waco investigation) we were trying to get documents from the FBI. Ed had them convinced we were sending in our investigators to pounce down on the headquarters in Washington the next morning. He put it in terms of a courtesy call. Our investigators were all postal inspectors. The FBI gave the documents to us voluntarily."

Jack Danforth, former U.S. Senator and special counsel on the Waco investigation



"When he represents you he's competitive and he fights for what's right. I don't think he could handle a case he didn't believe in. We don't look on him as our outside attorney. We look on him as a trusted adviser."

Bob Reynolds, chairman president and CEO of Graybar



"He's a Renaissance man — an unbelievable golfer, on the team at St. Louis Country Club. He's an avid reader and student of history and he remembers everything he's read. All of this is outside of his law practice, and in addition to his skills as a horseman, he can build you a barbed wire fence."

Doug Dowd, brother and managing partner at Dowd & Dowd

