

Ryder Puts Years of Know-How Into Bankruptcy and Commercial Litigation

AMY O. WILLIAMS | *The Daily News Online*

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Attorney John L. Ryder is a member of the well-known Memphis law firm of Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC. The firm formed in 2000 as the result of a merger between two longtime Memphis law firms: Harris, Shelton, Dunlap, Cobb & Ryder PLLC and Hanover, Walsh, Jalenak & Blair PLLC.

Ryder has been practicing in Tennessee for more than 20 years. He focuses his practice on bankruptcy and commercial litigation. He has participated in the bankruptcies of such companies as Braniff International Airlines, which filed for bankruptcy in 1982. Braniff was once the ninth largest airline in the United States.

Q: What made you want to study law, and was it something you always wanted to do?

A: I knew that I wanted to be a lawyer from a fairly early age. I am not sure whether it was watching Perry Mason or not, but by the time I started high school, I was set on being a lawyer.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I was born in Chicago, but my parents moved here in 1963. I went to White Station High School (where I met my wife), then to Wabash College in Indiana, my father's alma mater, and to Vanderbilt Law School. When I went to Vanderbilt, my intention was to return to Memphis to practice law.

Q: What brought you to Harris Shelton?

A: I came to Harris Shelton in 2000 with a group of lawyers from another firm. That firm had decided to concentrate all of its lawyers in East Memphis. Trying to practice in the bankruptcy courts from East Memphis is inefficient. We decided to stay Downtown, and Harris Shelton has proved to be a wise choice. It is a great firm with good lawyers, who are also good partners.

Q: What attracted you to practicing bankruptcy law?

A: Actually, I fell into it. As a young associate, I was assigned to handle some collections work. Increasingly, bankruptcy became part of the collections practice. My timing was pretty good because I started just as the current bankruptcy code took effect. All the lawyers and judges learned the code together in the late '70s and early '80s.

Q: What special skills or qualities do you bring to your practice areas?

A: I think bankruptcy practice, particularly in business bankruptcies, involves all of the different skill sets of lawyering: litigation, negotiation, drafting. It also provides an opportunity to be creative in trying to find solutions to business problems.

Q: What is the best part about your job?

A: The best part of practicing law is the ability to help people. As a lawyer, you have the skills, training and experience to help people solve their problems.

Q: What are some of the best moments from your career as a lawyer?

A: Cases where we were able to confirm a plan of reorganization that produced a significant distribution to unsecured creditors; cases where I was able to save someone's business; watching an entrepreneur sign the documents to start his own business.

Q: What do you do when you are not working?

A: Currently, I am chairman of the Board of Trust of Opera Memphis, which is a labor of love for me. I also like to hunt and travel. I remain active with the Republican party, serving as a member of the Republican State Executive Committee.

Q: What are you most proud of, personally and professionally?

A: Personally: my family - my wife, Lain, and our daughters, Reagan and Nancy Kate. Professionally: board certification as a business bankruptcy specialist; participation in the Braniff bankruptcy, the Julien Cos. bankruptcy; handling several redistricting cases over the years; successful reorganizations. [To read more about the Julien case, read our March 30, 2006, Law Talk feature at www.memphisdailynews.com.]

Q: What are your goals for the future?

A: To stay current with the ever-changing legal environment so that I can continue to serve the interests of my clients.



Memphis Law Talk



Name: John Ryder

Position: Member

Company: Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh PLLC

Basics: Ryder, who has been practicing law in Tennessee for more than two decades, focuses his practice on bankruptcy and commercial litigation.

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- John Ryder