

ANTITRUST

Whenever he can get away, Everett Bowman grabs a canoe and paddle.

He spends many weekends slashing through the white waters of the Ocoee, French Broad or Nantahala rivers. The scenery is lovely, the outdoor air invigorating, but what really excites him is working the currents. "If you line up the right way on a riffle or wave, you can ferry yourself across the river with a minimum of strokes, maybe one or two," he says. The best part is "when you can use the water to help you do what you want to do."

No battles, no drama — just smart, efficient moves. That's the way he practices law as well. In a 25-year career, he has become one of the state's top antitrust lawyers. "No matter what's happening, he can keep it all straight in his mind and explain things in an understandable way," says Matt Sawchak, an antitrust lawyer in Raleigh.

That has come in handy on a recent federal court case. Bowman represents Fort Mill, S.C.-based Springs Industries and Bowling Green, Ky.-based Fruit of the Loom, which joined with other textile manufacturers in 2003 to sue four suppliers of polyester fiber they contended were price fixing. Settlement talks brought together a roomful of lawyers, and tempers inevitably flared. With a joke here and a firm hand there, Bowman, who led the manufacturers' legal team, kept the negotiations going. Three suppliers have settled. "When people talk about letting cooler heads prevail," Sawchak says, "Everett is always one of those cooler heads."

He was born in Wilmington, the son of a railroad conductor. He passed up a Morehead Scholarship to UNC to enroll at Harvard, where he earned a bachelor's in history and literature. A fellowship took him to Cambridge University, where he studied English literature. Bowman was on the path to academia, but seeing the oversupply of English professors, he veered into law school. After graduation, he spent a year as a clerk for Judge Gerald Tjoflat on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Jacksonville, Fla. There he

worked on a big case involving price fixing in the corrugated-container industry. He considered heading to Atlanta to practice law, but Tjoflat gave him some advice: "People who are native North Carolinians usually end up back in North Carolina, so you ought to save yourself a few years elsewhere and just go directly to North Carolina." He landed at Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson in Charlotte.

He helped on a criminal case concerning price fixing by paving companies and began holding antitrust-compliance seminars for the firm's clients. Soon he was doing more antitrust work than anyone else at the firm. In the '80s, Bowman worked with Robinson Bradshaw partner Ward McKeithen defending Jantzen against a lawsuit brought by a Gastonia discount store. Jantzen had stopped selling swimsuits to the store, which contended that Jantzen had conspired with Belk department stores to harm its business. A related case went to the Supreme Court, and Jantzen prevailed.

Antitrust cases rarely make it to trial, which is fine by Bowman. "Two of my favorite things about practicing antitrust law are brief writing and letter writing. Often I see that lawyers write very belligerent, angry letters threatening all kinds of terrible consequences. That tone tends to drive parties farther apart. I see my role as being a problem solver more so than a no-holds-barred advocate."

One problem he helped solve more than a decade ago was how to bring

together the small group of antitrust lawyers in the state. He and others championed the creation of an antitrust section of the North Carolina Bar Association. Their efforts succeeded in 1990. "It's a forum where people can educate each other and encourage each other, and that's consistent with the way Everett is," Sawchak says. "He holds himself to high standards, and he helps other people to achieve high standards, also."

— Lisa Davis



STEVE EXUM

EVERETT J. BOWMAN

Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson PA, Charlotte

Born: July 26, 1953

Education: bachelor's, Harvard University, 1975; law, 1979, Cambridge University

Family: divorced

Legal philosophy: "Focus first on solving the client's problem rather than demolishing the client's adversary."

Recent books read: *Assembling California* by John McPhee and *The Stories of John Cheever*

Good works: Helped found Wolf Creek Adventures, a nonprofit that helps at-risk children build skills through canoeing