

# DAVID REID

## Trek from Gridiron to IRS to Tax Game Plans

by Josh Weinhold

SPRINGFIELD—David R. Reid isn't your average tax attorney. He played Division I football on a full scholarship. He wrote a children's book. He has four advanced degrees.

Reid, owner of **Reid Law Office LLC** in Springfield, isn't one to quickly brag about his past accomplishments, but he does admit not many attorneys have done the kinds of things he has.

"I'm kind of unusual for this area, with my background," he says. "Those things aren't really something I'm aware of many others having."

These days, Reid, 62, remains far more focused on his work as a sole practitioner, handling tax law, estate planning, wills and trusts, probate, and business law matters. And aside from having an extensive knowledge of several areas of law, Reid says his keys to

Southern Illinois University. He wound up leading the team in receiving yards in 1970 and 1971, statistics that helped earn him entry into the Springfield Sports Hall of Fame in 2010. The Chicago Bears drafted one teammate, offensive tackle Lionel Antoine, in the first round. But Reid returned home after graduation in 1972, putting thoughts of attending law school on hold while he prepared for a different type of selection process, the military draft.

By 1973, though, the draft ended, and Reid knew he wouldn't be headed to Vietnam. He worked for a local insurance company and earned a master's of public administration degree from the University of Illinois-Springfield during that time, but soon landed an internship with Miami-Dade County in Florida, spending time on the staff of several public departments.

moved back to Illinois to be closer to family, and passed the Illinois bar exam.

He landed a job with the Internal Revenue Service's Chief Counsel's Office, where he handled litigation and represented the government in U.S. Tax Court.

The work involved many other types of legal matters, including tax collection and summons, placing levies on taxpayers, and filing notices of federal tax liens. Reid says he didn't find it hard to keep busy in that office.

"When you're an attorney for the IRS, you never have to worry about marketing or going out and attracting clients," he says. "The cases just show up at your door and keep piling up."

Reid says that IRS cases brought a variety of subject matter with them. Sometimes the litigation involved million-dollar mergers between corporations. Others were more unusual, like a case involving a man who claimed his dead hunting dog as a loss on his tax returns. Reid didn't win that dispute, he says, but he still points to it as a sign of unpredictable nature of his work there.

"I liked it because the cases would always be new," he says. "That was always interesting."

Reid later spent three years with the IRS in Atlanta, a move prompted by his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Strow, who had gotten a dermatology residency position at Emory University in Georgia. There, Reid decided to get a master's of tax law degree. Few tax attorneys can claim both broad experience working for the IRS and extensive educational training in several areas of study, Reid says.

"I try to market that," he says. "A lot of people, that's important to them. They like people to have that IRS background—because of the knowledge of the inside."

Reid eventually returned to Springfield, working for Brown, Hay & Stephens LLP for a time, before setting out to found his own firm in 1995.

With two young children at the time, Reid says running his own operation made sense because it gave his schedule added flexibility. As an independent sort, he says he also enjoyed being on his own. Unlike his days at the IRS, however, cases didn't just stack up instantly.

"When you just get started, you take whatever you can," he says. "Then after you've



achieving his clients' desired goals are rather simple.

"I try to get along with people. I try to treat them as I would want to be treated," he says. "I try to be reasonable in any matters. I'd like to think I've been successful at that."

Reid grew up in Springfield, where his skills playing wide receiver for Sacred Heart-Griffin High School earned him a scholarship to

During the evenings, Reid took law classes at the University of Miami and master's of business administration courses at Florida International University.

"That," Reid says simply, "was hard."

### Is Dead Hunting Dog Really a Loss?

By 1983, he had two more degrees and had passed the Florida bar. Shortly thereafter, he

been in practice for a while, you're more selective about what you will do or won't do. And you see problems sooner than you did 20 years ago."

Much of his practice now focuses on tax controversy work, and on estate and tax planning work. Tax law remains compelling, Reid says, because of its defined nature.

While some gray areas still exist in the field, he says it's much easier in tax law to "put a number on what you're doing. A lot of the law, you don't know what the outcome could be," he says. "In tax, you know the cases and what position the IRS has taken on issues, so you should be able to give the client some idea of what it will cost them or how much they'll save if they do a certain thing."

Reid says he continues to draw on material he learned during his various advanced degree programs—namely the marketing and financial analysis lessons he went through to gain his MBA. He doesn't try to do too much, though, and says he prefers that his clients rely on other experts for certain affairs.

"I'm a lawyer, so I try to focus on the law and let the client work with his or her accountant," he says. "I like the round table, where everybody's there—the attorney, the client, the accountant—so we can proceed in a way where everybody's included and has input into the decisions."

## Excising the 'Nerve-Wracking' from Referrals

One such local accountant, Terri Phelps, says she first sent a client to Reid about five years ago, when that individual ran into an IRS audit.

"I was at the point I thought I was going to have to give in," says Phelps, a partner at Estes, Bridgewater & Ogden CPAs in Springfield. "He won it all for me."

Since that time, Phelps says she sends Reid all the tricky tax matters she encounters and constantly recommends him to others.

"When you go to hand your client to somebody, that's a little nerve-wracking," she says. "You want them to take good care of them, and he does that. He keeps me up to speed, keeps the client up to speed."

Mariann Pogge, a sole practitioner in Springfield, says she doesn't just direct her clients to Reid for tax law help—she trusted him on personal matters, too. Pogge says she had Reid prepare wills for both her and her husband, despite the fact both work as attorneys.

"He's my go-to person if I have a tax question or if somebody needs some estate work done," Pogge says.

James E. Elmore, a partner at Elmore & Reid

in Springfield, says he contacts Reid any time his criminal defense clients have a tax issue attached to their case. Reid's experience and connections with the IRS pay big dividends, Elmore says, in helping clients resolve troubling situations.

"If you can make a phone call and get someone to return it, that's pretty important stuff," Elmore says. "He's got that kind of status with the IRS and with state of Illinois people, so it's pretty important to have him on your side."

Timothy J. Londrigan, of Londrigan & Londrigan in Springfield, shares office space with Reid, and calls him one of the "brightest guys in the area."

Reid is also one of the humblest, rarely boasting of his academic or athletic achievements. Reid is a rare breed, Londrigan says, a traditional personal lawyer who clients can rely upon to take care of everything.

"He's not going to give you advice he's not confident of," Londrigan says. "If Dave tells you something, you can pretty much take it to the bank."

Away from the office, Reid, a father of three, maintains an active role in the community. He served as the first male president of the Sangamon County Medical Society Alliance, an organization of spouses of physicians. He also remains involved with the Springfield Art Association, the Illinois Coalition for Community Services, and the Lincoln-Douglas American Inn of Court.

Reid also wrote a children's book published in 2012, "The Shade Girls Were Right," which describes the dangers of sun tanning. It was inspired by his wife, who developed skin cancer in 2010. Reid's life experience amounts to a unique collection of academics, athletics, and professional expertise, experience he hopes benefits his clients on a daily basis.

"I have a broad background," he says, "So I see the bigger and broader perspective on things." ■