

Hall of Fame 2023

J. OWEN TODD

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Boston

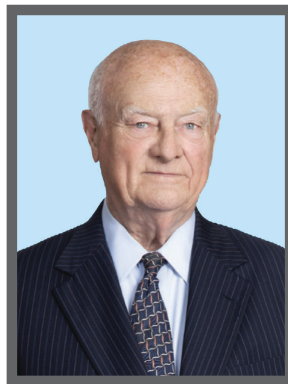
A doctor's son, J. Owen Todd was admitted to medical school. But he spent a summer working in a hospital, where one night he heard a patient screaming in pain. He told his father he wasn't going to be able follow through and was told, "Good. I didn't think you were fit for it."

Fortunately for the legal community and his clients, Todd went to law school instead, embarking a 60-year career litigating everything from murders and mass torts to bankruptcy and "bet the company" business cases.

Clients have included pro athletes, major corporations, attorneys, judges, law firms and even the Massachusetts Trial Court itself at one point.

Todd may be best known locally for his representation of Cardinal Bernard Law, head of the Boston archdiocese, in the lawsuits stemming from the Catholic church sex-abuse scandal. Law was universally vilified but Todd, who reached a settlement on Law's behalf, describes the late archbishop as more of an absentee landlord than anything else.

"He was at a small parish in Texas before he came to Boston and had never heard of a pedophilia



case before," says Todd. "He was usually in Rome so he was seldom in Boston and left someone else to manage the store."

Other high-profile cases Todd's been involved in include famous intra-family squabbles over Legal Sea Foods and the Demoulas supermarket chain.

In the Demoulas case, he represented the widow of Arthur S. Demoulas's oldest son. She inherited stock totaling about 25 percent of the company and wanted to sell it to Arthur T., head of the rival faction. Todd tried to negotiate but Arthur T. wouldn't budge on the price, so she sold the stock to someone else. Todd says Arthur T. eventually had to buy it back for many times what Todd's client would have sold it to him.

"Those cases were frustrating at times. The parties were driven by passion and weren't always exercising good business judgment," he says.

But it's Todd's representation of the Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi that he finds most memorable. An American hospital company sought out the well-connected Khashoggi as a partner in a business venture in Saudi Arabia.

When the company sought to breach their contract, the case went to arbitration in London. Todd, an American, thus found himself in England before a retired member of the Queen's Bench representing a Saudi against an American company, which, in turn, was represented by an Egyptian lawyer living in Saudi Arabia. As pleased as Todd was with the favorable result, Khashoggi himself made it an unforgettable experience.

"He was an inveterate gambler and spent more money than all but four nations in the world," Todd says. "Casinos would pay his staff to direct him to their casino. And when he testified, he would preface everything by saying, 'In the desert we have a saying; as though he was talking from his tent, but in a thousand-dollar suit.'"

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