

Art, Cars, Parrots and Other Spoils of Miami Fraud Lawyer Edward H. Davis

"Corruption is like an acid eating away the steel understructure of society," said Edward H. Davis Jr. of Sequor Law, Miami, who's made it his mission to pursue corrupt politicians and Ponzi-schemers hiding money, boats, sports cars and exotic pets around the globe."

November 2, 2018

By Raychel Lean



Edward H. Davis Jr. of Sequor Law, Miami. Photo: J. Albert Diaz/ALM.

Ask Miami asset recovery lawyer [Edward H. Davis Jr.](#) where in the world he hasn't been, and he'll have to pause for a moment to think.

Israel — Davis hasn't gone there yet. But by next week it'll be the 81st country he's visited, edging him one step closer to a spot in the Travelers' Century Club.

"You have to prove you've been to 100 countries to join," Davis said. "I'm on my way."

Lucky for Davis, founding shareholder of Sequor Law, fraudsters don't just leave stolen money in their backyard. They scatter it all over the globe, using it to buy outlandish collectibles, unconventional modes of transport and exotic pets.

As a representative of fraud victims, it's Davis' job to seize those assets, sell them and return as much as possible to the client.

"We've repossessed some very, very beautiful sports cars, yachts and airplanes. We've recovered land, houses, hotels," Davis said. "One time we got a guy's prized dog and prized parrot, and were able to sell them back to him for money to give to the victims."

Davis once recovered a Jean-Michel Basquiat painting, bought with money a fraudster had stolen from a Brazilian bank. He represented the liquidator in the case and sold the piece by the renowned painter for \$13 million.



Edward H. Davis of Sequor Law in Miami with a seized Serge Poliakoff painting. Courtesy photo.

"I hate to say this, but it looked like a 5-year-old drew it," Davis said." The fraudster paid \$1.2 million for it, so we actually made money on that particular piece."

Davis also seized a Serge Poliakoff painting that once belonged to Edemar Cid Ferreira, former president of Brazilian bank Banco Santos, who was charged with money laundering.

Offshore jurisdictions and remote islands are particularly popular hiding place for fraudsters, who "try to use places that are

hard to get to and hard to find,” according to Davis.

Mauritius, Guernsey, Dominica, the British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dutch and French sides of Saint Martin — all regular haunts.

Davis has also been to Finland twice, but only to the airport, so it doesn't count toward his 100-country goal.

“I'm very strict about that,” he said.

Early in his career, Davis represented a defrauded Guatemalan family business in a [case spanning 10 jurisdictions](#).

“I grew up dreaming about going to these places, and when you get there you still pinch yourself a little bit,” said Davis, who grew up in a tiny farm town near Buffalo, New York, where he said dairy cows outnumbered humans.

Though it's tough spending up to 100 nights away from home every year, the attorney says he still hasn't gotten over the novelty.

“I've been to Slovenia, Dubai, Hong Kong, India. I get to learn about other cultures, hear their language, eat their food, understand how they live,” Davis said. “And when you really get down to it, most people are pretty much the same. But instead of focusing on that 90 percent of stuff we all agree on, we tend to focus on the 10 percent that we disagree on.”

The way Davis sees it, corruption is “the No. 1 thing that we have to fight in the world.”

“Lack of medical care, lack of adequate clean water, food and housing can be stopped if we get rid of corruption,” he said. “It should be a human right to live in a society free from corruption, and it's not.”

On a daily basis, Davis encounters people who've lost everything “but the lint in their pocket,” so funding litigation can be a big problem.

Third-party litigation funders have emerged in the last few years to help pay for asset



Edward H. Davis of Sequor Law, Miami. Photo: J. Albert Diaz/ALM.

recovery. But before then, Davis said, many cases languished and fraudsters went unpunished.

Never a Pang of Guilt

These criminals are almost always men — often “amazingly intelligent and charming” businessmen or politicians who, according to Davis, are “almost like computers,” unable to process emotion “the way most normal human beings do.”

“They can smile at you, tell you they love you, then steal your money and walk away, and never feel a pang of doubt, a pang of guilt. Nothing,” Davis said. “What’s really tragic is that most of them are so smart that they could actually do really well if they applied themselves.”

At the beginning of every case, Davis and his team write two words on a white board — “We win.”

“We ask every client, ‘What do you define as a win?’ Then we design a strategy to get to that point,” he said.

Davis served as co-general counsel to the liquidators of Stanford International Bank in a [case against Allen Stanford](#), the second most notorious Ponzi-schemer in history — after Bernie Madoff. He found many of Stanford’s victims were seniors, forced to return to work after losing their retirement

While sending perpetrators to jail provides a sense of justice, Davis admits this does nothing to restore what victims have lost.

“Corruption is like an acid eating away the steel understructure of society,” he said. “If you let it get out of hand, and you don’t fight it and don’t get the money back, then eventually that acid will eat through the under-structure, the metal skeleton, and the whole society collapses.”

Davis calls himself an “accidental lawyer,” having switched tracks from marine biology on a whim and taken the LSAT without studying. But since then, he’s developed an unwavering mission statement.

“What I think we’re doing is restoring hope and trying to do our little part to help society work,” he said. “So much of what we have is based on trust, and

the minute that people say they can't trust, you're done. We're trying to counteract that."

Edward H. Davis Jr.

Born: March 1962, Buffalo, New York

Spouse: Kateri Davis

Children: Ashley, Alissa and Jaclyn Davis

Education: University of Miami, J.D., 1987; University of Miami, B.A., 1984

Experience: Founding shareholder, Sequor Law, 2017-present; founding shareholder, Astigarraga Davis, 2000-2017; founding shareholder, Davis, Devine, Goodman & Wells, 1998-1999; associate and partner, Steel Hector & Davis 1992-1998; law clerk and associate, Paul Landy Beiley & Harper, 1987-1992.