



WINNER  
JANE SMITH

## The real deal

*Smith excels in male-dominated industries*

MATT JARZEMSKY | STAFF WRITER

**W**hen negotiating a real estate transaction, Jane Smith keeps her father's advice in mind: Find out what motivates everyone in the room.

The Fulbright & Jaworski LLP lawyer's skill in that area has helped her rise to partner at three firms. Colleagues and clients say Smith is an expert negotiator who can quickly identify each party's needs and find leverage for her side. Whether coolly responding to a screaming New York lawyer, sending a hard-to-reach attorney's assistant flowers to get him on the phone or persuading a real estate investment trust to raise \$100 million to call a developer's bluff, she always seems to know the undercurrents of a negotiation.

"When she was my attorney, we were dealing with the major real estate developers in this country, and they had some very good attorneys," says Tom Cagnole, real estate transaction manager for Weston Solutions Inc. and Smith's client throughout the 1990s. "She was extremely adept and well-respected, even by the people on the other side of the table."

Smith began her law career in Atlanta-based Alston + Bird and later worked in the St. Louis office of Chicago-based Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP. Males dominated real estate law, especially in her early years. At one point, she missed out on the welcoming party for a new associate because her co-workers took him to a strip club.

"I'm mortified that this guy's going to work for me and I'm not invited to his party," she recalls. "But, of course, they're not inviting me to this party because of where they're going."

Rather than complaining or getting anyone in trouble, she wrote a senior partner a note about how she felt, discouraging

similar behavior in the future. Although Smith hasn't let a paternalistic business environment get in her way, she thinks the business community has a long way to go in recognizing and being sensitive to people's differences.

"The truth is [the party planners] didn't have any clue," she says. "It wasn't deliberate."

Outside of work, Smith helps lead professional and community organizations. She serves as a director for Fight SMA, an international nonprofit working for a treatment or cure for spinal muscular atrophy.

Commercial Real Estate Women Network named her president, effective mid-October. She was elected by the networking group's more than 8,000 members, three-fourths of whom are partners, CEOs or senior managers of their companies.

A self-described morning person, Smith swims for 45 minutes and writes in a journal some mornings — "Every lawyer says they were going to be a writer," she says wryly — before arriving at the office at 8:30 a.m.

"Jane accomplishes more in any given day than most people accomplish in a month," says Greg Otto, a principal with the St. Louis law firm Jenkins & Kling PC. "The woman just has more energy than I could ever hope to have."

Otto worked under Smith at Sonnenschein. One of Smith's many proteges, he cut his teeth working on deals for her client Mercantile Stores Co., a department store chain bought by Dillard's.

"She'd give you enough leash to almost hang yourself but pull you out if it wound up going down the wrong road," Otto says.

Her most enduring lesson is "fully investing yourself in the client and their business and caring a whole hell of a lot if that client succeeded, as opposed to just looking at the client as another billable hour."

