

Newest Columbia law firm has family connections

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RILEY POPE & LANEY, LLC

Headquarters: Columbia

Partners: Ted Riley, T. Lowndes Pope, Roy Laney

Administrative employees: Two

By R. KEVIN DIETRICH

Staff Writer

The legal bloodlines of Columbia's newest law firm run deep. RILEY POPE & LANEY, LLC, which opens Monday, is headed by the sons of three prominent South Carolina attorneys.

Ted Riley is the son of former S.C. Gov. Dick Riley, a partner in the Columbia-based law firm of Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough. Lowndes Pope is the son of Pope and Rodgers law firm founder Bill Pope. Roy Laney is the son of former Turner Padgett Graham and Laney law firm partner Edward "E.W." Laney.

Next week the three step out on their own, operating out of the 800 Suite of the National Bank of South Carolina building on Columbia's Main Street.

"We all could have gone into practice and worked for other firms, but we wanted the challenge and the satisfaction of building a firm and building it our own way," Roy Laney said.

The trio will concentrate on legislative affairs, technology law, administrative law, regulatory law and litigation.

The three have similarities beyond their legal bloodlines. All are 35 years old, grew up in the Columbia area and graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

Ted Riley, a legislative lobbyist for companies including the Gtech lottery firm, is leaving the Columbia law firm of Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd to start the new firm. Lowndes Pope is leaving Minneapolis-based Old Republic National Title's S.C. operations; Roy Laney is leaving Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina.

"This is an opportunity to start something from scratch, to be able to grow it and leave a legacy," Lowndes Pope said.

Pope isn't the first in his family to start a new firm.

In 1989, Bill Pope left Columbia's Robinson McFadden and Moore law firm to join with Paul B. Rodgers III and form Pope and Rodgers. Pope and Rodgers' offices are also on the eighth floor of the NBSC building.

Roy Laney, whose father died in 1980, said he may get some of his desire to go it alone, from his grandfather and uncle, both independent businessmen.

Ted Riley's father is the best known of the three fathers. The former two-term S.C. governor recently rejoined Columbia-based Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough, South Carolina's largest law firm, after serving eight years as U.S. education secretary under President Bill Clinton.

"That we'll have instant name recognition is a definite positive," said Ted Riley, whose grandfather also was a lawyer with Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough.

"We hope we can continue the tradition and stellar reputation of our fathers, not only in the Columbia area; but throughout South Carolina."

R. Kevin Dietrich covers banking, personal finance and consumer affairs.