



William A. Rice/Daily Mining Gazette

Stephen Dresch gestures while speaking in his Hancock home last month. Dresch, the former Michigan Tech University dean of business and engineering administration, co-founded a forensic intelligence firm that has him working on a wide variety of fascinating cases.

'HE'S FEARLESS'

With forensic firm, maverick Dresch remains 'burr under the saddle'

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By BRAD SALMEN
Gazette Writer

HANCOCK — Stephen Dresch's resume is a study in iconoclasm.

The former Michigan Tech University dean took on the school's administration over the infamous Ventures financial scandal. He's sparred with the state Department of Natural Resources for 10

years on behalf of a Baraga County couple who lost their home in a regulatory dispute. The Libertarian-minded Dresch took on the state Legislature after an unlikely win in a 1990 state House race.

And now, the 60-year-old Han-

cock resident is taking his fight to some of the most powerful institutions in the land, including the FBI and the United States Department of Justice. His latest

— Joe Callewert
retired Detroit police detective

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Maverick Dresch taking on Justice, FBI

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battles are waged by way of the company he co-founded, Forensic Intelligence International, LLC.

"FII is a loose confederation of occasional collaborators," Dresch said, relaxing in his large, cluttered home in one of Hancock's oldest neighborhoods. "Precisely who is involved in a particular project depends on the requirements of the project. We provide advice, information, intelligence, expert analysis and testimony for our clients."

Those clients, he said, most often are lawyers who need information for cases involving all manner of murder and mayhem, although he adds, "vastly too many (cases) we pursue on our own account." He abhors the term "private investigator," but to a significant degree, that is what he does.

The stories often are fascinating. He's able to thread a connection between two murders, an Oklahoma organization, high-ranking Democrats, a corrupt FBI agent, Japanese organized crime, bribery, harvested placentas and bioweapons — for starters.

Leaning back in his chair

and smoking filterless Liggett cigarettes, one after another, the golden-tongued agitator described how he once holed up in a drab Oklahoma hotel for more than a week, listening to hundreds of hours of taped telephone conversations. He's spent so much time in federal prison talking to inmates, he said, that guards know him by name. Working another case, he once walked up to the Florida home of a former mafia hitman and got him to talk.

Joe Callewert, a retired Detroit police detective and FII "collaborator," said such carelessness regarding personal safety is typical of Dresch.

A one-word description of his friend?

"Hero," Callewert said. "There isn't a sneaky bone in his body. In Oklahoma, I'd have to remind him to back his license plate against the hotel. He's fearless. He puts all his phone numbers and addresses on everything he writes."

With Dresch's history of tangling with government institutions, it probably shouldn't be surprising that he's now determined to humiliate the FBI. He became disillusioned with the agency and the justice department while investigating

several cases. He alleges the FBI helped cover up murders in Oklahoma, Utah, and New York City.

FBI officials in Salt Lake City and Brooklyn were not available for comment. The FBI's Oklahoma City bureau has no records of the case Dresch discussed. That doesn't surprise him, he said. He maintains there is a pattern of collusion and deception at top levels of government that allows certain misdeeds to be overlooked or covered up.

And it visibly irritates him.

"I'll be honest, I want nothing more than to bring the FBI into complete disrepute," Dresch said. "We live in a country governed by the politics of fear."

That he remains defiant comes as no surprise to state political observers and former colleagues. They universally describe him as extremely intelligent. They also say he's "eclectic," "dedicated" and "unyielding."

"Stephen is very bright, and very opinionated," said Terry Monson, an associate dean at MTU's School of Business and Economics who was on the faculty during Dresch's tenure as dean. The school was then called the School of Business

and Engineering Administration. "He would grapple on to an issue and he wouldn't let go of it."

While serving in the state House as a Republican, Dresch often was a thorn in the side of his own party.

"He's a real maverick," said Bill Ballenger, editor of Inside Michigan Politics in Lansing. "Philosophically, he's almost purely Libertarian. He was not a go-along, get-along politician. He was a gadfly, a burr under the saddle for both Republicans and Democrats."

Far from the Capitol, Dresch remains a burr looking for a saddle. But as exciting as the FII work can sometimes be, it hasn't been as profitable as he hoped.

"It's like a floating craps game," he said. "I've been more than successful keeping occupied. I've not been as successful attracting funds."

Still, he's optimistic. He's working on two books and hopes to appear as an expert in an upcoming biowarfare documentary.

"Ultimately, I anticipate that many of these efforts will eventuate in 'journalistic' outcomes," Dresch said. "And a few, hopefully, will make some money."