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PORTICO 10

Local firms nominated and local judges chose this year's PORTICO 10, an impressive group of up-and-coming Jackson area attorneys

PHOTOS BY BILL JACKSON

Dorsey R. Carson, Jr.

Firm: Burr & Forman, LLP

Years in practice: 15

Primary area of practice:

Construction Litigation

Education: Graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1996; Mississippi State University, Magna Cum Laude, in 1993; In 1996, I spent my last semester of law school at the Law Consortium at the University of London.

Greatest challenge: Although our firm has 250 attorneys around the southeast, there are only seven of us located in Jackson, so we all challenge ourselves to be a top-performing office financially, while simultaneously advocating zealously for our clients. The four years that I served as managing partner of the Jackson office of Burr & Forman were also the most challenging. Through that administrative role, in addition to practicing law full time, I began to truly realize that the law profession is just that, a profession, and the ability to help our clients is dependent upon a good support staff (we have the best), balanced budgets and financial stability.

Greatest achievement: My greatest professional achievement was being lead attorney in the Architex case before the Mississippi Supreme Court. That case involved insurance coverage for subcontractor construction defects and, in a rare move, the Court expressly disavowed a prior ruling of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. We had our entire office working on that case, and it was a huge victory for the entire construction industry.

Advice: For an attorney to truly succeed, he or she must balance a difficult work schedule with quality time with family and friends. It takes consistent self-evaluation to keep a balcony-view of our profession. Work hard, be passionate, but also save the largest part of yourself for loved ones. I tell incoming lawyers that this is a marathon, not a sprint, so do not burn yourselves out. Sometimes I have to remember my own advice, as there always seem to be constant deadlines.





Path to leadership: My path to leadership began at Colonial Heights Baptist Church, where my parents encouraged me to attend every Sunday and Wednesday and to continue as a youth leader. I do not pretend to be anything except an imperfect human in need of grace and redemption, and that Christian base has always been there for me to try to adjust my life and build upon those life lessons. After losing four of my best friends in college, that painful process helped me to realize how much of a gift life is, and how I had nothing to fear in the future. My fraternity gave me my first opportunities to serve in leadership capacities, and I grew on that to be a judge and then director of the Student Traffic Appeals Court. In law school, I was elected as Vice-President of the UGA Student Law School Association. I served as President of the Downtown Exchange Club, and as an Elder at Fondren Presbyterian Church. Although I narrowly lost a tough election for the Legislature in November against a longtime incumbent, I continue to grow through the process in a very positive manner.

Cheri Turnage Gatlin

Firm: Burr & Forman LLP

Years in Practice: 15

Primary area of practice:

Construction

Education: J.D. Mississippi College

Greatest challenge: Balancing professional career with family life is my greatest challenge.

Greatest achievement: My greatest achievement thus far has been helping Thyssen Krupp build the largest private project in United States history and helping build a great Burr & Forman office in Jackson with lawyers and staff who genuinely care about each other and our clients.

Advice: Try to help someone everyday. If you don't like practicing law, do something else.

Path to Leadership: I have a great husband who has been a wonderful partner, and working together we have been able to practice law and take care of our four boys.



Mark David Jicka

Firm: Watkins & Eager PLLC

Years in practice: 20

Primary area of practice: Litigation

Education: University of Alabama (1984-85), Mississippi College B.S (1988), and Vanderbilt University J.D. (1991)

Greatest challenge: My greatest challenge is keeping perspective. A competitive nature can be helpful in litigation when fighting for one's clients, but it can also cause a loss of clarity on the ultimate goal. It is very true that not every battle needs to be won, or for that matter, even fought. At times, I have been guilty of wanting to engage an adversary at every turn. However, it seems that the best opportunities for success are often found only after considering the whole picture.

“EVERY LAWYER
WANTS TO WIN
EVERY CASE,
BUT ONLY HALF
OF US WILL
DO SO.” MARK
DAVID JICKA

Greatest achievement: My greatest achievement is my family. From a professional standpoint, I have had the opportunity to expand my practice into new and interesting areas while still enjoying my original products liability practice for corporate clients. From representing clients under federal indictment to prosecuting cases for Hinds County as a special prosecutor, the evolution of my practice has been exciting.

Advice: It is very important to keep perspective in one's life and practice. Every lawyer wants to win every case, but only half of us will do so. If we work hard, prepare hard and put forth our best effort, then we should sleep soundly at night. While this is much easier said than done, try. Read a book, take a walk, spend quality time with your family, travel and do the things you love. It is important to

enjoy some of the fruits of our labor along the way.

Path to leadership: I have been blessed to have great mentors at Watkins & Eager. They have taught me how to keep the client first, how to present the best advocacy and how to be a professional. My constant wish is to be the same type of example to all of those with whom I am lucky enough to work.

Tanya D. Ellis

Firm: Forman Perry Watkins Krutz & Tardy LLP

Years in practice: 7.5

Primary area of practice: Mass tort defense and general litigation

Education: Mississippi College School of Law, J.D. (summa cum laude), 2004 University of Mississippi, B.A. Political Science, 2001

Greatest challenge: Balance. I work every day to achieve balance in my life and to manage my time so that I can be a good wife, mother, friend, attorney, and (occasionally) gym-goer.

Greatest achievement: Professionally, my greatest achievement was gaining the confidence to make my first-ever closing argument to a federal court jury in a high profile case that garnered national attention. Personally, my greatest achievement came on August 30, 2011 with the arrival of my healthy baby boy; I consider the fact that he now sleeps for eight consecutive hours to be quite an achievement as well.

Advice: Be patient. Like most things in life, I learned this lesson the hard way. On my first day out of law school, I was ready to try a case. Or at least I thought I was. I had no idea how much I had to learn. I'm still learning and will be until the day I retire.

Path to leadership: I look to the leaders of my firm who have achieved so much and earned the respect of so many. In particular, W.G. Watkins, who handles national litigation for Fortune 100 companies and manages a 500+ person law firm all the while valuing and maintaining his family life. No one is too big or too small for him. I hope to accomplish the same balance.

E. Barney Robinson III

Firm: Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens & Cannada, PLLC

Years in practice: 19+

Primary area of practice:

Commercial litigation

Education: I graduated from Washington and Lee University, with a B.A. in European History in 1988, from the University of Mississippi School of Law with a J.D., magna cum laude, in 1991 and from the University of Cambridge (Magdalene College), with a LL.M., International Law, with Class I Honors, in 1992. I also am a graduate of the United States Army 5th Special Forces Group Basic Airborne School, the United States Army Armor Officer Basic Course, the United States Army Judge Advocate Officer Basic and Advanced Courses and the United States Army Intermediate-Level Education Program, (formerly known as Command and General Staff College).

Greatest challenge: The greatest challenge of my adult life has been balancing family, my law practice and my military service as an officer in the Mississippi Army National Guard. While serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2009, I was seriously injured and spent months in physical therapy regaining the ability to walk. That personal challenge has given me a new understanding of the challenges faced by the disabled, as well as by returning veterans.

Greatest achievement: My greatest achievement is having the privilege to serve my country as an officer in the military and the honor of deploying in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Advice: Broaden your horizons. It is easy to stay in one's comfort zone of family, friends, church and work. Additionally, live in today, not tomorrow. While long-term goals and planning are both responsible and necessary, solve today's problems before dwelling on those of tomorrow.

Path to leadership: Watch, listen and learn from others who have earned success. Once you have done so, step up to the plate and take responsibility for moving things forward.

Christopher Ray Fontan

Firm: Brunini, Grantham, Grower & Hewes, PLLC

Years in practice: 6

Primary area of practice: Labor & Employment

Education: I graduated from Mississippi College in 2001 (Summa Cum Laude) with Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. I graduated from Mississippi College School of Law (Summa Cum Laude) in 2006.

Greatest challenge: On a daily basis, I find my greatest challenge is to find the proper balance between my professional career and personal life. I have been a husband and father for nearly the same amount of time as I have been practicing law. Working to strike the proper balance between developing my legal practice and devoting time to my family is a constant endeavor.

Greatest achievement: The achievement I will remember the most is the day I was offered my first job out of law school. As law students, you invest so much time and effort into a process in the hopes that it will result in something tangible and ultimately worthwhile. I am fortunate to work with one of the preeminent law firms in the country, practicing the type of law I want to practice. In this day and age, not many attorneys can say that. I feel truly blessed.

Advice: Surround yourself with the right people. Whether it be friends, family or co-workers, if you surround yourself with positive people, people that truly have your best interests in their hearts, life is much easier.

Path to leadership: I have been fortunate enough to learn from some of the best attorneys in their fields. From litigation strategies to client interactions to life/work balance, learning these things from successful people cannot be understated.

David F. Maron

Firm: Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC

Primary Area of Practice: Business litigation and appellate practice primarily in commercial disputes and the defense of product liability, consumer fraud, and mass tort matters.





Years in Practice: 16

Education: University of Mississippi School of Law, cum laude 1995; Mississippi College, with high honors and special distinction 1992

Greatest Challenge: This is a cynical era of reality TV, the ever-ready lawyer joke and a distressing news cycle punctuated with legal troubles of the so-called famous. So the real challenge then is to help this generation and the next grasp the vital importance of the rule of law and of law itself as a profession charged with defending it, "liberty and justice for all" really means something. It requires looking to courageous role models who've defended and upheld the rule of law even when unpopular, if not dangerous.

Greatest Achievement: I've been privileged to be a part of several initiatives while serving as president of the Jackson Young Lawyers Association, the Federal Bar Association and in leadership roles with other professional organizations. And the 2006 Mississippi Bar Outstanding Young Lawyer Award is truly one of the highest professional recognitions I've received. But serving as the ABA Disaster Legal Assistance Coordinator for Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina had the most profound impact. The physical devastation and the stories from the many storm victims exposed a tremendous need for legal assistance to the poor. During the months after the storm, witnessing the personal and professional generosity of hundreds of pro bono lawyers who came from Mississippi and many other states showed me the selfless spirit of service that I believe remains at the core of our profession. There is still great need. But the thousands of hours of pro bono legal work of these men and women truly made a difference and proved what is possible.

Advice: It's true that diligence, responsibility and hard work are essential to success. But it's more important to first identify and focus on the principal objective. That's bigger than a "goal." Lewis Donelson, one of the founders of our firm, has reminded us of the maxim: "the good

is the enemy of the great." There will always be an endless array of good or useful things vying for your time and effort, but not all are necessary and, above all, none of them can ever have proper context or priority until the thing of paramount importance is first established. That proves true whether you're developing a litigation strategy or seeking to grow spiritually and personally (see Matthew 6:33). My favorite author C. S. Lewis puts it this way: "You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first." Understand your main effort; then give that your best.

Path to Leadership: I've been fortunate to have mentors who believed in me and over time entrusted me with increasingly greater responsibilities. But it all starts much earlier. My parents have been my most important mentors. My father immigrated to the US in 1951 as a 20-year-old refugee from Soviet occupied eastern Germany. He and my mother, who raised our family alone after his death, will always be my chief role models. I still learn from their example today. Their sacrifice, courage and faith are constant reminders of what I can do, and who I should be as a father, husband and lawyer.

L. Michele McCain

Firm: Adams and Reese LLP

Years in practice: 11

Primary area of practice: I practice with the firm's Energy and Environmental, Real Estate, and Forestry Teams

Education: Graduated from Delta State University in 1997 and from Mississippi College School of Law in 2000

Greatest challenge: The greatest challenge I face on a daily basis is managing a family and a full-time law practice at the same time.

Greatest achievement: I think my greatest challenge is also my greatest achievement. Although I continue to work at this and by no means have it perfected, I am able to manage my husband, my two children and my law practice with some success.

Advice: Identify mentors early in your practice and study those



mentors' work ethic, interaction with clients and their handling of office business and employees. I have been fortunate to have mentors along the way starting with Justice Jim Smith who I clerked for at the Mississippi Supreme Court my first year out of law school. Everyone has their own style to the practice of law, but the lessons you learn from mentors are priceless and provide far better guidance than anything else. If you do not have a mentor yet, find one (or three).

Path to leadership: My parents, particularly my dad, instilled in me from the beginning that I could do anything that I set my mind on doing. The encouragement of my parents was instrumental through school as I worked toward attending law school upon graduation. Other lawyers and their dedication to the

practice of law and to the service of their clients inspired me.

Will Manuel

Firm: Bradley Arant Boult Cummings

Years in Practice: 17

Primary areas of practice: General litigation/employment litigation

Education: Graduated magna cum laude from Mississippi State University; University of Virginia School of Law

Greatest challenge: My greatest challenge is dressing like a lawyer. Other than that, it's balancing the stress of litigation with the responsibility of being a parent. Yelling "objection overruled" at my children doesn't work that well.

Greatest achievement: My greatest achievement was running my first marathon. Two classmates told me that a fat redneck like me could



Primary area of practice: General and Commercial Litigation
Education: Graduated from Vanderbilt University Law School in 2001; Graduated from Howard University in 1998 with a B.A., magna cum laude, in Human Communication Studies

“I grew up in a family of volunteers who taught me by example the importance of a life of service.”
Tianna Hill Raby

Greatest challenge: I grew up in a family of volunteers who taught me by example the importance of a life of service. Throughout my years of practice, I have tried to honor this legacy. It has been difficult, however, to practice and still give the time that I would like to the organizations in which I'm involved. The good thing is that my firm has always been supportive of my community endeavors in supporting my many causes financially and allowing me to give my time. Nonetheless, striking a balance continues to be a lesson that I am constantly learning.

Greatest achievement: Fortunately, I have had many professional successes, but my greatest achievement thus far is a personal one. As a young lawyer, I had my youngest sister come live with me. I instantly became a parent of a headstrong high school student. Today she is a great mother and working on a Masters degree. She is smart, funny and compassionate and a great person. To be able to say that I, along with my parents, had a hand in that makes me prouder than words can express.

Advice: No matter what your position, show respect to everyone. Never be too busy to acknowledge a person's presence and hard work. In

every interaction, think of how you would like your family to be treated. It is a cliché, but in my life it has proven true that when you show respect, you generally get respect. Path to leadership: I truly believe that God, as he does for everyone, has a plan to prosper me. Because of this, I have had great opportunities. I have a long list of people who have positioned me for leadership. Professionally, I have several mentors at the firm who have encouraged and taught me, placed me in firm leadership positions and made it their business to grow my business. My path to leadership is not solely my own but is shared with all of the great people who have invested in me. ●

Choosing the Portico 10

Special thanks to Alan Lange, Dean Mike Maloney, Dean Jim Rosenblatt and Mark Wiggs for judging the competition.

The criteria for selection was based on the following:

- Accomplishments while practicing
- Community involvement
- Education and special awards
- Notable cases

To nominate a local attorney for 2013's PORTICO 10, e-mail editor@PORTICOjackson.com.

Photos on pages 36-41 were made at the Old Capitol Museum, administered by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

never do it. I went home, trained and did it.

Advice: Don't take yourself too seriously. The law is a noble profession, but we shouldn't act like it puts us above the fireman, policemen, nurses and doctors who deal with real stress every day.

Path to leadership: I have been lucky to have fantastic support from my fellow lawyers, my staff and my family. That support has always made me feel that I should give my best at my profession to earn their respect. Also, I think being tall has really helped me. Sometimes the answers to law's questions are on the high shelves.

Tianna Hill Raby

Firm: Forman Perry Watkins Krutz & Tardy, LLP

Years in practice: 10