

NC Favorite Things



By Kevin Ellis

Photography Becky & Bert VanderVeen

This marks the 25th class of *Business North Carolina's* Legal Elite, which honors the state's top lawyers as chosen by their peers.

Fewer than 1,100 made the list, compared with more than 30,000 attorneys regulated by the North Carolina State Bar. Those receiving the most votes in each of 17 categories are recognized as Hall of Fame members. More than 4,000 attorneys received at least one vote.

We asked the 17 category winners of this year's Legal Elite class to share words of wisdom they recall when things get tough. Some shared practical guidance, related to a specific decision or task. Others passed on more philosophical words of wisdom like "this too will pass" and "don't borrow trouble."

The messages came from both familiar sources, such as parents, mentors and diverse authorities, ranging from Theodore Roosevelt to rapper Kendrick Lamar, who performed at the most recent Super Bowl.

CATEGORY WINNERS

Legal Elite Business North Carolina 2026

ANTITRUST & COMPLEX BUSINESS DISPUTES | Robert King III
 APPELLATE | Preston Odom III
 BANKRUPTCY | Lance Paul Martin
 BUSINESS | Brian McMillan
 CONSTRUCTION | Carl Jeffress Burchette
 CORPORATE COUNSEL | Janet Thoren
 CORPORATE LAW | Marc Bishop
 CRIMINAL | Joe Zeszotarski
 EMPLOYMENT | Marc Gustafson

ENVIRONMENTAL | Billy Clarke
 FAMILY | Theresa Viera
 IMMIGRATION | Helen Parsonage
 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY | Shawna Cannon Lemon
 LITIGATION | Clint Morse
 REAL ESTATE | S. Leigh Rodenbough
 TAX AND ESTATE PLANNING | Sara Vizithum
 YOUNG GUNS | Zechariah Etheridge

Business North Carolina thanks the attorneys who took time to vote on their peers, and we appreciate those who participated in this feature.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity. Previous Hall of Fame members are listed by their firm at the time of selection, unless otherwise noted.

Business North Carolina contracted DataJoe Research to facilitate an online peer-voting and internet research process. DataJoe Research is a Boulder, Colorado-based software and research company specializing in data collection and verification, and it conducts various nominations across the nation on behalf of publishers. DataJoe confirmed that each published winner had, at the time of review, a current, active license status with the appropriate state regulatory board. If unable to find evidence of a lawyer's active registration with the state regulatory board, that lawyer was excluded from the list. In addition, we checked available public sources to identify lawyers disciplined for an infraction by the state regulatory board. They were excluded from the list. DataJoe presented the tallied results to *Business North Carolina* for its final review and adjustments.

Legal Elite

Business North Carolina 2026

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INCLUDED IN *BUSINESS*
NORTH CAROLINA'S
LEGAL ELITE**



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Business

Al Clyburn
Family

Phillip Cowan
Family

Richard Crow
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Angela Doughty
Intellectual

Chris Edwards
Appellate

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Litigation

Paul Fanning
Bankruptcy

Lily Faulconer
Bankruptcy

Alexandra Ferri
Construction

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Real Estate

Michelle Gonzalez
Real Estate

Justin Hill
Employment

Lee Hodge
Corporate Counsel

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Real Estate

X. Lightfoot
Employment

Avery Locklear
Employment

Evan Musselwhite
Construction

Michael Parrish
Litigation



Lauren Quinn
Family

Erica Rogers
Intellectual

John Sloan
Tax and Estate Planning

Jeff Stoddard
Construction

Jason Strickland
Construction

Matthew Thompson
Tax and Estate Planning

Hayley Wells
Employment

Devon Williams
Employment



Jeremy Wilson
Litigation

Cameron Winfrey
Real Estate



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See businessnc.com/special-sections/legal-elite
for an explanation of the standards of membership.

HALL OF FAME

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Real Estate Law

Jim Creekman
Corporate Counsel
(retired)

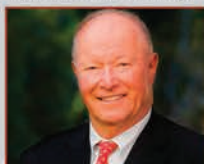
Brad Evans
Antitrust

Lance Martin*
Bankruptcy
*2026 Inductee

Will Oden
Employment

Amy Wang
Environmental

David Ward
Corporate Counsel
(Counsel Emeritus)



ANTITRUST - COMPLEX
BUSINESS DISPUTES

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Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Charlotte

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Manning Fulton & Skinner
Raleigh

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The Sanderson Law Firm
Raleigh

Gregory L. Skidmore
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Charlotte

Nathan C. Chase Jr.
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
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Brooks Pierce
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Allen Stahl + Kilbourne
Asheville

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Brooks Pierce
Raleigh

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Ward and Smith
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Green Lewis Brisbois
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J. Blakely Kiefer
Wyrick Robbin
Raleigh

Robert Daniel Gibson
Davis Hartman Wright Attorneys
New Bern

Jonathan McGirt
North Carolina Advocates For Justice
Raleigh

Rebecca K. Watts
Collins Family & Elder Law Group
Monroe

Erik Randall Zimmerman
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Chapel Hill

Michelle Ann Liguori
Ellis & Winters
Raleigh

M. Duane Jones
Hedrick Gardner Kincheloe Garofalo
Charlotte

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Wilmington

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Lorin J. Lapidus
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough
Winston-Salem

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Sigmon Lee Segui
Raleigh

Amie Carol Sivon
Ragsdale Liggett
Raleigh

Kip David Nelson
Fox Rothschild
Greensboro

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Raleigh

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Wake Forest Law
Winston-Salem

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McGuireWoods
Raleigh

John R. Wester
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Charlotte

Jill Schnabel Jackson
Jackson Family Law
Raleigh

Ashley Ann Crowder
Round 2 Legal
Charlotte

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Wyrick Robbins
Raleigh

Stephen D. Feldman
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Raleigh

Jonathan Y. Ellis
McGuireWoods
Raleigh

C. Todd Browning
Browning & Long
Charlotte

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Brooks Pierce
Greensboro

Tricia Shields
Campbell University
Raleigh

Charles E. Coble
Brooks Pierce
Raleigh

D. Martin Warf
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough
Raleigh

Brian C. Bernhardt
Fox Rothschild
Greensboro

David C. Hawisher
Roberts & Stevens Law
Asheville

Daniel F. E. Smith
Brooks Pierce
Greensboro

Jaye Elizabeth Bingham-Hinch
Batten McLamb Smith
Raleigh

Daniel M. Blau
Blau Hynson Law
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Charlotte

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 - Jacqueline M. Cajigal** Real Estate
 - Linda B. Sayed** Family
 - Jessie B. Boylan** Young Guns
- Back Row (Left to Right):
- Nathaniel H. Cook** Real Estate
 - J. Dickson McLean** Business
 - Jeffrey P. Keeter** Real Estate
 - Christopher K. Behm** Construction
 - Colin J. Tarrant** Litigation
 - Brody M. O'Neal** Young Guns

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ROBERT KING III

ANTITRUST and COMPLEX BUSINESS DISPUTES

BROOKS PIERCE

GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Charlotte

UNDERGRAD: UNC Charlotte

LAW SCHOOL: Wake Forest University School of Law, 1988

PRACTICED LAW: 37 years

FAMILY: Wife, Julie Davis, son, Rhyne King, and daughter, Grace King

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: A tie between Texas Pete and sweetpotatoes

FIRST JOB: Delivering newspapers on my bike taught me that I don't want to deliver newspapers on my bike.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Running or walking, depending on the condition of my knees; yoga; gardening; doing what my dog tells me to do.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Representing Wake Forest University in a wrongful death case, it was an honor to work with the folks at that school.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I was born with few talents, but arguing and writing are two of them.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: My screened-in porch, which looks out over several acres of woods.

BEST ADVICE: [Brooks Pierce partner] Ed Winslow on writing briefs: "No one wants to read what you are writing, so make it as easy as possible."

YOUR BEST ADVICE: I have stolen Ed's advice. Also, life and the practice of law are difficult enough without making things worse by being unnecessarily difficult and ugly to others. Read every document one more time than other people would think rational — you will often find mistakes that you missed the first few readings.

BEST WORK HABIT: I start early each day and make sure to tie off things like timesheets before the new day really starts.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Less stress, more ice cream

BIGGEST RISK: Concentrating on litigation vs. non-courtroom work. I am at heart an introvert and (when young), uncomfortable talking publicly; building a career based on dealing with stressful situations in front of a crowd is not in my DNA.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: The Who; Talking Heads; the Kinks



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Christopher G. Smith
Smith Anderson
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Allen Stahl + Kilbourne
Winston-Salem

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Ward and Smith
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Sasser Law Firm
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Congratulations
to our
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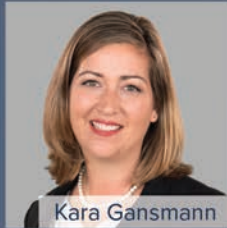
Steven Bader



Vince Eisinger



Patrick Flanagan



Kara Gansmann



Deedee Gasch



Dan Katzenbach



Rebecca Knudson



Patrick Mincey



Dominic Totman



Benton Toups



Marshall Wall

PRESTON ODOM III

APPELLATE

GARDNER SKELTON

CHARLOTTE

HOMETOWN: Tallahassee, Florida

UNDERGRAD: Florida State University

LAW SCHOOL: Florida State University School of Law, 1997

PRACTICED LAW: 28 years

FAMILY: Son, Elijah Odom, daughters, Grace and Avery Odom

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Mt. Olive products – I love pickled cucumbers, jalapeno peppers, banana peppers (hot and mild), okra, red peppers, and pepperoncini.

FIRST JOB: Mowing lawns taught me both the value of hard work and the severe nature of my allergies to most grasses.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Playing pickleball, walking or flatwater kayaking.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Helping the late Bill Diehl Jr. and John Buric represent driver Jeremy Mayfield in a drug-testing policy dispute against the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing. We managed to persuade U.S. District Court Judge Graham C. Mullen to issue a preliminary injunction against NASCAR.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER?: A “Street Law” class during my sophomore year in high school. I then decided during my junior year at Florida State that becoming a lawyer would align with both my desire to help people and my aptitude for critical thinking.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: It used to be Cork and Cask in Cornelius, which regrettably closed last year. Currently, Pins Mechanical in Charlotte.

BEST ADVICE: It's actually both the best and worst advice I've ever received: “Remember, there are 24 hours in a day.” The late Bill Diehl Jr.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Love yourself well so you can love others well.

BEST WORK HABIT: Being curious about everything – which sometimes spawns wild goose chases, also often fosters favorable results for my clients.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Integrating more standard processes in my practice to become more efficient.

BIGGEST RISK: Leaving my former firm, James, McElroy & Diehl, after nearly 25 years to join my new firm, Gardner Skelton, in August.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Run DMC



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Congratulations to Ryan Beaver, Matthew DeAntonio, Rob Marcus, Brian Rowilson, and Michael Wilson for being named to Business North Carolina's 2026 Legal Elite

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LANCE PAUL MARTIN BANKRUPTCY

Ward and Smith

ASHEVILLE

HOMETOWN: Chauvin, Louisiana

UNDERGRAD: Spring Hill College (Mobile, Alabama)

LAW SCHOOL: Tulane Law School, 1995

PRACTICED LAW: 31 years

FAMILY: Married to Anne Conquest for 30 years and two sons, Max and Leo

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: East Fork Pottery because Rice Krispies really pop in their bowls.

FIRST JOB: My dad was a crane operator for a drilling company in Louisiana and got me a summer job as a deckhand on a 65-foot crew boat moving personnel and supplies to rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. I learned how to tie knots, swab decks, navigate in fog and fend off roughnecks eager to haze a future "college boy."

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Long walks

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Representing victims of Hal Brown, who played the bongo drums for Up With People, then ran a Ponzi scheme in Biltmore Forest before taking residence at a federal prison in Talladega, Alabama. Talk about a life in full.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I was a liberal arts major in college. To paraphrase Robert Frost, when I graduated, two roads diverged in the woods. I took the one more traveled. Also, I liked the TV show "LA Law."

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Asheville

BEST ADVICE: Omit needless words. From "The Elements of Style" by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Prioritize your spouse's career over your own.

BEST WORK HABIT: I finish each workday with an empty email inbox. Most of the time, I can delete all my unread emails without consequence.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: A substantial increase in salary and reduction in billable hours based on receiving this honor.

BIGGEST RISK: I know people do it all the time, but moving from New Orleans to Greenville (North Carolina) in 1999.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: The Cure and I have the eyeliner stains to prove it.



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Moore & Van Allen
Charlotte

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Chapel Hill

Stephen M. Bennett
Arnold & Smith
Charlotte

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Dominic Totman
Cranfill Sumner
Raleigh

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Villmer Caudill
Charlotte

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Robertson & Associates
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Kliebert Law
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Sigmon Klein Bennington
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Jesse Hofers Jones
Fourscore Business Law
Raleigh

Peter Singh
Fourscore Business Law
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Allen Stahl + Kilbourne
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Wall Templeton Haldrup
Raleigh

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Poyner Spruill
Raleigh

Judson A. Welborn
Manning Fulton & Skinner
Raleigh

Robert Jason Herndon
NC DRC Certified Mediator
Raleigh

Rebecca Ann Knudson
Cranfill Sumner
Wilmington

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Maynard Nexsen
Raleigh

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Hamilton Stephens Steele + Martin
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Mays Johnson Law
Asheville

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Charlotte

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Windle | Terry | Bimbo
Charlotte

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Office Of John T Benjamin Jr.
Raleigh

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Ragsdale Liggett
Raleigh

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Cranfill Sumner
Raleigh

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Shumaker Loop & Kendrick
Charlotte

Bryan G. Scott
Baker Donelson
Winston-Salem

Steven Allen Bimbo
Windle | Terry | Bimbo
Charlotte

Kevin Anthony Marshall
Johnston Allison & Hord
Charlotte

Dave Levy
Gardner Skelton
Charlotte

Joseph W. Moss Jr.
Maynard Nexsen
Charlotte

Scott M. Tyler
Moore & Van Allen
Charlotte

David C. Kimball
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
Charlotte

John Thomas Floyd
Moore & Van Allen
Charlotte

Whitaker Boykin Rose
Rosenwood Rose & Litwak
Charlotte

Benjamin Thomas Buskirk
Poyner Spruill
Raleigh

Adam Reese Denobriga
James Denobriga
Charlotte

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Maynard Nexsen
Greensboro

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Ragsdale Liggett
Raleigh

John I. Mabe Jr.
Maynard Nexsen
Raleigh

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BRIAN J. McMILLAN BUSINESS

BROOKS PIERCE

GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Manhattan Beach, California

UNDERGRAD: University of Denver

LAW SCHOOL: UCLA School of Law, 1996

PRACTICED LAW: 29 years

FAMILY: Wife, Caroline, three stepchildren, Alexandra, Harrison and Carter

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: "Fall"—I grew up in southern California and never really experienced the season until I moved to North Carolina. I love the colors of fall. I hate cleaning up the leaves.

FIRST JOB: Assistant buyer for Case Goods, a 15-store chain in southern California, dealing with furniture. Buyers run their own businesses within the larger store businesses, and so that job taught me every aspect of running a business: inventory control and purchasing, advertising, staffing, cost control.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Walking in the woods with my dog, Daisy.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: NCDOT v. 74 Holdings, et al. It was an eminent domain case in Brunswick County. NCDOT offered our client \$140,000. The jury gave us \$2.6 million plus interest.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: After working in sales and marketing for eight years, I wanted a different intellectual challenge.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Wrightsville Beach

BEST ADVICE: My father: "Success" equals achieving to the best of your abilities; accomplishing as much as you have the ability to accomplish; and working as hard as necessary to achieve your potential.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Do not worry about things or people that you can't control.

BEST WORK HABIT: Attention to detail.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Involve the firm's associates more to try and pass my expertise in a couple of niche areas to the next generation.

BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL RISK YOU'VE TAKEN: At age 36, I left a job where I was successful and making a significant amount of money to attend law school and change careers.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Loggins & Messina or the Eagles.



Allen L. West
Hamilton Stephens Steele & Martin
Charlotte

Ward Davis
Bell Davis & Pitt
Charlotte

W. James Johnson
Mays Johnson Law
Asheville

Jeffrey Anderson
Long James Denobriga Long
Charlotte

Jason Strickland
Ward and Smith
Raleigh

Ryan Lee Beaver
Bradley
Charlotte

Brian M. Rowlson
Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings
Charlotte

Aaron Lay
Hamilton Stephens Steele & Martin
Charlotte

Benjamin C. DeCelle
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson
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Steven C. Hemric
Spilman Thomas & Battle
Winston-Salem

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Ward and Smith
Raleigh

Melissa Dewey Brumback
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Raleigh

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Womble Bond Dickinson
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Maynard Nexsen
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CARL JEFFRESS BURCHETTE CONSTRUCTION

ROSENWOOD, ROSE & LITWAK

CHARLOTTE

HOMETOWN: Charlotte

UNDERGRAD: University of Alabama

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 2014

PRACTICED LAW: 11 years

FAMILY: Wife, Katie Burchette, daughter, Clara, 4, and son, Jack, 1

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Texas Pete tastes great on everything. North Carolina barbecue — making it, visiting the restaurants and eating it with friends — reminds me of home and family.

FIRST JOB: Working as a laborer for Crowder Construction in Charlotte taught me the value of hard work and the teamwork required on a construction project.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Fly fishing in the mountains.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I tried a case that resulted in a settlement prior to jury deliberation. We were able to have six members of the jury come back, sit in the box, and have them deliberate in front of all attorneys and the judge on the major issues and give us feedback. We then had the judge give us feedback. It was a learning experience on what worked and didn't work at trial.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER?: Growing up in a family full of attorneys, I saw the value an attorney can bring in helping clients solve problems. I really enjoy helping clients at all stages, particularly when negotiating and drafting contracts with the benefit of having litigated the issues you're trying to avoid.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Asheville

BEST ADVICE: Don't borrow trouble. I grew up hearing it from my parents. It's a reminder to focus on the issues in front of you that you can control or work to solve.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Tom Hanks said, "This too shall pass." Give yourself grace to understand tough times in a case or in life will pass. Take advantage of the times when work is slow, and celebrate even the little victories you or others experience.

BEST WORK HABIT: Taking a walk around the block to get up, move and clear my head.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Pick key times during the work day to check emails.

BIGGEST RISK: Joining a small firm my partners started.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Red Hot Chili Peppers.



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NORTH CAROLINA REAL ESTATE COMMISSION

RALEIGH

HOMETOWN: Fayetteville

UNDERGRAD: Pembroke State University

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 1988

PRACTICED LAW: 37 years

FAMILY: Husband, Bruce Crisp, daughter Kristine, son Zach, stepsons Austin and Logan. Dogs Bailey and Easton.

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Carolina Hurricanes. My son and stepsons played hockey in various leagues and travel leagues and all three played in college. I've spent a lot of very early mornings in some very cold ice rinks.

FIRST JOB: Making and dishing out soft-serve yogurt at a little stand in Fayetteville. I learned a lot about customer service and solving problems because the machines broke down a lot. Most of the time I was working alone. Those are the times you learn the best and the most.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: It's hard to be stressed when you get outside, look around and feel a little sunshine.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: A broker allowed a tenant to move into a property without permission from the absent owner, an older woman. The owner found out when the neighbors started gossiping because he had moved a heart-shaped jacuzzi onto the property. She was embarrassed to think her neighbors thought the jacuzzi was hers. She drove to Raleigh to personally thank me.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I was a business major and when my business law class ended, the professor gifted me with the LSAT prep course materials. He pointed me in a direction, and I followed the path all the way.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: It became a dream for us to build a house on Lake Gaston. We moved in last year, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. The sunsets are amazing, and it's hard to be stressed when you can grab dinner and go out on the lake for a few hours.

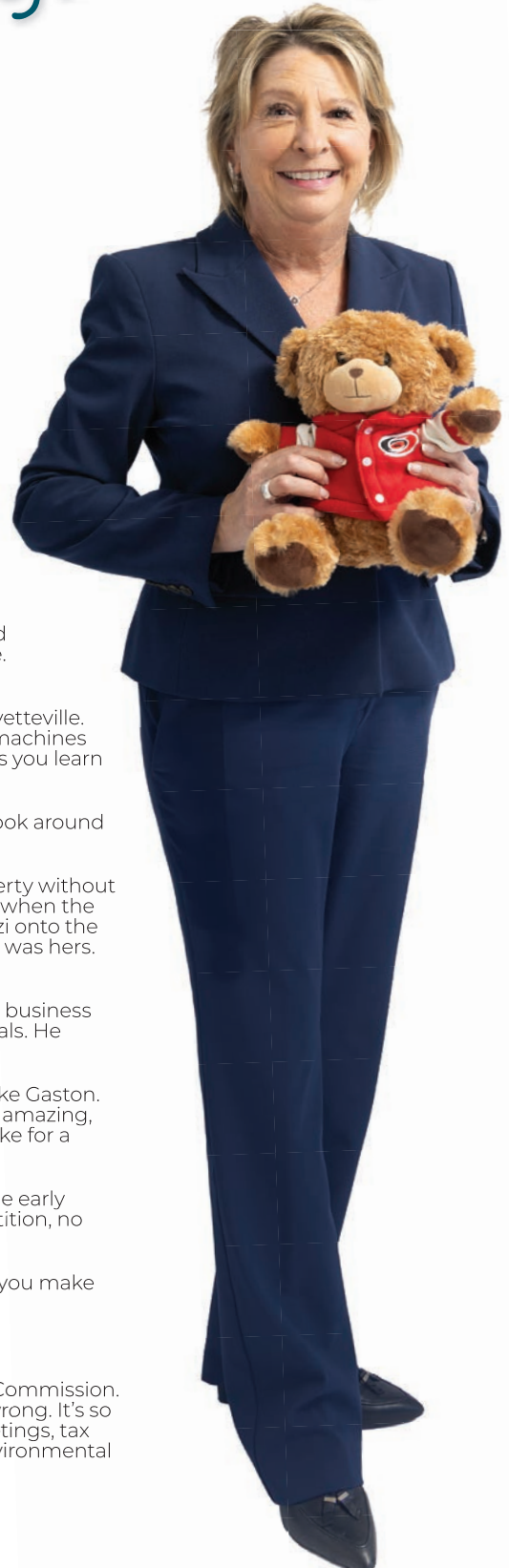
BEST ADVICE: A partner in the firm I worked for, Doug Hargrave, taught me early on that being the most prepared person in the room equalizes the competition, no matter how well-known or how long they have been practicing.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: You only learn from your mistakes. Own them when you make them and fix things. They are there to teach you.

BEST WORK HABIT: Always over prepare.

BIGGEST RISK: I left private practice and went to work for the Real Estate Commission. I wanted a better work-life balance, but worried it would box me in. I was wrong. It's so much more than real estate. It's employment law, open records, open meetings, tax law, insurance, contracts, timeshares, legislative issues, education laws, environmental laws. On any given day, I need to know at least a little about a lot of things.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: The Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen still top my list.



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Hatch Little Bunn
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BROOKS PIERCE

GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Chapel Hill

UNDERGRAD: UNC Chapel Hill

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 1984

PRACTICED LAW: 41 years

FAMILY: Wife, Diane, adult children, Scott and Sarah

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: My formative years, ages 9 to 24, were spent in Chapel Hill, which exposed me to experiences and opportunities I otherwise would not have been exposed to, much less explored.

FIRST JOB: Weekend dishwasher and busboy at Ye Olde Waffle Shop taught me I should pursue work that was more mental than physical in its demands.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Running for many years, and tennis for many more.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Three years out of law school, represented the seller in a large, complicated business sale transaction that was planned, negotiated and closed over a period of about one year. I still consider it to have been one of the most intense transactions I've ever handled. After 38 years, the client is still with our firm.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: It matched my relative strengths: writing, reasoning and counseling.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Chapel Hill

BEST ADVICE: "Go to law school." My father's immediate response during my junior year when I was debating law school or business school.

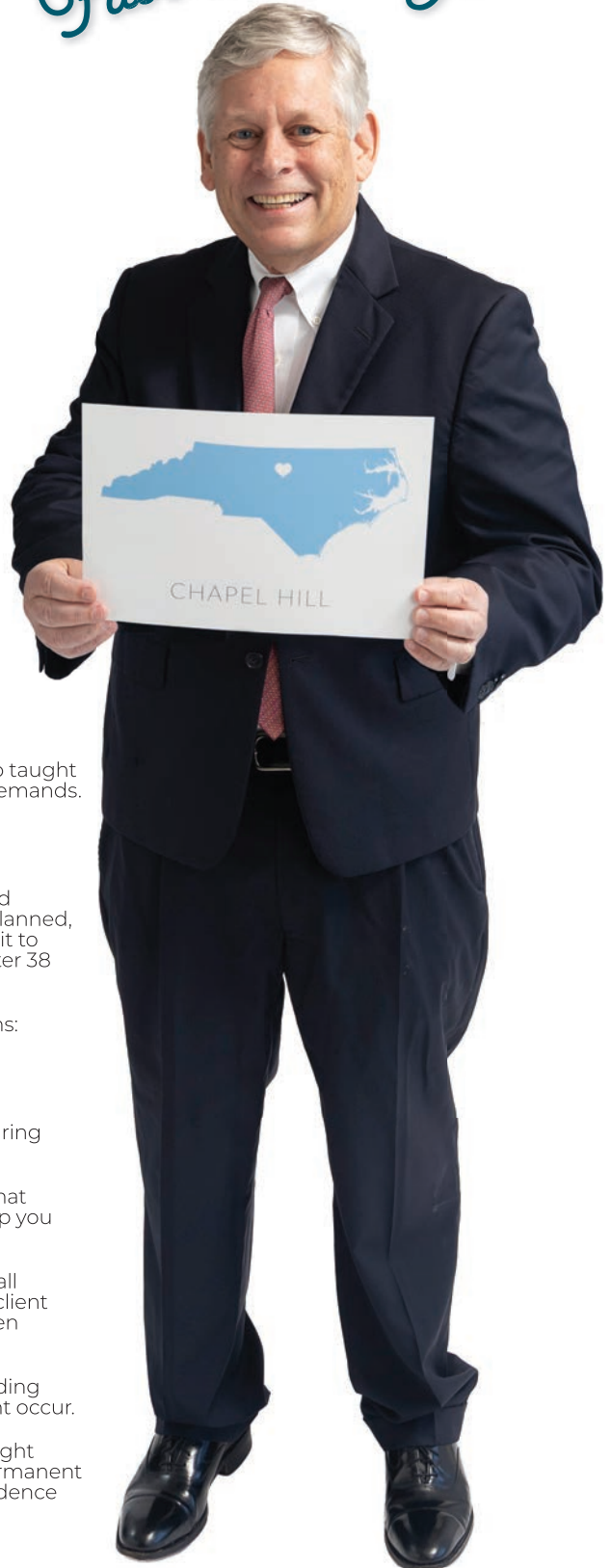
YOUR BEST ADVICE: Pursue a variety of relationships and activities that are meaningful to you. They will make your life more fulfilling and help you become a more effective lawyer.

BEST WORK HABIT: Trying to put myself in the shoes of the client in all communications, and being proactive in trying to stay current on all client matters, large and small, so as to reduce the risk of falling behind when unexpected matters arise.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Work on developing a clearer plan regarding "retirement," whatever form that might take and whenever that might occur.

BIGGEST RISK: At the time, it felt like a risk joining Brooks Pierce straight after law school. I clerked with two other firms that had extended permanent offers. I had less firsthand knowledge of Brooks Pierce and less confidence that I would meet the firm's expectations.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: The Who



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Worm Law
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The Noble Law
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JOE ZESZOTARSKI CRIMINAL

GAMMON & ZESZOTARSKI

RALEIGH

HOMETOWN: Green Brook, New Jersey

UNDERGRAD: Muhlenberg College
(Allentown, Pennsylvania)

LAW SCHOOL: Wake Forest, 1994

PRACTICED LAW: 31 years

FAMILY: Wife Dana, daughters Anne and Amelia, dog Ted.

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Bertie County peanuts salted in the shell. Good and good for you.

FIRST JOB: Laborer for a plumbing company

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: My doctor would want me to say exercise, but red wine is probably more accurate.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Tie between representing my law partner in the NC Supreme Court when the district attorney filed a petition to try to force disclosure of what his deceased client had told him in a murder investigation. (I lost.) Also, representing Dr. Jeffrey MacDonald in the Fourth Circuit on a habeas corpus petition to overturn his convictions for the murder of his family that took place in 1970 (I lost). I guess I learn more from the losses than the wins.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER?: I ask myself that question most every day.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Back porch of our family's condo at Atlantic Beach.

BEST ADVICE: Seeing my father work multiple jobs for meager pay on days, nights and weekends in an effort to support a large family. It leaves an impression on a young person.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: I stole this from (the late Sampson County attorney and judge) Doug Parsons. I remind (almost) every criminal defendant client who wants to testify at trial, "I can probably explain this to the jury better than you can — that is why you hired a lawyer."

BEST WORK HABIT: My motto is that no one ever drowned in sweat.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Resuming my sorry golf game after a 15 year or so hiatus.

BIGGEST RISK: Leaving a comfortable partnership at a great firm to start my own firm, when I had a small child and a pregnant spouse.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: That is easy for someone who grew up in New Jersey — Bruce Springsteen.



Michael A. Kornbluth
Kornbluth Ginsberg Law Group
Durham

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For more than 25 years, Robertson & Associates has represented North Carolina businesses at the intersection of construction, commercial real estate, and complex litigation. We work with owners, developers, contractors, and growing companies who need counsel that understands how projects are built, deals are structured, and disputes are resolved.

Those qualities define our firm—and the lawyers who lead it. We proudly congratulate Managing Partner R. Lee Robertson, Jr. and Attorney Jacob A. Johnson on being named *Business North Carolina* Legal Elite honorees.



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& ASSOCIATES
Attorneys & Counselors at Law

2730 East W.T. Harris Boulevard, Suite 101 Charlotte, North Carolina | 704-597-5774 | www.rlrobertson.com

Legal Elite

Business North Carolina  2026

MARC GUSTAFSON EMPLOYMENT

BELL, DAVIS & PITT

CHARLOTTE

HOMETOWN: Monroe

UNDERGRAD: UNC Chapel Hill

LAW SCHOOL: Indiana University Maurer School of Law

PRACTICED LAW: 24 years

FAMILY: Wife, Jane, children, Knox, 12, and William, 10

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Lance crackers, or as my dad would say, a pack of nabs. They bring back so many childhood memories.

FIRST JOB: Cutting grass in my neighborhood. Doing the work wasn't always the hard part, getting paid sometimes was.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Tennis

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I represented a large national jewelry chain where the CEO stood in his conference room and told us he would fire the person responsible for the fraud that had been committed. A few days later, we were in the same conference room firing him. He went to jail.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: The people I looked up to in my hometown were lawyers.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Top of Grandfather Mountain

BEST ADVICE: "Don't get cute," my Dad would say.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: "Don't worry about anything because it will change. For the same reason, you should enjoy things while they last."

BEST WORK HABIT: Responsiveness

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: To work out more during the workday

BIGGEST RISK: Sold an old Land Rover to a partner I worked for.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Pearl Jam

NC Favorite Things



Penelope Lazarou Hefner
Sodoma Law
Charlotte

R. Maria Hawkins
Wyrick Robbins
Raleigh

Brittany Capps Hall
Block Crouch Keeter Behm & Sayed
Wilmington

Linda B. Sayed
Block Crouch Keeter Behm & Sayed
Wilmington

Susan S. Simos
Craig Jenkins Liipfert & Walker
Winston-Salem

J. Albert Clyburn
Ward and Smith
Wilmington

Mark D. Riopel
Hamilton Stephens Steele + Martin
Charlotte

Monica R. Guy
Kurtz Whitley Guy Sanders & Rainey
Winston-Salem

Irene Patrice King
King Collaborative Family Law
Charlotte

John Paul Tsahakis
James, McElroy & Diehl
Charlotte

Lindsey S. Dasher
Dasher Law
Matthews

Maren Tallent Funk
Godley Glazer & Funk
Statesville

Jordan Griffin
Leitner Bragg & Griffin
Monroe

Sarah Dees Miranda
Miranda Law Firm
Fayetteville

Lauren Vaughn Lewis
Essex Richards
Charlotte

Bennett D. Rainey
Kurtz Whitley Guy Sanders & Rainey
Winston-Salem

Grace Massarelli
Gailor Hunt Davis Taylor & Gibbs
Raleigh

A. Michael Davis Jr.
Davis & Davis Attorneys at Law
Salisbury

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Bosquez Porter Family Law
Raleigh

Charles W. Coltrane
Coltrane & Overfield
Greensboro

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Connell & Gelb
Raleigh

Michael S. Harrell
Manning Fulton & Skinner
Raleigh

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Rik Lovett & Associates
Raleigh

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Ghama Law
Asheville

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Cordes Law
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Freedom Law NC
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McIlveen Family Law
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The Armstrong Law
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The Rosen Law Firm
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Law Office Of Tamela T Wallace
Charlotte

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Montford Family Law
Asheville

Rebecca Wofford
Wofford Law
Charlotte

Jennifer M. Bradley
Triangle Smart Divorce
Cary

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Smith Debnam Narron Drake
Saintsing & Myers Raleigh

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Modern Legal|Viera Legal
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Sodoma Law
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Tin Fulton Walker & Owen
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Arnold & Smith
Charlotte

Paul Doughton Horton
Sodoma Law
Charlotte

Carolyn Love joy Krueger-Andes
Krueger-Andes Law
Charlotte

Danielle Jessica Walle
Marcellino & Tyson
Charlotte

Tara Austin Harrawood
Marcellino & Tyson
Charlotte

Lindsay Woodard Willis
Rosen Law
Raleigh

Dara Duncan Larson
Duncan Larson Law
Charlotte

Wesley Peter
Gelb Connell & Gelb
Raleigh

Lillie Ashworth
Soni Brendle
Charlotte

Clara Annlglich
Bell Davis & Pitt
Winston-Salem

Carly G. Baker
Wake Family Law Group
Raleigh

Madeline Hurley
The Mueller Law Firm
Raleigh

Amy Lynn Britt
Parker Bryan Family Law
Raleigh

Lindsey Easterling
Easterling Law
Matthews

James W. Lea III
The Lea/Schultz Law Firm
Wilmington

Robin J. Stinson
Bell Davis & Pitt
Winston-Salem

Barbara R. Morgenstern
Coltrane & Overfield
Greensboro

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Siemens Family Law Group
Asheville

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Triangle Smart Divorce
Cary

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TO OUR LEGAL ELITE IN FAMILY LAW

Jeffrey Marshall

Marshall & Taylor, PLLC
Family Law & Divorce Attorneys

If you need help resolving legal issues in family law or divorce in Raleigh, please contact Jeffrey Marshall today to learn more about what he can do for you. A North Carolina State Bar certified specialist with over 28 years of experience.

At Marshall & Taylor PLLC, we have the skills, knowledge, and experience to provide the guidance you are looking for.

MARSHALL & TAYLOR PLLC | Family Law and Divorce Attorneys
221 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27603 | 919-822-8176 | marshalltaylorlawfirm.com

Jeffrey Marshall - Legal Elite 2025, 2022 and 2021

BILLY CLARKE ENVIRONMENTAL

ROBERTS & STEVENS

ASHEVILLE

HOMETOWN: Fairview, just outside Asheville

UNDERGRAD: Princeton University

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 1982

PRACTICED LAW: 43 years

FAMILY: Wife, Cynthia Williams Clarke, five children, seven grandsons

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Many years ago, I would have said tobacco. Today I will say sweetpotatoes

FIRST JOB: Working on the family farm, milking cows, baling hay, cutting silage. It taught me the value of hard work and working together with family and neighbors.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Hiking and being outdoors with my dog, Prince. Wife, Cindy, and son, Will, also pictured.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: We had to try a sedimentation and erosion case twice because the Court of Appeals affirmed the first verdict on liability but sent the damages issue back for retrial. We tried it again and got more money the second time

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: Many of the people I knew growing up who were doing good things in North Carolina were lawyers, not necessarily practicing ones. I thought I might practice for a few years, then do something else, but here I am 40-plus years later.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Too many to name. Many places in the west, but North Carolina has so many interesting and beautiful places, including the cities and towns.

BEST ADVICE: My long-time partner and mentor, Jack Stevens, told me, "Do good work, and the rest will follow."

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Sometimes when I get discouraged about the position a client finds itself or him or herself in, I remind myself and others, "They got themselves in this mess. My job is to do the best I can to get them out."

BEST WORK HABIT: Do not take yourself too seriously.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Work a little less.

BIGGEST RISK: Deciding to work in Asheville in 1982 when unemployment was 11% and the town looked like it was closing down.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Creedence Clearwater Revival and Johnny Cash



Jeffrey E. Marshall
Marshall & Taylor
Raleigh

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Wofford Law
Charlotte

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Wilmington

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Law Office Of Julia M Pendleton
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Mulligan Attorneys
Wilmington

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The Lea/Schultz Law Firm
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Shannan Barclay Tuorto
Tuorto Family Law
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Krueger-Andes Law
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Caulder & Valentine Law
Shelby

Josh Valentine
Caulder & Valentine Law
Shelby

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Benton Family Law
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Raleigh

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Parker Bryan Family Law
Raleigh

Carolyn T. Peacock
Peacock Family Law
New Bern

Katherine Ann Frye
Oak City Family Law
Raleigh

Katherine Hardersen King
Wake Family Law Group
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Legal Aid Of North Carolina
Raleigh

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Gailor Hunt Davis Taylor & Gibbs
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Lauren Quinn
Ward and Smith
New Bern

Phillip Cowan
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Business North Carolina 2026

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Three Best Rated
Best Divorce Lawyers Ranked by Three Best Rated

Legal Elite

Business North Carolina  2026

NC Favorite Things

THERESA VIERA FAMILY

MODERN LEGAL

CHARLOTTE

HOMETOWN: Multiple cities and towns, including Edison, New Jersey; Washington Heights in New York City; Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania; Cary

UNDERGRAD: George Washington University

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 2012

PRACTICED LAW: 13 years

FAMILY: Husband, Sangeet

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Cheerwine. I don't drink soda often, but when I do, I prefer the best.

FIRST JOB: Retail, where patience and customer care are the cornerstone of service.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Meditation

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Every case where a child is in a safe, healthier situation afterward.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: To help children and families.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: On my rooftop deck

BEST ADVICE: Be humble, sit down — Kendrick Lamar

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Consistency allows you to overcome most, if not all, obstacles.

BEST WORK HABIT: Deep breaths

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Grow my business and my family.

BIGGEST RISK: Open a law firm in the midst of a pandemic.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: I became a professional ballroom dancer, so anything dance related.



LITIGATION

CLINTON S. MORSE

Brooks Pierce
Greensboro

Vince Eisinger
Cranfill Sumner
Raleigh

Harrison A. Lord
Lord & Lindley
Charlotte

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Fitzgerald Litigation
Winston-Salem

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Raleigh

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Villmer Caudill
Charlotte

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Leitner Bragg & Griffin
Monroe

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Fox Rothschild
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Greensboro

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Winston-Salem

R. Susanne Todd
Johnston Allison & Hord
Charlotte

William Kirk Sanders
Hendrick Bryant Nerhood
Sanders Otis Winston-Salem

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Roberson Haworth & Reese
High Point

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Parker Bryan Britt Tanner & Jenkins
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David Self Law
Cornelius

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McIlveen Family Law Firm
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Spidell Family Law
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Charlotte Collaborative Divorce
Charlotte

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Carter Arnold & Smith
Charlotte

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Wray Law Firm
Charlotte

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James, McElroy & Diehl
Charlotte

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Camino Law
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Ward Family Law Group
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Noland Arnold & Smith
Charlotte

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Tharrington Smith
Raleigh

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Winston-Salem

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Vestal Immigration Law
Davidson

David J. Garrett
Maynard Nexsen
Raleigh

Steven H. Garfinkel
Garfinkel Immigration
Charlotte

Douglas Bradley
Clawson and Staubes
Charlotte

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Aziz Law Firm
Charlotte

Hannah Faith Little
Garfinkel Immigration
Charlotte

Lindsey Taylor Goehring
Charlotte Immigration
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Mary Lynn Tedesco
Tedesco Legal
Charlotte

Colleen Forcina Molner
Garfinkel Immigration
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McKinney Immigration
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Jackson Lewis
Raleigh

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Law Office Of Vanessa A Gonzalez
Wilmington

Rosa Maria Corriveau
Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak &
Stewart Raleigh

Ann Robertson
Robertson Immigration
Raleigh

Jordan Grace Forsythe
Cauley Forsythe Immigration
Charlotte

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Spahn Law
Charlotte

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Jaimes Law Office
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Allen Pinnix
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Helen Tarokic Law
Wilmington

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Lopez Law
Charlotte

Nam Douglass
Garfinkel Immigration
Charlotte

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Eva Gullick Frongello
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Raleigh

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Schwartz Law
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Shumaker Loop & Kendrick
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Withrow Terranova
Apex

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Morningstar Law Group
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Winston-Salem

Darrell A. Fruth
Smith Anderson
Raleigh

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Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton
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NK Patent Law
Raleigh

Ani Agrawal
NK Patent Law
Raleigh

Emmett Weindruch
Holland & Knight
Charlotte

Doug Meier
NK Patent Law
Raleigh

HELEN PARSONAGE IMMIGRATION

ELLIOT MORGAN PARSONAGE

WINSTON-SALEM

HOMETOWN: London

UNDERGRAD: University of Birmingham,
United Kingdom

LAW SCHOOL: North Carolina Central,
2006

PRACTICED LAW: 19 years

FAMILY: Husband, three sons and a
granddaughter.

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Seagrove pottery.
I am a collector of art pottery.

FIRST JOB: Being a line server in a cafeteria
taught me that's not what I want to do.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Spinning and
knitting

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: In *Nasrallah
v. Barr*, I was successful in a U.S. Supreme
Court case in 2020 where my client, Nidal
Khalid Nasrallah, sought protection using
Convention Against Torture in a court battle
not to send him back to Lebanon.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I
love picking issues apart and winning
arguments.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT:
Blue Ridge Mountains or Oak Island

BEST ADVICE: Just do it.

BEST WORK HABIT: Keeping a balance and
not working evenings or weekends

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Cutting back some.

BIGGEST RISK: Going back to law school with three children at home.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Pink Floyd



Henry L. Kitchin Jr.
McGuireWoods
Raleigh

Tricia M. Derr
Lincoln Derr
Charlotte

Joshua B. Durham
Bell Davis & Pitt
Charlotte

Thomas Hamilton Segars
Ellis & Winters
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Lord & Lindley
Charlotte

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Law Offices Of James Scott Farrin
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Brooks Pierce
Raleigh

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Brooks Pierce
Charlotte

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Young Moore and Henderson
Raleigh

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Rayburn Cooper & Durham
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The Van Winkle Law
Asheville

Shannon R. Joseph
Morningstar Law
Raleigh

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Moore & Van Allen
Charlotte

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Law Offices Of Lori Keeton
Charlotte

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Noah Breen Abrams
Abrams & Abrams
Raleigh

Congratulations to the Shumaker attorneys named to *Business North Carolina's* Legal Elite! Thank you for your dedication to Shumaker's century-long mission to help our clients and communities move forward with confidence.



Shumaker

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Trey Baker
J. Jack Santaniello
Christina Davidson Trimmer
Rhett N. Butler

Patrick B. Horne
Andrew S. Culicerto
Ronald D.P. Bruckmann
S. Alex Long, Jr.

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SHAWNA CANNON LEMON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

STANEK LEMON CROUSE + MEEKS

CHARLOTTE

HOMETOWN: Columbia, South Carolina

UNDERGRAD: Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina; doctorate in biomedical science/pharmacology from the University of South Carolina

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 2001

PRACTICED LAW: 24 years

FAMILY: Husband of 31 years, Brian, children Claudia, 29, Grayson, 26 and Nicholas, 21

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Basketball. I'm a die-hard football mom, but I love basketball and we have so much talent in the Triangle.

FIRST JOB: In high school, I was on the Rich's (now Macy's) Teen Board as a student ambassador. Through this experience, I discovered my passion for empowering other women.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Watching "Days of Our Lives" and "The Young and The Restless" like I did with my grandparents when I was growing up. Makes me feel safe and deeply loved.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I had to convince an examiner at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Alexandria, Virginia, to drink a bottle of Gatorade to evaluate my client's drug properly after first convincing security to let me bring it inside the building. I cleared every hurdle and the patent was issued.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: Law was my first passion, even though it was my second career. I remember playing the role of advocate on behalf of other students in elementary school.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Golf & spa at The Grandover Resort in Greensboro.

BEST ADVICE: My mentor [Raleigh attorney] Mike Sajovec told me early in my career that client development takes time and not to be discouraged by unsuccessful attempts.

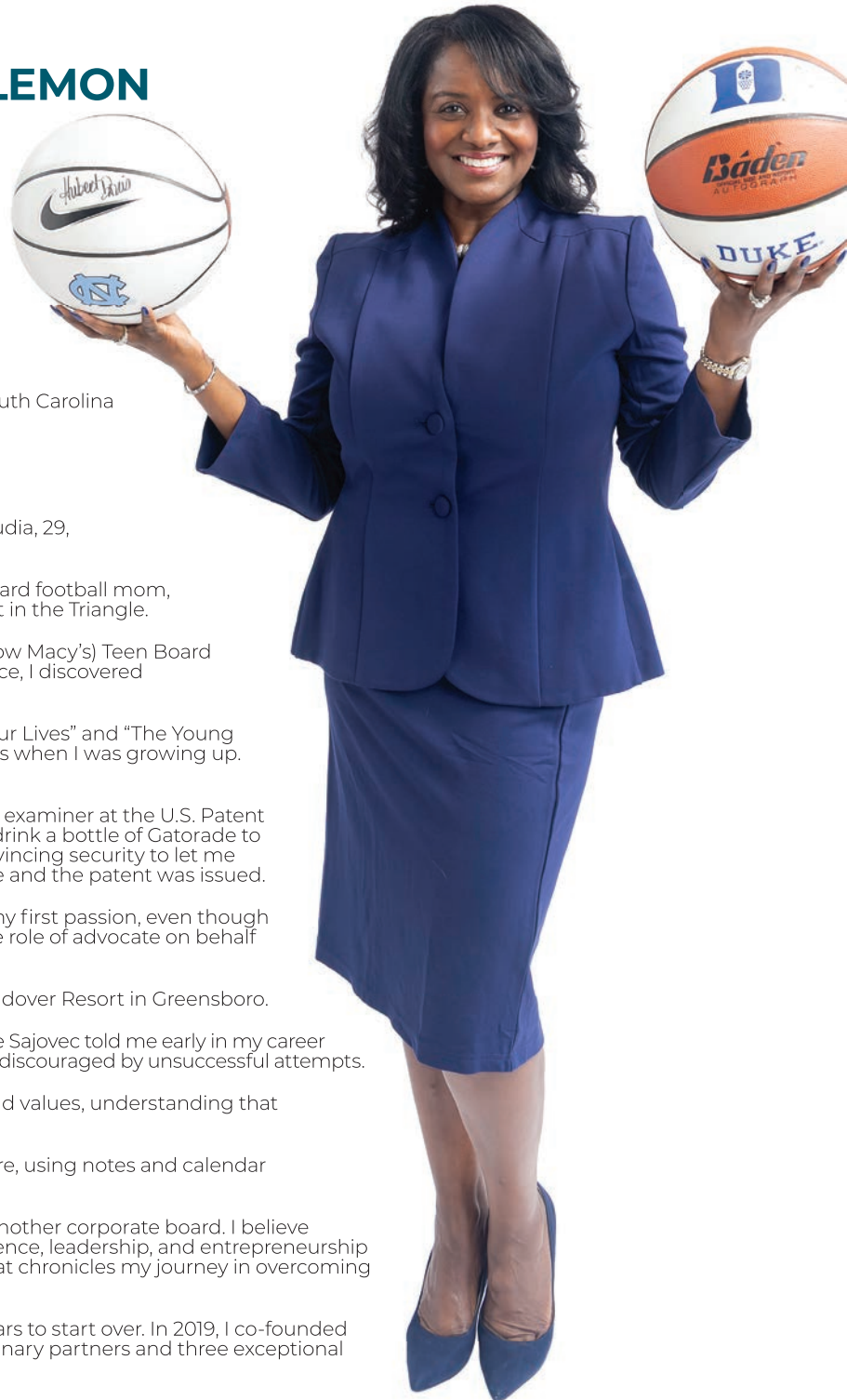
YOUR BEST ADVICE: Stay true to your morals and values, understanding that sometimes only a few will stand with you.

BEST WORK HABIT: Plan my day the night before, using notes and calendar reminders to set goals and prioritize tasks.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: I would like to join another corporate board. I believe that my multidisciplinary background in law, science, leadership, and entrepreneurship would be an asset. I also want to write a book that chronicles my journey in overcoming workplace toxicity.

BIGGEST RISK: Leaving a firm in 2016 after 16 years to start over. In 2019, I co-founded an intellectual property firm with three extraordinary partners and three exceptional support staff members.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Prince



CONGRATULATIONS

BUSINESS NORTH CAROLINA 2026 LEGAL ELITE

DAVIS & DAVIS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW, PC

Family Law
Criminal Law
Civil Litigation



James A. Davis



Jennifer Davis Hammond



Timothy J. Readling



James A. Davis, II



N. Paxton Butler



A. Michael Davis, Jr.



Phillip A. Vargo, II



Justin W. Freeman

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GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Grew up in Roanoke, Virginia, as a seventh-generation Texan born in Houston.

UNDERGRAD: James Madison University

LAW SCHOOL: Wake Forest University School of Law, 2008

PRACTICED LAW: 17 years

FAMILY: Wife, Diana Morse, Shepperd Morse, 12, Brady, 9

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: The American Chestnut. I love being a part of the effort to bring this tree back that was nearly wiped out by a terrible blight in the early 1900s. Contributing what you can to a cause, even if success will only be obtained decades in the future, is inspiring.

FIRST JOB: Being a Division I tennis player taught me goals can only be reached with dedication, focus, hard work and desire.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Tending to the chestnut trees at our property in Grayson County, Virginia.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I get the best result by taking on my client's problem as if it is my own. To that end, it is impossible to choose one "most memorable case," because, win or lose, each of my clients become part of my family for that case.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: As a third-generation lawyer, I believe that my dad, perhaps unwittingly, trained me to be a lawyer from a young age. -All the work he put in making me speak in public, keeping arguments logical and teaching me about competition made me an attorney.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Proehlific Park to watch Brady play football. And the tracks and cross-country courses to watch Shep run for the High Point Blaze.

BEST ADVICE: From Theodore Roosevelt: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena . . . so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat." One of the many quotes Dad made us memorize.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Do not be afraid to lose. Litigation is inherently risky. Advise your clients about the risks, and then go and do everything you can to win.

BEST WORK HABIT: Fighting for what I believe is important, while relaxing when facing the insubstantial. Also, giving high fives around to my office teammates.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Get more associates arguing matters earlier.

BIGGEST RISK: Taking on \$100,000 in student-loan debt to become an attorney.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Dave Matthews Band



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Allen & Buie
Charlotte

S. LEIGH RODENBOUGH IV REAL ESTATE

BROOKS PIERCE

GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Greensboro

UNDERGRAD: UNC Chapel Hill

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 1980

PRACTICED LAW: 45 years

FAMILY: Married Melanie Hyatt Rodenbough in 1980, and lost Melanie to metastatic breast cancer in 2021; I found new love and married Kelly Peterson in November 2024; four children, Andy Rodenbough, Anna L. Rodenbough, Libby Rodenbough, MK Rodenbough; two grandchildren

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Mipso, the Chapel Hill-based band that my daughter Libby, has toured with for about 13 years.

FIRST JOB: Priming tobacco at age 12 and caring for 20,000 adolescent chickens for local farmers in the Rockingham County town of Madison. You can not imagine the amount of methane produced by 20,000 chickens.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Working out in the morning with my trainer, Nicholas Kimps.

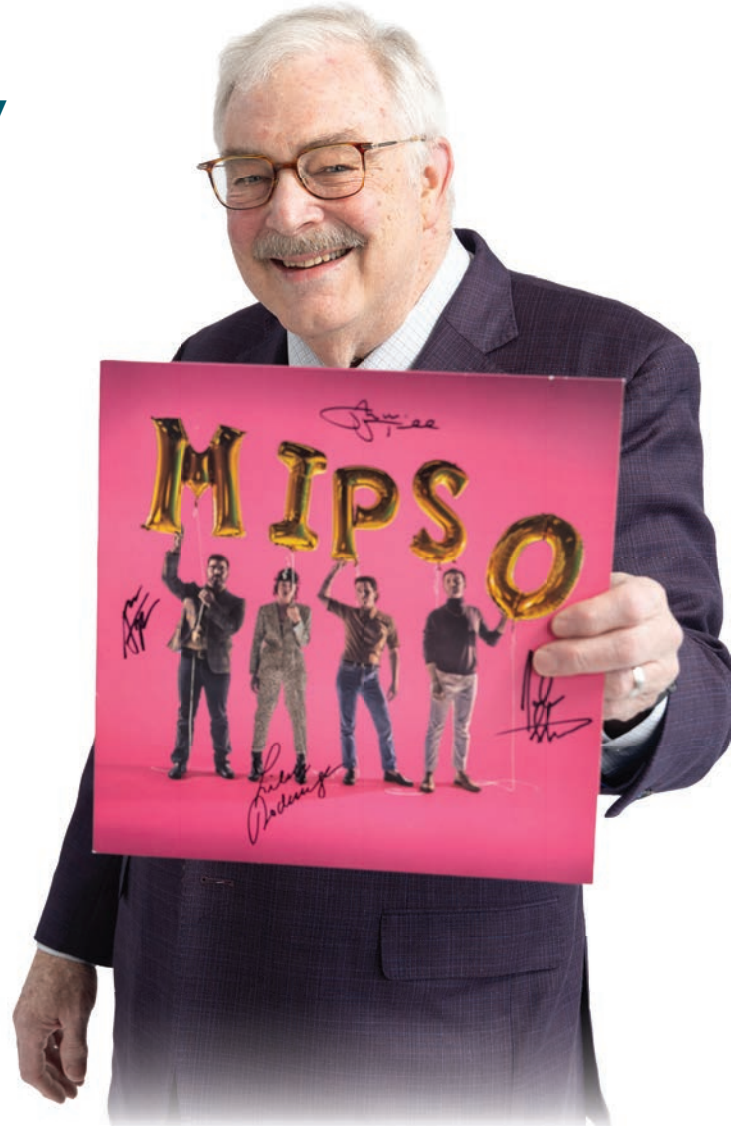
MOST MEMORABLE CASE: A series of land title cases involving thousands of acres on Hatteras Island acquired in 1929 by Andrew Carnegie's partner, John H. Phipps, and his son, John S. Phipps. They used the land for hunting, fishing and gun clubs at Avon and Buxton. For about a decade, I traveled there every other week with my partners, Randy Underwood and Bill McNairy, to search titles in Dare, Hyde and Currituck counties. We ate a lot of seafood, met colorful characters and made friends as we came to love Hatteras Island.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: My father was a solo practitioner who would let me observe court proceedings from age 10. From high school to when I was in law school, I worked in his office. So becoming a lawyer was in my DNA.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Holden Beach. Melanie and I honeymooned there in 1980, and my family and I have rented oceanfront houses there all but a handful of summers since.

BEST ADVICE: From my late partner, Edgar B. Fisher: "There are no gray areas in the practice of real estate law – it is either right or it is wrong. But good and thoughtful lawyering can cure any error in a chain of title or the drafting of an instrument."

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Law truly is a jealous mistress that can consume you all day, every day, so make time first for your family, your faith and your community.



BEST WORK HABIT: Doing whatever it takes to solve a problem and get the best result for our client, without regard to how long it takes or how much of that time gets billed to the client.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Delegate more, get to bed earlier and travel with my wife, Kelly.

BIGGEST RISK: Forgoing opportunities to go in-house to continue practicing law with Brooks Pierce, a decision I have never regretted.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Brice Street, a band from Greensboro that I saw perform at the Town Hall my first night in Chapel Hill.

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The Miller Hogue Law
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Moore & Van Allen
Charlotte

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Season, Jones, Gottschalk & Cash
Asheville

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St Amand & Efid
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Capital City Law
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GREENSBORO

HOMETOWN: Big Rapids, Michigan

UNDERGRAD: Hope College (Holland, Michigan)

LAW SCHOOL: UNC School of Law, 2002

PRACTICED LAW: 23 years

FAMILY: Husband, BJ, children, Lily and Will

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: UNC Chapel Hill. My husband and I are both graduates. We love the school and rooting for the Tar Heels.

FIRST JOB: Legislative correspondent for U.S. Representative Dave Camp of Michigan. I learned to always be prepared and to never walk into someone else's office without paper and pen.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: A walk, preferably on the beach or the woods. Even better if it is with someone who makes me laugh.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: Sitting at the counsel table at the NC Court of Appeals a few weeks after passing the bar and holding the watch for my (now) partner. It was my only time in a courtroom other than for a swearing in.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I loved Nancy Drew books. I wanted to be a private investigator (like Nancy) or an attorney (like her dad). The more I learned about what I could do as an attorney and how I could help people, I realized that was what I wanted to do for a living.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Anywhere in the mountains.

BEST ADVICE: My mentor, [Brooks Pierce partner] Bill McNairy, taught me that you always get a better answer when you collaborate.

BEST WORK HABIT: Trying to learn and improve every day.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: Making time for exercise daily

BIGGEST RISK: Working part-time while my kids were young. It was worth it.

FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: Depeche Mode



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Charlotte

ZECHARIAH ETHERIDGE YOUNG GUNS

ETHERIDGE LAW

CHAPEL HILL

HOMETOWN: Morven (Anson County)

UNDERGRAD: UNC Greensboro

LAW SCHOOL: Elon University School of Law, 2021

PRACTICED LAW: 3 years

FAMILY: Wife, Kendall, dog, Clover, cats Lavender and Willow

FAVORITE NC PRODUCT: Hole Doughnuts in Asheville has set the bar so high. They are made to order and you can't go wrong with any of them.

FIRST JOB: Bagging trash, cleaning bathrooms, working the pool and checking families in for sporting events at Little Park in Wadesboro at age 15 taught me how important community spaces are to the people that live in that community, to work independently and be a team member. Plus, spending time goofing off with my older brother.

GO-TO STRESS RELIEVER: Weightlifting

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I drafted a petition for clemency for a woman incarcerated, seeking early release due to the circumstances of her conviction, pro bono. She was 17 at the time of the offense and under immense pressure. I am still holding out hope for her.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A LAWYER: I enjoy making complicated concepts easy to understand. Many bad situations (insolvency, criminal and civil violations) are more or less avoidable with the right knowledge and guidance.

FAVORITE NC HANGOUT: Battleground Park, Greensboro

BEST ADVICE: Attitude determines altitude. My late grandfather, Theodore Carr II.

YOUR BEST ADVICE: Take risks to become someone you are proud of and live a life you enjoy. Tomorrow isn't promised, and a life of regrets is worse than 1,000 failures. Have a reasonable backup plan that you can be comfortable with if plan A does not fully pan out.

BEST WORK HABIT: After losing valuable physical notes, I started taking electronic notes for meetings with opposing counsel or clients. Chapel Hill lawyer Jim White shared this tip with me, and I'm very grateful for it.

2026 WORK-LIFE CHANGE: More speaking engagements for small business owners on contracts and loan documents, so they do not have to come see me for a bankruptcy consultation later.

BIGGEST RISK: I narrowly failed my first attempt at the bar exam. I had a job offer at my first law firm and moved to Raleigh, even though I didn't know whether I would pass on my second attempt. I restarted my life, while fully aware I could lose the law firm job. It all worked out and I thank my wife for the courage to make that move.

YOUR FAVORITE MUSICAL ACT AT 18: The Lion King



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Brooks Pierce
Greensboro

Trent S. Allard
Johnston Allison & Hord
Charlotte

Olivia Smith
Wallace & Graham
Salisbury

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Raleigh

Amanda S. Hawkins
Brooks Pierce
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Diane B. Burks
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The law is always the foundation in her cases, but this is the LOWEST standard of conduct. Families do better with resolutions that fit their specific needs. Processes like Collaborative Law help families transition from the title of Husband and Wife while remaining Mom and Dad forever.



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Matt Joyner helps business owners with their corporate and transactional legal needs, including asset purchases and sales, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, franchises, "business divorces," non-competition agreements, LLC operating agreements, corporate shareholder agreements, employment agreements and negotiating and drafting contracts for businesses. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Dartmouth College and a former Editor of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, Matt also shares real world, practical business experience with his clients from his time as General Counsel and Vice President of Administration of an international chemical manufacturing company. He is a former judicial clerk on the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, past Chair of the NC Bar Association's Corporate Counsel Section and currently serves as President of the Mecklenburg Historical Society. Matt welcomes referrals of conflicts from other firms.



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Kate Kliebert serves as the go-to fractional general counsel for small and medium-sized growing businesses across North Carolina. With a strong record of advising companies in the tech sector, she provides practical, business-minded legal guidance that helps leaders navigate growth, manage risk, and respond strategically when challenges arise. Kate's clients rely on her ability to understand their operations, their risk tolerance, and the realities of day-to-day decision making. She offers direct, steady counsel when business questions surface without warning, helping teams think clearly, plan their next steps, and keep momentum moving forward.

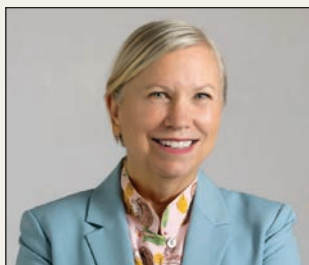


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Kathryn's passion for law stems from her desire to help individuals and families on a personal level. Her natural ability to build strong relationships with clients, attorneys, and other professionals enables her to find solutions and effectively reduce conflict for clients in or outside of court or as a Family Mediator.



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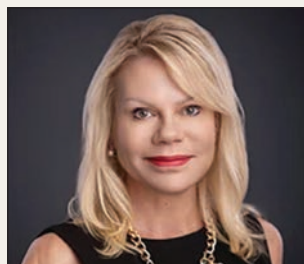


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James T. Williams Jr., Brooks Pierce, Greensboro (2002, 2003); Clarence W. Walker, Kennedy Covington Lobdell & Hickman, Charlotte (2004); Gary S. Parsons, Brooks Pierce, Raleigh (2005); William K. Davis, Bell, Davis & Pitt, Winston-Salem (2006); Dan J. McLamb, Yates, McLamb & Weyher, Raleigh (2007); Robert D. Walker, Walker, Allen, Grice, Ammons & Foy, Goldsboro (2008); J. Donald Cowan Jr., Ellis & Winters, Greensboro (2009); G. Gray Wilson, Wilson, Helms and Cartledge, Winston-Salem (2010); James H. Kelly Jr., Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, Winston-Salem (2011); Daniel L. Brawley, Williams Mullen, Wilmington (2012); Lee M. Whitman, Wyrick Robbins, Raleigh (2013); Michael J. Byrne, Byrne Law, Raleigh (2014); Jonathan D. Sasser, Ellis & Winters, Raleigh (2015); Jean Sutton Martin, Law Office of Jean Sutton Martin, Wilmington (2016); Greg Merritt, Harris, Creech, Ward & Blackerby, New Bern (2017); Ward Davis, Bell, Davis & Pitt, Charlotte (2018); Elizabeth Scott, Williams Mullen, Raleigh (2019); Clay A. Campbell, Marcellino & Tyson, Charlotte (2020); Kristen L. Beightol, Edwards Kirby, Raleigh (2021); Fred W. DeVore III, DeVore, Acton & Stafford, Charlotte (2022); Ross Fulton, Rayburn Cooper & Durham, Charlotte (2023); W. Scott Jones, Searson, Jones, Gottschalk & Cash, Asheville (2024); J. Scott Flowers, Hutchens Law Firm, Fayetteville (2025); Clint Morse, Brooks Pierce, Greensboro (2026)

REAL ESTATE

Alfred Adams, Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, Winston-Salem (2004); Barry D. Mann, Manning, Fulton & Skinner, Raleigh (2005); Brent A. Torstick, Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, Charlotte (2006); Samuel T. Oliver Jr., Manning, Fulton & Skinner, Raleigh (2007); Charles Gordon Brown, Brown & Bunch, Chapel Hill (2008); C. Steven Mason, Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan, Raleigh (2009); Timothy G. Sellers, Sellers, Hinshaw, Ayers, Dortch & Lyons, Charlotte (2010); Frank M. Bell Jr., Bell, Davis & Pitt, Winston-Salem (2011); George W. Sistrunk III, Hamilton Stephens Steele & Martin Charlotte (2012); Robert Charles Lawson, Williams Mullen, Raleigh (2013); Michael G. Winters, Ellis & Winters, Raleigh (2014); Holly H. Alderman, Schell Bray, Chapel Hill (2015); Brian W. Byrd, Smith Moore Leatherwood, Greensboro (2016); Anna P. McLamb, Wyrick Robbins, Raleigh (2017); Beth Voltz, Weatherspoon & Voltz, Raleigh (2018); Annika M. Brock, The Brock Law Firm, Asheville (2019); Allen York, Smith Anderson, Raleigh (2020); Diana R. Palecek, Fox Rothschild, Charlotte (2021); Philip Hackley, Wyrick Robbins, Raleigh (2022); Joanne Badr, Ward and Smith, Asheville (2023); Julian Robb, Blanco, Tackabery & Matamoros, Winston-

Salem (2024); Marc L. Isaacson, Isaacson Sheridan, Greensboro (2025); S. Leigh Rodenbough IV, Brooks Pierce, McLendon Humphry & Leonard, Greensboro (2026)

TAX & ESTATE PLANNING

Robert C. Vaughn Jr., Vaughn Perkinson Ehlinger Moxley & Stogner, Winston-Salem (2002, 2003); W. Curtis Elliott Jr., Culp Elliott & Carpenter, Charlotte (2004); Ray S. Farris, Johnston Allison Hord, Charlotte (2005); Elizabeth L. Quick, Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, Winston-Salem (2006); James W. Narron, Narron, O'Hale & Whittington, Smithfield (2007); E. William Kratt, Herring Mills & Kratt, Raleigh (2008); Christy Eve Reid (died May 8, 2014), Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, Charlotte (2009); Michael H. Godwin, Schell Bray Aycock Abel & Livingston, Greensboro (2010); Maria M. Lynch, Lynch & Eatman LLP, Raleigh (2011); Graham D. Holding Jr., Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, Charlotte (2012); Andrew H. Veach, Edwards Craver Veach, Winston-Salem (2013); Robert H. Haggard, Van Winkle Lam, Asheville (2014); Michael A. Colombo, Colombo, Kitchin, Dunn, Ball & Porter, Greenville (2015); Jason Walls, The Walls Law Firm, Apex (2016); Debra L. Foster, Foster Royal, Charlotte (2017); Elizabeth "Liz" K. Arias, Womble Bond Dickinson, Raleigh (2018); Jean Gordon Carter, McGuireWoods, Raleigh (2019); Rudy Ogburn, Young Moore and Henderson, Raleigh (2020); Jessica Mering Hardin, Robinson Bradshaw, Charlotte (2021); Brooks Jaffa, Cranford, Buckley Schultze, Tomchin, Allen & Buie, Charlotte (2022); Michael Cory Howes, Strauss Attorney, Raleigh (2023); Amy H. Kincaid, Schell Bray, Greensboro (2024); Heidi Elizabeth Royal, Heidi Royal Law, Charlotte (2025); Sara Vizithum, Brooks Pierce, Greensboro (2026)

YOUNG GUNS

J. Christian Stevenson, Kirk Palmer & Thigpe, Charlotte (2012); George Mason Oliver, Oliver Friesen Check, New Bern (2013); Michael F. Easley Jr., McGuireWoods, Raleigh (2014); Alvaro R. De La Calle, Calle Law, Greensboro (2015); Aaron Lay, Hamilton Stephens Steele + Martin, Charlotte (2016); Elie Foy, Wyrick Robbins, Raleigh (2017); Matthew T. Marcellino, Marcellino & Tyson, Charlotte (2018); Nancy S. Litwak, Rosenwood, Rose & Litwak, Charlotte (2019); Antonia A. "Toni" Peck, Nelson Mullin, Raleigh (2020); Holden B. Clark, Holden B. Clark, Attorney at Law, Gastonia (2021); Carl Burchette, Rosenwood, Rose & Litwak, Charlotte (2022); Keith Boyette, Director of State Government Relations, North Carolina Healthcare Association, Raleigh (2023); Katarina "Katie" Wong, Brooks Pierce, Raleigh (2024); Carlie Anne Smith, Manning Fulton, Raleigh (2025); Zechariah Etheridge, Etheridge Law, Chapel Hill (2026)