

By: Elizabeth Towe
Bernstein, Stair & McAdams



KNOXVILLE BARRISTERS PRESIDENT MIKEL TOWE

Since moving to East Tennessee eight years ago, I have learned how much East Tennesseans love this area. However, I'm not sure that anyone loves it as much as Mikel Towe. A proud Powell High School Panther, class of 2006, Mikel was born and raised here and has never considered living anywhere else. He really doesn't even like to be away for too long on vacation. In fact, I'd say his office with a view of the Sunsphere is pretty much the dream. Or, at least, as a non-native Knoxvillean, I assume that's the dream – it is sort of like working in Paris with a view of the Eiffel Tower, right? As far as I know, when it came time for Mikel to decide where to go to college, he didn't even consider anywhere other than The University of Tennessee. (Well, he may have, but I like to leave some mystery in our marriage, so I have never asked.) It wouldn't have mattered anyway; there was no question that Mikel would be a Volunteer. Mikel is a third-generation graduate of The University of Tennessee and the son of a UT cheerleader, so the love of all things big and orange just runs in his blood.

At the University of Tennessee, Mikel graduated Magna Cum Laude with a History major and a Geography minor, but his proudest accomplishment is his perfect attendance record at UT football home games. He didn't miss a game through all of college or law school. If you remember anything about Tennessee football from 2007-2013, you will understand the depths of his dedication, or as some would call it, masochism. During college, Mikel was on track to achieve his dream of becoming a high school football coach, but ultimately settled for his second-choice career as an attorney.

Mikel learned the value of hard work even before his illustrious career at the University of Tennessee when he got his first job at the age of fourteen as a buggy boy at Food City. After four decorated years as a star Food City employee (he even earned the coveted two-year pin), he felt it was time to move on, and his love of sports led to a prolific, if not particularly lucrative, career as a youth and high school baseball umpire. I know how much Mikel enjoyed umpiring, because I had to beg him to give it up after he started full time at Lewis King, now Lewis Thomason, and I became increasingly jealous of his weekends at the baseball fields. In fact, Mikel's umpiring uniform is still hanging in our guest room closet, because, as Mikel says, "What if I need it one day?" I don't want to tell him that his knees are 31 years old, and I'm afraid his umpiring days are done for good.

Mikel is one of those happy few who loves the practice of law and can't think of anything he would rather be doing. At the office he has earned the nickname Sweet Mike, but let's keep that between us.

It doesn't sound very intimidating, and I would hate for him to have a reputation as anything other than a formidable bulldog of an opponent (except for at home – happy wife, happy life, and all that). His practice area is general litigation, but for the most part he excels in insurance defense work. You can always count on Mikel to put a client at ease with his unassuming demeanor and East Tennessee accent.



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At home, he loves to cook on his Big Green Egg grill and has perfected the art of the Rendezvous Cheese and Sausage Plate with a little bit of encouragement from this Memphis-transplant. He is becoming quite the chef. True to his roots, however, his self-described cuisine philosophy is "Quantity over Quality", so it may be a while before he earns his first Michelin Star. He also puts me to shame by rising with the sun three days a week to attend spin class at the YMCA in addition to his cycling and running schedule. While I'm working on "New Year, New-ish Me," Mikel is miles ahead of me, literally and figuratively.

With years of dedication to the KBA and Barristers under his belt, I know that Mikel will be a committed Barristers President. In addition to serving on the KBA Board of Governors and Functions Committee, he has already proven his value to the Barristers in his role as four-time chair of the Membership Committee, chair of the Athletics Committee, Secretary, and Vice-President. He is excited to hit the ground running this year to continue the Barristers' success.

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