

Profile - James K. "Jim" Dorsett III



Jim Dorsett

By Paul Gable

An attorney at the top of his profession, James K. Dorsett III, of the firm Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell and Jernigan LLP, continues, everyday to strive in a variety of ways to improve both personally and professionally.

"I believe everything you do as a lawyer helps develop and further your skills," said Dorsett. "You never get to the point where you can confidently say "I'm there.""

The legal profession can be considered the de facto Dorsett family business as Dorsett's grandfather, father, several uncles, one brother and three brothers-in-law also practiced law. However, Dorsett's interests extend well beyond the office and the courtroom.

Dorsett attended Davidson College where he majored in History and was a member of the school's varsity tennis team. He was also president of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.

"I have loved tennis since the age of 10 and I was interested in receiving a good education," said Dorsett. "Davidson is a great little school with both great academics and great athletics, so it was the perfect choice."

After graduating from Davidson with an A.B. in History in 1974, Dorsett went to Wake Forest University Law School from which he received his Juris Doctor in 1977. However, another of his interests had to be attended to before Dorsett settled into a law firm.

"I love to travel and I wanted to see the world, so I sold my car and with help from my father, I bought an around the world ticket from Pan American Airways," Dorsett said.

Much of the trip was spent in Asia in such locations as Nepal, India; Bangkok, Thailand; Cairo, Egypt; Kabul, Afghanistan and China.

"It was a tremendous adventure and amazing experience seeing different countries and cultures," he said. "However, after eight months, I was running out of money and in need of work."

Dorsett returned to North Carolina and joined the Smith, Anderson Law Firm in Raleigh 32 years ago. He has practiced there ever since, now ranking as a partner in the firm.

"I clerked at Smith Anderson during the summer after my second year of law school and enjoyed the experience," Dorsett said.

Practicing in the areas of commercial litigation, products liability defense, and tort and insurance litigation, Dorsett has reached the top of his profession. He is listed in The Best Lawyers in America, North Carolina Super Lawyers and Who's Who in American Law.

However, it is the best interest of each client that Dorsett brings to each case.

"My job is to help clients resolve disputes successfully, preferably with a favorable settlement, so they can return to normal business," said Dorsett. "However, in the absence of an excellent settlement, I have great confidence in the ability of a jury to reach a fair verdict."

Dorsett is also very active in volunteer professional organizations. He has served as President of the North Carolina State Bar, President of the American Counsel Association, Director of the International Society of Barristers and is currently President of the International Society of Barristers Foundation.

"I believe part of what practicing law is about is giving back to the bar, volunteer professional organizations and volunteer organizations that serve the community," Dorsett said. "Most volunteer boards whether church, sports or civic are going to have lawyers involved."

The immediate past President of Food Runners Collaborative, Inc., an organization that partners with Meals on Wheels and the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, Dorsett enjoys the opportunity to help provide hot meals to those in need.

"We are about to serve our three millionth meal next month," he said. "Food Runners picks up food from various sources, prepares hot meals and delivers them mostly to homebound seniors and some students."

Even with the professional and volunteer demands on his time, Dorsett's primary interest is his family. He and his wife of 26 years, Wynn, have four children, daughter Elise, who just graduated from Washington University in St. Louis, daughter Rush, a sophomore at The Manhattan School of Music, son James, a freshman at Elon University and 13-year old daughter Grace, a seventh grader at Ravenscroft School.

"Family is very important to me," Dorsett said. "I spend as much time with my children as possible and have tried to help them expand their interests through the years by taking them on trips, both domestic and foreign, so they could experience as many different places and people as possible." Dorsett also manages to fit physical fitness into his busy schedule as he continues to play tennis on a regular basis.

"I still play with the same guys I have been playing with since I was 10 years old," he said. "We may not be quite as active on the court as we once were, but we are still as avid about the game."