

PUBLICATION

Spotlight on Charles Grant

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When most people think of Charles Grant, they think of an incredibly busy lawyer and someone dedicated to the community. To those people who wonder where he finds the time to accomplish everything he has accomplished, Charles would say it is the only way he knows. One of 15 children born to Roscoe C. Grant Sr. and Verleon H. Grant, Charles was raised in Nashville and learned from his parents the value of hard work, participation in politics and community service, and commitment to justice and equality.

Charles' father, a local businessman, was for many decades a state board member of the Tennessee Republican Party and served as a delegate to the 1948 Republican national convention (along with Howard Baker Sr., the former Senator's father, among others). His mother, an ardent Democrat, volunteered what little spare time she had to many local races, which included the Nashville Sheriff's office and the city council campaigns of Z. Alexander Looby. While Mrs. Grant never preached of the need to serve others, she led by example and it was expected in her household.

Mr. Grant's untimely death when Charles was eight left Mrs. Grant a single parent to their 15 children. To support them, she worked as a state teacher of juvenile delinquents during the day and as a waitress in the evening. It is little wonder that Charles acquired his tireless work ethic with such a role model.

After graduating from high school, Charles enlisted in the United States Air Force, serving our country for three years. While serving in the Air Force, Charles was trained as a linguist at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Presidio of Monterey, California. For 53 weeks, Charles' days were filled with eight hours of instruction and three hours of study. At the end of the course of study, Charles was fluent in the Vietnamese language. Upon completion of his service with the U.S. Air Force, Charles enrolled and graduated from the Citadel. Charles then made the decision to pursue a career in law and enrolled at Washington and Lee University School of Law.

If you know Charles at all, you know that the hard work and community service values instilled by his mother remain very much a part of his life today. In addition to his thriving practice, which includes defending clients in complex employment litigation, class actions and collective actions, litigation concerning claims under Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), and discrimination and harassment under state and federal laws, Charles has received a number of awards for his pro bono efforts, including Baker Donelson's pro bono attorney of the year award, the Tennessee Bar Association's Harris Gilbert Pro Bono Award, and the Nashville Pro Bono Program Volunteer of the Year Award. His considerable community involvement is reflected in his service on a number of nonprofit Boards, including Project Reflect (which founded Smithson-Craighead, Nashville's first charter school), the Nashville Business Incubation Center, and the Ladies' Hermitage Association Board.

Since joining Baker Donelson in 2004, Charles has become very active in the Firm, particularly in the area of recruiting. Charles is the Chair of the Recruiting Committee for the Nashville office and has recruited nationally for the Firm. He thinks involvement in recruiting is crucial, especially with regard to minorities, women and other under-represented groups. Charles' strong commitment to diversity was recognized when he received the Tennessee Bar Association President's Award in 2006 for his work on the Diversity Summit, at which

leaders of the bar from around Tennessee came together to strategize how to increase racial diversity in the legal profession. The event culminated with a keynote address by Fred Gray, the distinguished attorney who represented Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and other civil rights luminaries.

Charles also devotes substantial time and effort in training and mentoring young lawyers. One of his most prized pupils is a Baker Donelson alum, Nikki Smith-Bartley. When asked how Charles helped her to develop and grow as a young lawyer, Nikki said, “[Charles] was an excellent mentor. He always provided constructive criticism and praise. He helped my development because he provided me with ample opportunities to get hands-on experience, while providing the appropriate guidance along the way. I appreciated that he trusted me and was an advocate for me. For that reason, he was also considered a friend. Furthermore, he was an outstanding attorney with an abundance of experience and knowledge. As such, I found him to be an invaluable resource.”

Although Charles maintains a busy schedule with work and community service, he always finds time for family. When not in the office, Charles enjoys spending time with his wife Terry and their two sons, Donovan (21) and Denmark (20), as well as his siblings. Charles also enjoys reading, long walks and occasional runs through his neighborhood to decompress. Like so many of the committed and involved attorneys at Baker Donelson, Charles does what he does because operating in excellence is the only way he knows.