

DICTA

**IF IT AIN'T BROKE,
BREAK IT:**

**More Legislative
Revisions to the Health
Care Liability Act**



By: Jack H. (Nick) McCall



MUSICAL LAWYERS OF KNOXVILLE – PART FOUR

Michael A. Graves reports he grew up in a musical family, or as his friend Myers Morton notes, “his musical DNA alone is a history of country and bluegrass music.” Mike’s uncle, Josh Graves, was the dobro player for bluegrass legends Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs until their split-up. Hence, as Mike says, “I naturally grew up listening to bluegrass music”:

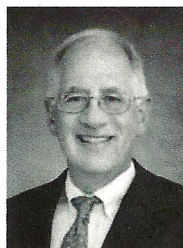
My older brother, Tedd Graves, is an accomplished singer and guitar player and is still doing recordings and shows around East Tennessee. My younger brother, Tim Graves, is a well known dobro player in Nashville. He has been voted “dobro player of the year” 10 times by SPGMA. He currently is in a bluegrass group call “Farm Hands Quartet.” That being said, I had no choice but to develop a love of music.

I play upright bass, electric bass, guitar, and play a little on mandolin. Over the years, I have been in several bluegrass groups as well as gospel groups and for a short time I was lead singer and bass player for a blues and oldies group. I sing lead as well as tenor. I also developed many karaoke songs and have sung at many local establishments. In the 1980’s I went on one tour with “Bobby Smith and the Boys from Shiloh” into Wisconsin (a professional bluegrass group from Nashville). While on stage at one place, I got to be onstage with the legends Bill Monroe and Vassar Clements. I have written a few songs over time. Currently, I’m not playing music with anyone but still play at home.

Mike adds “music doesn’t really play into the type law I practice (Criminal Defense), but it is a stress reliever for me after a stressful week in court.”



Mark Mamantov began playing violin at a very young age and was in one of the first Suzuki violin classes in Knoxville; as Mark notes, “Knoxville was on the cutting edge of Suzuki programs in the 1960s, led by Bill Starr.” Mark enjoyed playing violin and he kept at it his junior year in high school. “I played in the Knoxville Youth Symphony in some of its earliest years. I was never the musician that Myers Morton was (and may still be). Myers was a fine violinist,” Mark adds. Nevertheless, Mark’s interest in music has continued or perhaps, morphed in a different way from many of our other musical lawyers. In 1987, with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra wanting to add a couple of younger members to add age diversity to its Board of Directors, Mark was encouraged by his then-supervising attorney and then-KSO President, Joe Congleton, to apply to join the KSO’s board. “So,” Mark adds, “I have been on that Board almost 30 years, and have been very engaged after an inauspicious start.” And – I hasten to add – Mark has also served as the KSO’s President, as well.



Lawyer George Morton and his wife, Margo Morton, insisted their children become musical. Marcus, Myers and Primis Morton learned to play violin from William Starr starting at 4 years of age. (Mark Mamantov was there with the Mortons, learning violin under the Suzuki

method.) Marcus Morton ended up playing French horn and Primis piano. Brother Myers Morton eventually changed from violin to fiddle.

Myers plays Gospel Bluegrass with friends (including with his daughters Halle and Maris) and with First United Methodist Church’s praise band. At times, Myers “jams” with Mike Graves (see above) and David Skidmore. They tell Myers he is in the band because he has a pick-up truck to haul the equipment. (They also keep Myers’ microphone turned off.)

Public Defender David Skidmore grew up in a very musical family, and he has played from a very young age. Starting off with bluegrass – the music of choice in his family – David later discovered the Beatles and Led Zeppelin and bought a electric guitar. At this point now, he listens to and attempts to play all kinds of music with varying degrees of success. During law school he was in a Bluegrass quartet of law students that referred to themselves as “Learned Hand.” They actually got a letter from the great Judge’s daughter, saying she appreciated the reference and was sure her father would approve! “Although the practice of law takes up most of my time (sigh),” David reports, he still “likes to pick up his guitar and sing a couple of oldies with friends.” (His buddy Myers Morton also bills him as a top-notch musician.)

And – to round out this last installment of our musical lawyers’ series – we have one of Knoxville’s most unique musical lawyers, Michael S. Shipwash, a/k/a “Lawyer Mike.” Mike’s official musical career began in 2009. I say “official” because it took the previous year for Mike to find his way into music. As Mike explains:

Lawyer Mike’s mother went to be with the Lord in 2005. In 2007, Lawyer Mike’s brother was tragically killed in a tractor-trailer accident. Although the loss of his mother was hard on Lawyer Mike, the loss of his brother (two (2)) years later was



devastating. Lawyer Mike’s brother was the one in the family that pushed him to go to Law School. After the loss of his brother, Lawyer Mike had nowhere to turn except downward! He made some mistakes that led him to re-dedicate his life to Christ. His religious beliefs is why Lawyer Mike’s music is spiritually uplifting (with Bible verses in his videos). In fact, some call him a “Christian Rapper.” Lawyer Mike has been blessed enough to have worked with multi-platinum selling artists; to have 2 CD’s selling in stores and on line; to have shot a Pilot for Spike TV; has been featured on Local and National TV, Radio and Print; and has over 1.8 million views on his YouTube videos (he has 24). When asked if there was a CLE he would ever want to teach or attend, Lawyer Mike’s response was/is: “yes. LOL (Life Outside Law)”. It was/is this outlet that transformed Lawyer Mike from a corporate lawyer (setting billable hour records) to “jumping on the other side” and helping those less fortunate against those same corporations. If you ever have a case with Lawyer Mike, get ready for “Thanks and God Bless” in his correspondence!

As Mike would say it, he puts God first; he has also been billed as one of America’s first “lawyer-rappers.” You can check out more of his work at www.lawyeremike.net.

As we have seen in this series, the talents of our fellow legal professionals truly run the gamut: great lawyers and great musicians and singers fill the ranks of the KBA.