Feb 2015 E-newsletter Student Spotlight: T. Peyton Bell

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1. What did you do before attending law school?
After I graduated from college I moved to Washington, D.C., and worked for Congressman John Barrow. I started as Mr. Barrow's legislative correspondent. Then I was his legislative assistant, and for my last year in D.C., I was his press secretary.

My wife, Kate Bell, and I got married a little less than two weeks before we started law school. In July 2012, we moved out of our apartments in Washington, D.C., got married on July 28, moved to our home in Athens and both started law school orientation on August 9. It was a whirlwind of a way to start marriage and school, but I would highly recommend it.

2. Why did you choose to attend the University of Georgia School of Law?
I always knew that I wanted to go to the University of Georgia School of Law. My grandfather, John Chapman Bell, Sr., came to Georgia Law during the Great Depression. In the 1930s money was tight, and he could not afford law school on his own. His mother sold her engagement ring, probably her only possession of value, so that he could afford his law degree. Since then, my uncle, my father, two of my cousins and their spouses and my older brother have graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law. Kate and I will be the ninth and tenth members of our family to graduate from Georgia Law in May. My younger brother is currently a 1L at our law school. Those strong family ties, along with the great reputation of the law school, made the decision very easy.

3. What inspired you to become a lawyer?
Without a doubt, my father, David Bell. Dad has a small law firm in Augusta. People walk into his office with problems and ask for his help. As a lawyer, he is able to help them with difficult life situations, often the tragic death of a loved one or a serious personal injury. What inspires me is that people trust him with their most important problems because they trust him as a person. They trust him as a person because he has built his career out of his diligence, skill and integrity. He has taught me that integrity is a lawyer's greatest commodity. If I have a fraction of his integrity, then I know I'll have a fulfilling career as a lawyer.

4. What are your plans after graduation?
Kate will be working in Duluth at Andersen, Tate & Carr. I am currently looking for jobs in the metro-Atlanta area.

5. Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
Practicing law in Georgia. I don't know what that will look like or where it will be, but I do know that I want to have a practice focused on helping people.

6. Who is your favorite Georgia Law professor? Why?
Professor Coenen. I will never forget the gut-wrenching feeling I had my first day of law school when Professor Coenen started calling on people in Contracts. Admittedly, the feelings were not the "warm fuzzies" that made me think, "This guy is going to be
my favorite law professor.” Never in my life had someone demanded so much of me. The idea that he expected us to know the tiny details of the cases so well seemed at best unnecessary and at worst absurd. But through the course of that semester I realized that he demanded more than any professor I had ever had because he respected his students more than any professor I had ever had. His course on Contracts changed the way I read, speak and think. In my second year, I took him for Constitutional Law II and am currently in his seminar on the Federalist Papers. Without a doubt, I will be a better lawyer and person for having studied under Professor Coenen.

7. Thus far, what is your most memorable experience from your time at Georgia Law?
Studying abroad through the Georgia Law Summer Program in China. When Kate and I got to law school we were not even considering studying abroad, but when we learned about the program in China we were sold. We spent four weeks studying the Chinese legal system, U.S.-Chinese trade relations and comparative property law. The program was started and is run by Ambassador Don Johnson. Ambassador Johnson has an unbelievable knowledge of and contacts within the Chinese legal system from his time negotiating China’s entry into the World Trade Organization under the Clinton Administration. Combining such incredible learning opportunities while living in China for four weeks expanded my understanding of the law, culture and society in ways that are simply impossible without studying abroad.

8. What are some activities/clubs/clinics you are involved in at the law school?
Mock Trial and the Graduate Student Association

9. What made you decide to join/enroll in that activity/club/clinic?
Mock Trial: I would like to say that I would have joined the mock trial team at any law school, but I am not sure that would be true. The primary reason I wanted to join the team was our Director of Advocacy, Kellie Casey. When I was a first-year student, all of the second- and third-year students and alumni I viewed as mentors were involved in either mock trial or moot court. All of them sang Kellie's praises. Since joining the team, I have come to see why.

Graduate Student Association: Last year I served as the treasurer of the Student Bar Association, which gave me a taste of student governance. I enjoyed that position but wanted to get more involved with the university. So, last spring, I was fortunate enough to be elected the president of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) for this year. GSA is the representative body for the more than 8,000 graduate and professional students in the 17 schools and colleges at the University of Georgia. It has been a wonderful experience getting to learn more about the way the whole university operates and having the opportunity to stand up and advocate for my fellow students.

10. What are your hobbies?
I like basically anything that involves good conversation with interesting people.

11. Where is your favorite place to study? Why?
Beside the window at the far back table in the Alexander Campbell King Law Library. The window in the library is huge and has a great view of North Campus.

12. What are two things you always have to have with you when you study?
Noise-canceling headphones and a pen. It’s hard to believe, but sometimes the law books don’t scream at you to pay attention, and I need to block out any outside noise in order to bear down and focus. I always have a pen on me. Unlike most law students, I handwrite my notes instead of typing them on my computer.

13. What do you do to handle the stress of law school?
I take an "all of the above" approach. Sometimes I need to go to the gym and work out, sometimes I need to go to eat hot wings with a group of friends, and sometimes I just need to watch a movie at home with my wife and our dog and get some rest.

14. What would you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?
My marriage. Kate Bell is smarter than me, prettier than me, kinder than me, more likeable than me, and all around a better person than I am.

15. What is your favorite place on campus?
Sanford Stadium on Saturdays in the fall.