

# Managing partner of Nashville firm juggles demands of leadership role

By Tim Kirvan



It seems fitting that Brian Holmes had early designs on becoming an architect, particularly in light of the fact that he has built a successful legal career as the managing partner of Cornelius & Collins, LLP in Nashville, Tennessee over the past seven years.

As a native of Tennessee's capital city, Holmes is especially well-suited to lead the civil litigation firm that for 80 years has served clients that range from Fortune 500 companies, to small businesses, trade organizations, and individuals.

"I've spent my entire career here," said Holmes, who marked his 20th year with the firm this year. "It's been my home away from home, so to speak. I started as a summer associate after my second year of law school and had the privilege of learning from some of the best attorneys in Nashville."

In particular, longtime partner Ben Harrison, "who has now been practicing over 40 years," according to Holmes.

"I learned how to practice from him, and inherited my biggest client from him," said Holmes of his chief legal mentor.

Holmes, in addition to his administrative responsibilities, primarily defends "health care providers in health care liability and other personal injury cases." His clients include "physicians, hospitals, nurses, and mid-level providers such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners."

He also advises "individuals and companies in the health care industry on HIPAA compliance," and assists providers with licensure and credentialing issues.

"I've always enjoyed the challenge of being in court and doing my best for our clients," Holmes said of the plaintiffs and defendants he has represented in personal injury, professional liability, worker's compensation, and contract disputes. "There is a special satisfaction in prevailing at trial and gaining a sense of vindication for the client."

Married and the father of two teen-age daughters, Holmes originally planned to attend the University of Tennessee to pursue an architectural degree before his love for soccer intervened.

"I played soccer throughout high school and was offered a soccer scholarship to play at Belmont," said Holmes of the private Christian university located in Nashville. "It came during a time when Belmont was making the transition from NAIA competition to the Division 1 level, so we were competing against some of the SEC and ACC schools, like Kentucky, Vanderbilt, and Clemson. We were

particularly proud to have beaten Kentucky during the time I was there," added Holmes, who was a four-year starter as a midfielder for the Bruins. "It was a great experience to have played at the collegiate level."

After graduating from Belmont in 1999, Holmes took his academic talents to Vanderbilt Law School, traditionally ranked as one of the top legal schools in the South. It was there that he honed his oral advocacy skills, a talent that he further developed while working for the Tennessee Attorney General Office after his first year of law school.

"I first remember wanting to be a lawyer because of 'L.A. Law' in the 1980s, though I don't think that motivated me to pursue a legal career," he said of the popular TV drama that ran for eight seasons on NBC. "My true interest is political science broadly, and within the law it is constitutional law. I don't get much of that in my practice, unfortunately. I always wanted to be in the courtroom. I started doing a smattering of types of civil litigation and gradually migrated to health care liability/medical malpractice."

One of two brothers, Holmes previously lived in Orlando before his parents moved the family to Nashville in 1984.

"My mom was in insurance HR and my dad was a TV producer and director for Nashville's NBC affiliate," said Holmes, who is a product of Hillwood High School in the Music City. "They are honest people and hard workers who care about their family and are kind to others generally. I try to be like that."

Holmes and his wife, Kelly, a graduate of Vanderbilt University with a degree in economics, met at an office Christmas party and now have two daughters, Anna (14) and Julia (13).

"My wife was in banking management before taking time off to raise our daughters, and now she works for her brother's company," said Holmes, whose family also includes a 5-year-old Black Labrador Retriever mix named Oreo.

A Primerus™ member since 2021, Cornelius & Collins is a 15-attorney firm that embodies a commitment to community service, one of the International Society's Six Pillars.

"Our attorneys and staff are involved in a wide range of charitable endeavors each year," according to the firm's website. "We sort food at the Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee to support the fight against hunger, run in the Nashville Bar Association Young Lawyers Division's Race Judicata, volunteer

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for the Davidson County High School Mock Trial Competition, sponsor performances of the Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra, devote many hours to pro bono projects, and serve on the board of local nonprofit organizations.”

Accordingly, Holmes expects that the firm’s involvement in Primerus™ will grow in the years ahead.

“Although we’re a relatively new member, we already are seeing some of the benefits and we look forward to becoming more active in upcoming meetings and programs,” he said.



In a vacation setting, Brian Holmes and his wife, Kelly, with their daughters, Anna and Julia.