

# Q & A

## Q & A with Nicole Quintana



A partner with Ogborn Mihm, LLP in Denver, Nicole Quintana became interested in the trial practice while working as a paralegal for trial attorneys Murray and Mike Ogborn. She attended the University of Denver Sturm School of Law while working full-time and while also excelling on the law school trial team. Nicole graduated from law school with honors, in the top 10 percent of her class, and hit the ground running as a trial lawyer.

A graduate of the University of Colorado, Quintana practices primarily in the areas of commercial litigation, and she also handles legal malpractice and construction litigation, including construction defect cases.

**Q: Before becoming an attorney, what was your first job?**

**A:** I was actually a paralegal, before I went back to law school. After undergrad, I knew the legal field was where I wanted to be, but I didn't want to dive back into law school just yet. I actually started as a paralegal to my now-partners, so I was very fortunate to find my (work) family right away. Here we are roughly 20 years later.



All smiles, the Quintana family in a treasured photo.

**Q: What motivated you to pursue a legal career?**

**A:** Two things. I credit my 10th grade English teacher (former lawyer) with sparking my interest in the law. We read Shakespeare's "Caesar," and instead of having us write a paper, he split the class up into prosecution, defense, witnesses, and jurors in the trial of Brutus. I was appointed a defense lawyer. It was doubly special because my father was a lawyer in the military, and the assignment was the start of a shared language between the two of us. That said, I knew I didn't have the stomach for criminal law based on my single foray into defense work, but it opened up my path to representing plaintiffs.

**Q: Who was your chief mentor and how did he or she influence your career?**

**A:** I think there are different kinds of mentors. My grandmother was fearless and an outspoken, working mom ahead of her time. My mother raised three kids, went back to get her master's degree, and worked a full-time job with a husband who was out at sea for six months at a time. Both of them were beacons of strength, perseverance, and balance. My father taught me about loyalty, dedication, and attention to detail...which you either love or hate about me. Murray and Mike Ogborn—the father-son duo with whom I've worked for 20 years—taught me about trial work, compassion, and storytelling. Michael Mihm taught me about the business of lawyering and encouraged me to own my space. All the lawyers with whom I work exemplify brilliance and collaboration. And my family...my center...consistently teaches me about love and support. I take a piece of each of these people—along with so many others—into my practice every day, and I am grateful for what they have instilled in me.

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### Q: What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

**A:** So, my kids still get excited about coming to the office with me on their days off, which I will treasure and encourage for as long as I can. On one of those days about three years ago, my then 7-year-old daughter drew me a picture that said "Be Brave and Have Fun." That's probably the best piece of advice I've ever received. So much of what we do, inside and outside of our offices and courtrooms, requires bravery and sacrifice. This profession is hard. Because of that, it is so important to have fun, to hold on to the joy of what we do and practice with people we love and admire, but also to get away from this hard work and find happiness, laughter, and peace outside of our careers.

### Q: What is one thing you would like to learn to do?

**A:** One thing? There are a million things I would love to learn to do. Speak another language fluently. Play the piano. Poach the perfect egg...and make my parents' Hollandaise sauce. Keep a plant alive. How to sew. Pitch a tent without getting into an argument with my husband. Life is an education, and I never want to stop learning.

### Q: What is your proudest career achievement?

**A:** I'd say one of my proudest moments was becoming a partner in my firm. I've essentially grown up here, and to be asked to be a partner with the people I learned from, love, and admire meant a whole hell of a lot.

### Q: What other career path might you have chosen?

**A:** If I was not a lawyer, I would either like to be a professional chef (whose restaurant closes at 9 p.m. because I don't survive past 10 p.m.) or a researcher in the area of sociology or psychology because the study of human beings, the brain, and behavior are fascinating!



An artistic message from her daughter Avery serves as daily inspiration for attorney Nicole Quintana.



Mother and daughter strike a pose with their dog Miles, who is named after jazz great Miles Davis.

### Q: What is your most treasured material possession?

**A:** I don't know if this is sad to say or not...but I don't really have one. Growing up in the military, we moved around a lot, so we'd have to purge pretty frequently to avoid packing and repacking unnecessary items. I get nostalgic seeing certain things, but I don't get terribly sentimental over much.

### Q: What is your happiest childhood memory?

**A:** Again, don't know that I just have one. I have snippets of memories that make me smile. Camping in Washington State. Eating frozen snickers bars on the ski mountain with my family. Being covered head to toe in mud after a raucous soccer game. Playing car bingo with my brothers while on a road trip. Picking fresh blackberries by my grandparents' cottage outside of Toronto. The common denominator certainly seems to be the outdoors and fresh air.

### Q: What is your favorite movie and book?

**A:** Movie: "Goonies" ("It's our time, our time down here.") or "The Princess Bride" ("Inconceivable!"). Book: "The Name of the Wind" and "The Shining."

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**Q: What is the most awe-inspiring place you have visited?**

**A:** My husband and I took a backpacking trip here in Bellvue, Colorado, near Red Feather Lakes. Imagine camping below the canopy of evergreen branches, looking out on a field of wildflowers leading up to a jewel-toned blue alpine lake at the base of a snowcapped mountain backdrop. Oh, and did I mention no cell reception or e-mail? It was magical.

**Q: What are your favorite leisure time pursuits?**

**A:** I have two very active kids (10 and 7), so let's be honest. There isn't a whole lot of leisure in my life. That said, I am an avid hiker and backpacker, and my kids and husband thankfully love getting dirty in the mountains with me.

**Q: What is your favorite famous or inspirational quote?**

**A:** See above. It doubles as the best advice and best inspirational quote.

**Q: Who is on your guest list for the ideal dinner party?**

**A:** I mean there's the celebrity guest list of "my best friends" who I think would be hilarious (Ryan Reynolds/Blake Lively, John Krasinski/Emily Blunt, Jimmy Fallon/Nancy Juvonen, Justin Timberlake/Jessica Biel)—all funny, imperfect, seemingly honest people who can laugh at themselves and also have some penchant for altruism.

There's the introspective guest list: my uncle that I never really got to know; Jane Austen; William Shakespeare; Maya Angelou; Neil De Grasse Tyson; Sam Harris...

But in real life, give me multiple nights (spread over a few weeks because I'm an introvert who needs recovery time) of two to four of my friends or family over a meal we cooked together, some white wine or Mezcal margaritas—and I'm in heaven. I love the intimacy of smaller gatherings and a lot of laughter.

**Q: What are the top three items on your bucket list?**

**A:** Hiking/backpacking Machu Pichu. Hiking/backpacking the Tour Du Mont Blanc (French/Italian/Swiss Alps). Raising happy kids!



Hiking in mountain terrain is a favorite activity for Nicole Quintana, her husband Nick and their children, Avery and Greyson.