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LAWYER SPOTLIGHT

Michael Gonzalez Durand was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on December 27, 1951. He was raised in the Gentilly area of New Orleans right next to the Fair Grounds horse race track. Mike graduated from St. Aloysius High School in 1969. St. Aloysius no longer exists as it merged with Cor Jesu in 1970 to form what is now Brother Martin High School.

Mike planned to go to law school ever since he was eight years old. Before he started his first semester at LSU for undergraduate work, he researched which degrees “did best” in law school. At that time, it was History and English. He earned a degree in History and was three hours short of a degree in English. He graduated with a Bachelor in History from LSU in 1975. Mike graduated from LSU Law School in 1978. He also attended the University of Vermont Environmental Law Center in 1989 for a concentrated course of study in Environmental Law studying such topics as CERCLA, RCRA and Risk Assessment.

Mike’s primary practice areas are Environmental Law, Toxic Tort, Insurance Law & Coverage. He also has an appellate practice.

Mike biggest victory is the *Meredith v. Ieyoub* case, a contract dispute between Attorney-General and Plaintiffs Lawyers to sue oil companies for environmental damages on a contingency fee basis. This contract was declared unconstitutional. The best advice Mike has received is that trying a lawsuit is extremely beneficial for the lawyers involved and not so much for the clients. However, if the other side throws reasonableness out the window, prepare like hell. Bear Bryant said it best: “It's not the will to win that matters - everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters.”

Interesting fact about Mike is that he did not speak a word until he was over three years old. His parents thought that something was wrong and brought him to countless specialists with no results. Sometime during the latter part of his third year while at the dinner table he looked over at his sister and said "I'd like two pork chops, please." Pandemonium ensued. He later explained to his parents that up until that point everything had been just fine so he really didn't need to say anything prior to that. He is the only person he is currently aware of whose first words were a complete sentence.

In his spare time, Mike enjoys building and repairing computers; home theaters; cooking and photography.